

EFMC 2012: looking back and forward

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On May 24-25, 2012, almost 700 (!) delegates joined the European Facility Management Conference and the 11th EuroFM Research Symposium in Copenhagen, Denmark. The central theme was Facility Management – Global Responsibility; Local Acting. No wonder that many business and research presentations focused on sustainability issues, looking at them from different perspectives and often in connection with Corporate Social Responsibility. Interesting questions were answered such as: how shall we manage user behavior and user attitudes in order to reduce energy consumption? What are the costs, benefits and pay-back times of improved lighting systems? How can architecture add value for a sustainable business? Which key performance indicators express sustainability in FM? Other interesting topics included new ways of working and the impact of ICT on the future workplace, learning environments, FM tools such as FM benchmarking, service management, “rightsourcing”, risk management, knowledge management, life-cycle cost analysis, business models including the contribution of real estate and FM (REFM) to the core business, and the added value of FM.

Before the start of the parallel sessions of the business conference and the research symposium, Day 1 began with a plenary session with key note speakers including Prof. Michael Joroff, who discussed next steps in thinking and decision making, and Jeff Gravenhorst, Group CEO of ISS, who presented the

ISS 2020 Vision based on megatrends and scenarios for the future. Day 2 started with the “FM Debate of the Year”, with Peter Prischl, who asked the panel discussants and the audience if they would prefer to use only one term: either Facility Management or Facilities Management. It turned out that the majority preferred to use one term, but only a small minority was willing to give up their own preferred term. Also FM-people know what it is to be human... Although the debate was lively and interactive, one might wonder why no other and more important issues were discussed.

A personal highlight was the joint presentation of the book *The Added Value of Facilities Management*, edited by Per Anker, professor in Facilities Management at the Technical University of Denmark, Christian Coenen, professor of Marketing and Services Management at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, and Theo van der Voordt, associate professor in Corporate Real Estate Management at the Delft University of Technology. Due to our different backgrounds in FM, CREM and B2B-Marketing, we and our co-authors were able to discuss the concepts of Value, Added Value, and Value Adding Management from different perspectives. The reviews of Peter Prischl (Reality Consult), Leif Møllebjerg (Lego) and Geir Hansen (NTNU) were helpful and, at the same time, an invitation to go on with writing version 2.0. But let's first wait for more feedback.

At the end of the two-day event, Michael Joroff, Tore Haugen and Jan Bröchner did an excellent job in sharing their “observer reports” about the business conference and the research symposium. FM Students did a good job as well in presenting their research posters and – the nominated ones – giving very clear and brief presentations to tempt the audience to vote for them as the winner of the Student Poster Award 2012. At the end of the conference we received a USB stick with all the presentations, and on our way back home we could already read the Conference Proceedings of the 11th EuroFM Research Symposium, edited by Antje Junghans and Per Anker Jensen. Both the venue – the Bella Center – and the city – hosting the welcome reception in the Town Hall, a place with a nice mix of modern architecture and traditional



architecture, and accommodating the gala dinner in the National Museum – were highly appreciated. All in all, I think we can look back on a successful conference, and the organizers and participants all deserve a big Thank You!

Of course there are also points for improvement. A number of presentations were not really well structured or lacked clear conclusions and recommendations. Although most speakers finished on time, as usual there was insufficient time for discussion. And last but not least; in spite of the plenary sessions, the worlds of business and research are still too separated. It would be interesting to have more joint sessions. The subjects of the business conference and the research symposium are quite similar, and joint presentations by a client or a supplier and a researcher could add value by discussing the same case. The same holds true for sessions with two or more business people or researchers who first briefly present their own subject and then comment on each other's work, being able to prepare themselves by reading the presentations in advance. Looking back on EFMC 2012, some members of the Research Network Group suggested other points for improvement as well, e.g.:

- Use the same time schedules and use joint themes for the business conference and research symposium, to stimulate joint sessions.
- Ask business people to write a paper as well and use the same double-blind

review process; on a voluntary basis this could be a challenge for both speakers and reviewers.

- Learn from IFMA (world workplace) how they organize their research and founding of research projects.
- Give constructive feedback to the authors, both when accepted or rejected. This could be helpful to improve contributions now and in the future. However, without software support, coordination of feedback from reviewers to authors is a big task. Maybe journals that are partners of EuroFM could support the review process.
- Give the floor also to young researchers, even if they are in an early state of their research, but be clear about the character of a session on research-in-progress, that focuses less on results but more on discussing problem statements, research questions and research methods.

The next EFMC conference will be in Prague, Czech Republic, on the same days: 22-24 May 2013. I look forward to the Call for papers, you too?

