

# PAPER DISCOVERY CENTER

by Anne Atwood Mead

Photos by Tobin Mueller.

## LET THE CELEBRATION BEGIN!

*Poised to open its doors at the end of the month, the Paper Discovery Center is dedicated to celebrating everything about paper. Come along as we take a look inside.*

**G**o ahead: Just try to imagine living even one single day without paper. There'll be no books, newspapers, or magazines to read; no mail in the mailbox; no dollar bills in your wallet; very little but fresh produce in your refrigerator; no photographs to spark your memory; no labeled medications to take. No toilet paper!

Now admit it: You take paper for granted. You, like most of us, rarely stop to think about how paper touches almost each and every aspect of your daily life.

The Paper Discovery Center will change that. Slated to open in late February, the science and technology museum is dedicated to celebrating paper's past, present and future and its impact on culture and community. As Valerie Wylie, executive director of the Center, says, "Paper touches our lives in so many ways and is so vital to the way we live throughout the world. We'll be surprising people in our facility in a dynamic way with just how much paper impacts the way they live."

The Center couldn't be located in a more appropriate building, community or state. Wisconsin has led the nation in papermaking for more than 50 years. The Fox River Valley has the greatest concentration of paper mills in the world. And the Atlas Mill, home to the Paper Discovery Center, is a 19th-century gem that played a part in the building of the industry that has changed our lives.

Local developer Randy Stadtmueller expedited the conversion of the former Kimberly-Clark Corporation mill into the facility that now houses the Center, the Paper Industry International Hall of Fame, and office and retail space. The year-long project has resulted in 10,000 square feet of inviting ground-level gallery space that is open and filled with light. Curved and straight walls painted in warm, earthy colors lead visitors from exhibit to exhibit while never obstructing the Fox River views from the rows of floor-to-ceiling windows. The original gridiron supporting the roof of the mill is exposed, reminding all that this was once an industrial space.



The river level of the Center, located below the main gallery, will feature a library, studios, classrooms and an archival center.

Visitors to the Center will have the opportunity to learn more about the history and architecture of the mill itself through an exhibit featuring photographs, graphics and an array of products once manufactured there. It and the other exhibits in the Center are the result of brainstorming and collaboration between representatives of the paper industry, the Dersé Museum Group of Milwaukee, LORD Cultural Resources, local focus groups, Wylie, and the Center's curator and archivist, Carrie Feld.

Known by many in the Fox Cities, Wylie has worked for several local not-for-profit organizations. As the founding director of the Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau, she led that organization for 14 years. Her responsibilities at the Paper Discovery Center include directing the facility's daily operations as well as participating in the financial development of the organization.

Feld is new to the Fox Cities. A Sturgeon Bay native and *summa cum laude* graduate of St. Norbert College in De Pere, she worked as an archivist for both Georgia-Pacific Corporation and Good Humor-Breyers Ice Cream in Green Bay before joining the Center. She manages the permanent and temporary traveling exhibits and the archive collection and assists with the development and implementation of educational programs.

Wylie and Feld explain that all of the Center's exhibits are designed to be interactive and are

targeted toward middle and high school students and families. "From Tree to Tissue" is the signature exhibit. Demonstrating the full process involved in making paper today, it beckons visitors to follow a walkway featuring working models, graphics and interactive activities. Along the way, they will learn about the papermaking stages as they choose trees, break down fiber, explore chemicals, touch and feel pulp, highlight parts of a papermaking machine, and see a towering roll of paper as it appears when it emerges from such a machine.

The exhibit displayed at the entrance of the Center is its most colorful. A large paper sculpture made by local artist and teacher Tom Grade presents the story of paper from its beginning in China to the mills in the Fox Cities. Here visitors will gather before proceeding into the Center's 45-seat theater to view an introductory video exploring the history of the paper industry in the Fox River Valley.

From there, it's on to the Center's other 15-plus exhibits (see sidebar). Though not all will be in place when the Center opens, due to the need for additional funds, both Wylie and Feld are confident the Center will impress all who venture into it with those exhibits that are up and running.

Feld is particularly excited about hosting the Center's first traveling exhibit in April and May. The



Carrie Feld, curator and archivist, and Valerie Wylie, executive director, prepare a newly acquired piece of papermaking equipment for exhibition.

Open Book Peace Project will allow visitors to the Center, including local schoolchildren, to create and contribute handmade pages to a never-ending, growing book about peace that has been traveling throughout the Midwest since 2002.

Exposing children, especially those in middle and high school, to paper, the paper industry, and its career opportunities are high on Wylie and Feld's list of objectives for the Center. They plan to host school groups and to schedule special activities and programs that draw this age group to the Center.

"We're hoping to get kids excited about science, math and technology. It would be great if some of them someday joined the paper industry, but others may go on to write great formulas," says Wylie.

Another group of people Wylie is intent on recognizing, as well as pleasing, is today's papermakers. "I will have accomplished one of my main goals," she says, "if people who work in the industry walk away from the Center feeling great pride in what they do and what they have contributed." ☺



The International Paper Industry Hall of Fame exhibit is a tribute to paper industry greats.

## RAW MATERIALS

### What About Trees?

Wood fiber from trees is the most common source for making paper.

There are two main types of trees: softwoods and hardwoods. Softwoods, like spruce and fir, have needles and are also known as conifers or evergreens. Hardwoods, like oak and maple, lose their leaves in the fall and winter and are also known as deciduous or broad-leaf trees.

Not every tree is used to create paper, as some types are better suited than others. There are two kinds of trees in our forests: softwoods and hardwoods. Softwoods, like spruce and fir, have needles and are also known as conifers or evergreens. Hardwoods, like oak and maple, lose their leaves in the fall and winter and are also known as deciduous or broad-leaf trees.


Which do you think makes better paper?

### Do Softwoods or Hardwoods Make Better Paper?

Softwoods have short fibers and are used to make paper that is strong and durable. Hardwoods have long fibers and are used to make paper that is smooth and easy to read.

### Hardwoods AND Softwoods?

Most paper is made from a mixture of hardwoods and softwoods, taking advantage of the good qualities from both types of trees. Papermakers blend the long fibers of the hardwood with the short fibers of the softwood to create a paper that is both strong and smooth.



**More than Wood!**

Wood pulp is not the only material used for making paper. In fact, the likely ancestor of our modern paper was made in China around AD 105 using rags.

Check out some of these other papermaking materials!

Exhibit rendering by Dersé Museum Group.

# PAPER DISCOVERY CENTER EXHIBITS

## ORIENTATION

Paper Sculpture – this colorful work of art by local artist Tom Grade tells the story of paper from its beginning in China to the mills in the Fox Cities.

The 19th-Century Atlas Mill - presents the history and architecture of the Atlas Mill, home of the Paper Discovery Center.

Career Lab - a resource for students and visitors with videos of people working in the paper industry and computer terminals linked to partnering companies and educational institutions.

Paper Theater - a small theater presenting an introductory/orientation video that explores the history of the paper industry in the Fox River Valley.

Paper Particulars, Paper People - scattered throughout the Center, this simple, “minds-on” activity presents fun facts about the paper industry, its products and its people.

## THE IMPACT OF PAPER

Paper for the Ages - a chronological presentation of the history and influence of paper in a cartoon-style format. Ranges from the invention of paper in China in 105 AD through the first printing press by Gutenberg to the introduction of papermaking in the US and locally.

Paper in Our Lives - an interactive exhibit showing that paper can be found in a variety of everyday products and materials that relate to our lives. Includes a “Is It or Isn’t It?” interactive quiz identifying items made with paper and “Constructing with Paper,” a station to make paper airplanes, cards and origami.

Where and What in the World? - a changing exhibit displaying paper and paper-related products made around the world.

Education and Communication - an exploration of how paper has enabled world cultures to learn from and communicate with the printed word.

Paper’s Economic and Social Impact - a focus on the changes that the paper industry has brought to the local community.

Oral Histories - a presentation of stories from people who have worked in the mills and have experienced the changes in the paper industry.

Health and Hygiene - graphic panels and images showing what life was like before the introduction of tissue, toilet paper and other medical paper products.

## PAPER SCIENCE

Papermaking Materials - an exhibit showing the many materials that can be used in papermaking and how the final properties of the paper can be varied by choice of material.

From Tree to Tissue - an integrated walkway that includes working models, graphics and activities that demonstrate all stages of papermaking.

The Interactive Lab - an opportunity to explore the scientific tests and mathematical activities that control the quality of paper and the mechanics of the functioning paper machine. Visitors, particularly school groups, will make their own paper and then test it for properties such as brightness, density and strength.

Multi-Sensory Paper Machine - a visual projection of a papermaking machine with a sense of scale and reality, including sight, sound and smell elements – a quick, but high impact, whole-body experience.

## THE ENVIRONMENT – NOW AND FUTURE

You Decide! - a graphic presentation of the debate on some major environmental issues. Includes a simple feedback station and will change periodically to reflect current topics.

What is the Industry Doing? - a presentation of some of the different processes and programs that the paper industry has initiated to address environmental issues.

## PAPER IN OUR FUTURE – WHAT’S AHEAD

Future Technologies and Products - an exploration through graphics and text of new and exciting innovations.

Paperless Society? - a look at the increasing demand for paper despite the introduction of personal computers and hand-held devices.

Sustainable Forests and Genetic Engineering - a look at the extensive replanting of trees now occurring, the use of genetic engineering to create dramatically improved trees, and biodiversity.

## PAPER INDUSTRY INTERNATIONAL HALL OF FAME

An interactive computer display that invites visitors to learn about the industry leaders who have been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

## OUTDOOR LIVING CENTER

A riverside stand of trees with a display pavilion addressing the relationship of water and trees to the papermaking process.

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