

Development of ES&T

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The announcement of the forthcoming webinar, “ES&T: What Was and What’s Next,” prompted me to recount my recollections of the conception and launch of the Journal of Environmental Science and Technology (ES&T) in the mid-1960s.

The Journal of Environmental Science and Technology (ET&T) was conceived by G. Fred Lee as a means to improve the dissemination of technical findings of environmental chemistry research. After earning his PhD in environmental engineering and applied chemistry with a minor in public health from Harvard University in 1960, Dr. Lee was appointed Professor of Water Chemistry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, USA to develop a graduate degree program in aquatic (water) chemistry within the UWM Department of Civil Engineering. (Information on the development of that program is available at www.gfredlee.com/Education/WaterChemProgramDevel.pdf.) The program that Dr. Lee developed was specifically designed to prepare chemists and chemical engineers for professional careers in water treatment and water supply quality management, water pollution control, chemical aspects of public health protection, solid waste management, and management of chemical waste to control environmental impacts. Major funding for the development of the program was provided by a training grant, of which Dr. Lee was principal investigator, from the US Public Health Service (part of which was to become the US Environmental Protection Agency); that grant provided several years of funding for graduate student stipends and research support. As the program developed, research funding was also provided by UWM, several state of Wisconsin agencies, the US EPA, and other governmental agencies.

The prolific research of this program and the need to share the findings with the professional community however, revealed the need for a journal focused on results of water chemistry research. While at that time there were several journals in the water and wastewater field that would publish such results, those journals did not necessarily reach many of those actively involved in these particular areas. Because of this, in the early 1960s Dr. Lee proposed to the Water, Air, and Waste Division (now the Environmental Chemistry Division) of the American Chemical Society (ACS) that it consider developing a journal specifically to cover water chemistry publications; the Division supported that proposal. Dr. Lee then sent a questionnaire to all members of the Division inquiring about their interest in a journal for environmental chemistry research publications; there was wide interest and acknowledgement of the need for such a journal. Based on that response, Dr. Lee contacted the ACS Publications Division about its interest in development a journal for environmental chemistry publications. The ACS Publications Division indicated it was not interested and declined to pursue developing such a journal.

Given that rejection, Dr. Lee then contacted several of the national technical publishing firms e.g., Academic Press, whose response to the concept was quite positive. Given the interest expressed by other potential commercial publishers and Dr. Lee's affiliation with ACS, Dr. Lee went back to ACS Publications Division to inquire again about its interest. This time ACS Publications agreed to undertake the development of the journal and provided significant assistance in bringing it to fruition. ACS appointed Dr. James Morgan, a PhD graduate of Harvard University conducting research in the water chemistry field, as Editor of this new journal; he appointed Dr. Lee to the Editorial Advisory Board. In January 1967 "Environmental Science and Technology – Emphasizing Water, Air, & Waste Chemistry" was born. Under Dr. Morgan's leadership, ES&T became the premiere journal for publication of environmental chemistry research findings and fulfilled the vision of Dr. Lee.

Information on today's ACS publication, Journal Environmental Science & Technology is available at <https://pubs.acs.org/page/esthag/about.html#>

Lee, G. F., and Jones-Lee, A., "Development of the Water Chemistry Program at the University of Wisconsin Madison & Follow-on Activities of Dr. Lee in Developing the Water Chemistry Field," Report of G. Fred Lee & Associates, El Macero, CA, January 1 (2012).
<http://www.gfredlee.com/Education/WaterChemProgramDevel.pdf>