

International dialogue in science and technology

The role of a Learned Academy

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Science and technology (S&T) cuts across national boundaries. Industry, a major beneficiary of S&T, has therefore much to gain by integrating with the international S&T community. Many academic and research centres of international repute carry out R&D activities through international collaborations among themselves as well as with industries. This article presents an overview of the role and activities of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) and its links with global S&T research and development.

Introduction

By its very nature, science and technology (S&T) is international, with projects increasingly being undertaken through international teams. Publishing in international literature is an important part of the S&T process, both to facilitate the transfer of knowledge beyond national boundaries and to ensure that research is subjected to the rigour of international peer review. The internet is now an established and essential part of international knowledge transfer that speedily and cheaply transfers ideas and data between scientists on opposite sides of the globe. The globalization of S&T is conferring enormous benefits on many countries, including Australia. The benefits of such globalization are often recognized by the signing of S&T Agreements between participating countries, or between key organizations in those countries.

Within these broad generalizations, it is important to note the value that personal contact between professional scientists and technologists brings to team building and technology transfer. A number of studies of international interactions have shown that the most powerful way to initiate personal contact is through face-to-face meetings. This explains the importance ascribed by scientists and technologists to foreign exchanges, sabbaticals and visits to overseas colleagues. They have seminal roles to play in the process of knowledge transfer, and they are especially important for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in which internal networks of communication and collaboration are necessarily limited in scope.

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