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Quality Milestones in Spinning Mills

Two major milestones in quality innovations for spinning mills are being celebrated by Uster Technologies at the ITMA ASIA + CITME 2008 exhibition in Shanghai: “60 Years Evenness Testing” and the “50th Anniversary of the USTER® STATISTICS”.

Sixty years ago, USTER® launched the first-ever evenness tester for yarns – a breakthrough which was the beginning of a remarkable sequence of quality-enhancing developments for the textile industry.

Then, in 1957, the company issued the first edition of its USTER® STATISTICS quality benchmarks, now widely acknowledged throughout the industry worldwide as the indispensable communication medium for textile quality parameters.

Both these achievements are being hailed at the Shanghai event, with 60th and 50th anniversary celebrations, and this special article reflects on USTER®’s pioneering role in textile industry quality over the past six decades.

After the Second World War, textile experts were quick to capitalise on rapid progress in electronics made in response to military needs. In 1948 USTER® launched the first USTER® evenness tester for yarns – since developed and improved steadily to the point where it is essential equipment in any textile lab.

Today, the USTER® TESTER 5 has no fewer than six sensor options, providing a detailed yarn profile in less than 60 seconds, covering evenness, thin and thick places, neps, periodic mass variations, variance-length curve, hairiness, remaining dust and trash particles in yarns, diameter and diameter variation, density, roundness, foreign fiber content and yarn count.

USTER® STATISTICS arose in response to the need for spinners to compare their own mills’ quality characteristics with those of the world at large. In 1949, USTER® started collecting quality data

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and conducting literally thousands of tests on customers' yarn from around the world. A series of benchmarks for evenness, thin places, thick places and neps was produced and this data was first published as USTER® *STATISTICS* in the German textile magazine 'Melliand' in 1957.

The USTER® *STATISTICS* publication expanded rapidly from that point, and soon to be regarded as the essential guide to prevailing textile quality levels. The latest edition, USTER® *STATISTICS* 2007, covers seven laboratory procedures, with benchmarks for:

- Quality characteristics for cotton fibers
- Changes in fibers properties within the entire spinning process
- Quality characteristics for slivers, rovings and yarns
- Relationships between fiber and yarn characteristics

Innovation timeline

The USTER® story takes in many more significant contributions to improving textile quality, matching the progress in electronics with the increasing demands of the industry.

At the same time as USTER® was launching its first evenness tester in 1948, the Spinlab company was being established in the USA, developing the first electronic measuring instrument for the determination of the length of cotton fibers. Spinlab built a strong reputation in cotton fiber testing over many years, and was subsequently acquired by Uster Technologies in 1990. By the early Sixties, the accelerating electronics revolution had ushered in the first semiconductors and transistors, innovations which paved the way for online testing in the form of the USTER® yarn clearer, while the laboratory evenness tester was developed still further towards its current capability as a multi-purpose measuring system.

In 1951 Uster Technologies introduced an automatic strength tester to measure breaking strength and strength variation. This was the forerunner of the USTER® *TENSOJET*, launched in 1992 and capable of 30,000 tests per hour – fast enough to pinpoint the isolated weak places in yarns which often cause end breaks in weaving.

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Increasing automation of textile processes brought new opportunities for electronics-based monitoring, starting in the early Sixties with automatic winding machines fitted with USTER® electronic yarn clearers to replace disturbing thick places with knots. In 1968, the USTER® CLASSIMAT yarn analysis and classifying tool was launched. This made winding more efficient by eliminating the most serious yarn faults. The latest version, the USTER® CLASSIMAT QUANTUM can today check cleared and uncleared yarn, and classify thick and thin places, neps and foreign fibers.



Automation of blowrooms in the early Seventies meant card sliver was subject to greater mass variations – a problem solved by USTER®'s successful card autolevelling system, later also applied to drawframes.

In the mid Seventies, USTER® Data Systems were devised for spinning mills. The aim was to monitor the spinning preparation, spinning and winding processes, checking slivers for evenness and count deviations and warning of potential problems. Today, Computer Aided Yarn Engineering (CAY) uses sophisticated software to monitor all the clearers at the winding machine to find an ideal clearing curve.

A decade later, High Volume Instrument (USTER® HVI) cotton classing was developed in the USA – able to test fiber bundles and analyze quality characteristics within a few seconds. The two companies involved in these developments were acquired by Uster Technologies in 1990 and 1993.

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In 1988 Uster Technologies installed the first hairiness testing systems in the market with which a yarn could be measured with a high reproducibility.

In 1993 Uster Technologies introduced a single fiber testing device, the Advanced Fiber Information System (USTER® *AFIS*). This automatically counted the number of neps and the neps size for the first time. Today, the USTER® *AFIS PRO 2* has many more options, including references to USTER® *STATISTICS*, key data for setting drawframes, and nep size calculations.

Foreign fiber detection in yarns was a major focus for Uster Technologies during the 1990s, and this vital area is now one of the standard features of the company's electronic yarn clearers. Another problem of the industry addressed by USTER® since is the detection and prevention of "rogue" bobbins production – ones which fall outside normal tolerances for count, count variation, evenness, imperfection, hairiness, etc. A single bobbin which has serious defects can ruin a massive quantity of production if it gets through into the woven or knitted fabric.

USTER®'s important role in the history of textile electronics shows how technology and know-how can contribute to higher quality and higher productivity throughout the textile chain. USTER®'s proud heritage is the basis for USTER®'s Think Quality concept – a continuation of USTER® dedication to provide solutions and consulting to the textile industry to address current and upcoming quality challenges of the industry.

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About Uster Technologies Ltd

The Uster Group is a leading supplier of quality controlling systems for the textile industry. The Group provides testing and monitoring instruments, systems and services that allow optimization of quality through each individual stage of textile production; from the raw textile fiber, such as cotton, wool or synthetic filament yarns, to the final finished fabric. The Uster Group provides benchmarks that are a basis for the trading of textile products at assured levels of quality across global markets.

The Group is headquartered in Uster, Switzerland and operates through a worldwide Market Organization complemented by Technology Centers. It has sales and service subsidiaries in the major textile markets and Technology Centers in Uster (Switzerland), Knoxville (USA) and Suzhou (China). In 2007, the Uster Group generated gross sales of CHF 187 million and an operating profit (EBITA) of CHF 52 million, with a workforce of approximately 530 employees.

Uster Technologies Ltd has been listed on the SWX Swiss Exchange since October 2007. The ticker symbol is USTN.

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