



THE WORLD'S RFID AUTHORITY

Eight RFID Labs Form Global RF Lab Alliance

The goal of the group, which includes the University of Arkansas' RFID Research Center, is to spur large-scale research initiatives.

By Beth Bacheldor

May 1, 2007—Academia has joined forces to drive research collaboration and communication among top labs around the world focused on RFID initiatives. This confederation, the [Global RF Lab Alliance \(GRFLA\)](#), was founded by the [University of Arkansas' RFID Research Center](#) in the United States, the [RFID Lab](#) at Italy's [University of Parma](#) and the [University of Bremen's LogDynamics Lab](#) in Germany.

Announced today at [RFID Journal LIVE! 2007](#) in Orlando, Fla., the alliance will provide a mechanism for coordinating research and sharing information among the world's top laboratories studying radio frequency identification technologies, says Bill Hardgrave, executive director of the [Information Technology Research Institute](#) and director of the [RFID Research Center](#) with the [University of Arkansas' Sam M. Walton College of Business](#). "As the area of RF began to grow, we started seeing centers of excellence around the world," Hardgrave says, "but we had no formalized mechanism to communicate and collaborate. The alliance is a way for these labs to do some great work."

The GRFLA, adds Hardgrave, will enable labs to expand their work beyond their own initiatives, as well share resources such as students and professors, collaborate on projects and avoid duplication of efforts. The hope is that the GRFLA will be able to spur large-scale RFID initiatives—which can be very difficult when undertaken by individual labs—by pooling the research and resources of multiple laboratories. "The most exciting thing to me is the opportunity to attack the really big global RF projects rather than piecemeal projects worked on by individual labs," he states. "Collectively, we have a much better chance of effecting real change, rather than incremental advances individually."

The GRFLA plans to submit grant proposals for projects to both the [European Union](#) and the [National Science Foundation](#).

In addition to research efforts, the alliance plans to publish a quarterly academic periodical, *The International Journal of RF Technologies: Research and Applications*, which will focus on the application of RFID and other RF technologies to solve business problems. The publication, which the GRGLA hopes to launch in 2008, will feature articles submitted by RF technology experts.

In addition to the three founders, the five other charter members are the [Center for Food Distribution and Retailing](#) at the [University of Florida](#); the [Georgia Tech Research Institute](#) at the [Georgia Institute of Technology](#); the [Chinese Academy of Science](#) in Beijing, China; the [Hong Kong University of Science and Technology](#); and the [Research Center for Logistics Information Technology \(LIT\)](#) at Korea's [Pusan National University](#).

The alliance does not yet have a specific agenda, though the charter members have established a common set of themes that include supply chain automation, product life-cycle management and the cold chain. These themes encompass the charter labs' areas of expertise in such sectors as retail, automotive, aviation, logistics and pharmaceuticals. Technologies the alliance intends to focus on include anything related to RFID, such as real-time location systems, wireless sensors, middleware and advanced data processing.

Only about two labs will be admitted each year, until the roster reaches a maximum of 20 members. "We will admit only the most reputable labs that have shown the propensity to collaborate," Hardgrave says. While the founding members want the number of member labs to grow from the current eight, Hardgrave says they want consistency so the roster doesn't change from year to year. The 20-member limit was chosen to prevent the alliance from becoming unwieldy.

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Each member lab will be expected to financially support its own involvement and participate actively. The alliance does not plan to impose a minimum dollar amount that prospective labs will need to contribute to fund their membership.

Additionally, the alliance will not have any management staff per se, though it has elected Antonio Rizzi, head of the University of Parma's RFID Lab, to serve as its president. "The most important thing is to start very soon with some projects," Rizzi says. "We have very positive feedback from the members already."

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