

# Concluding words: “From the consul of Spain to RT ’98”

## Eljas Pohtila

Director General

The Finnish Forest Research Institute, Unioninkatu 40 A, FIN-00170  
Helsinki, Finland, Eljas.Pohtila@metla.fi

*”... Supported by an ignorance concerning the Northern regions, the Southern imagination creates at will images of Scandinavia in which people cower under blankets of snow and step out only every once in a while to take in some fresh air while at the same time smoking a cigar and having a jovial conversation with reindeers, bears and seals...”. It was a hundred years ago that Angel Ganivet, a philosopher-cum-writer and diplomat, used these and other words when writing letters from and about Finland to his friends in Granada (Ganivet; “From the consul of Spain”).*

Angel Ganivet wrote numerous letters from Finland to his countrymen during the two years (1896–1897) he spent here. In the letters, the state of being a Finn took shape in what proved to be very accurate analyses of Finnish society. The contents of the letters varied from descriptions of the everyday of the liberated Finnish woman and the political situation to national customs, from swimming

in a lake in hole made in the ice to, of course, drinking and eating habits, and of course to the essence of love. A matter of special interest is Ganivet’s amazement at the enormous enthusiasm the Finns showed for the recently invented telephone. According to him, and therefore already a hundred years ago, the telephone appeared to be more common a tool in households than appropriate kitchen equipment! – But it must be noted that the telephone in those times was not a portable device.

Resource Technology 98 symposium has now been brought to its conclusion. I feel confident that the participants have found the occasion to have been both interesting and inspiring. It has been observed that the basic technologies, which have evolved during the last 10 years, have been widely applied and that the focus in development has shifted to the processing of issues one step higher in diversity than hitherto. In place of the immediate introduction of technology, we need solutions for organising and coordinating co-operation, utilisation of networks and the formulation and maintenance of functional policies.

The technological issues involved in the systematic use of natural resources and monitoring of the environment are part of research in Western countries. Scientific problem setting is dominated by the mainstreams of research policy. The sufficiency of natural resources, the impact of mankind on the environment, global processes (such as climate change, fixing of carbon and biodiversity), all these provide applicable frameworks of reference. Modern-day research means that the development of data processing systems is problem-centred. Information management is no longer merely a matter of technological solutions, but instead an important part of correct understanding of the field of phenomena being examined.

On the basis of the RT98 Symposium, it can be said that most of the current orientation options in science underscore the necessity of utilisation and development of information technologies. The subjects addressed in this symposium support the aforementioned themes. The papers presented have emphasised the needs of the producers and users of information to find new technological channels and procedures. A lot of credible solutions have been presented. It would also appear that the question of how to be able to efficiently access this information, which has bothered researchers for some decades, has reminded among the foremost subjects of thanks to the intensified exchange of information over networks. The increase in information production, the flood of information resulting from the banalization of the offering of information over networks, and support sought from the Internet by data systems

have ensured that the final solution to this relatively simple general issue is a matter for the future.

As a scientific occasion, this symposium is a success. Simply the fact that we have had representatives from twenty-six nationalities, with Brazil (the future world champion in football I guess) as the last to register, is indicative that the scientific commission of the symposium has worked well in their task of selecting the ninety papers from among those offered. The demonstration of state-of-the-art technology has further supplemented the presentations and made tangible the subjects dealt with.

The functioning of the symposium arrangements merits praise of its own. Even though we here in Finland have, indeed, become accustomed to highquality levels in conference arrangements, it should be noted in this connection, too, that these services are not possible without the organisers shared enthusiasm and the commitment by the expert executive team to the outcome of the project. I wish to congratulate each and every one of the organisers of the symposium for their co-operation. Hopefully, our guests have gained the impression that at least part of the early enthusiasm of us Finns for applying telecommunications and information technology is still alive and well. Also, it is my hope that you will all, in the manner of Ganviet, whom I cited in the beginning, be pleased to convey your feelings and sensations concerning Finland to your countrymen.

*Thank you all!*