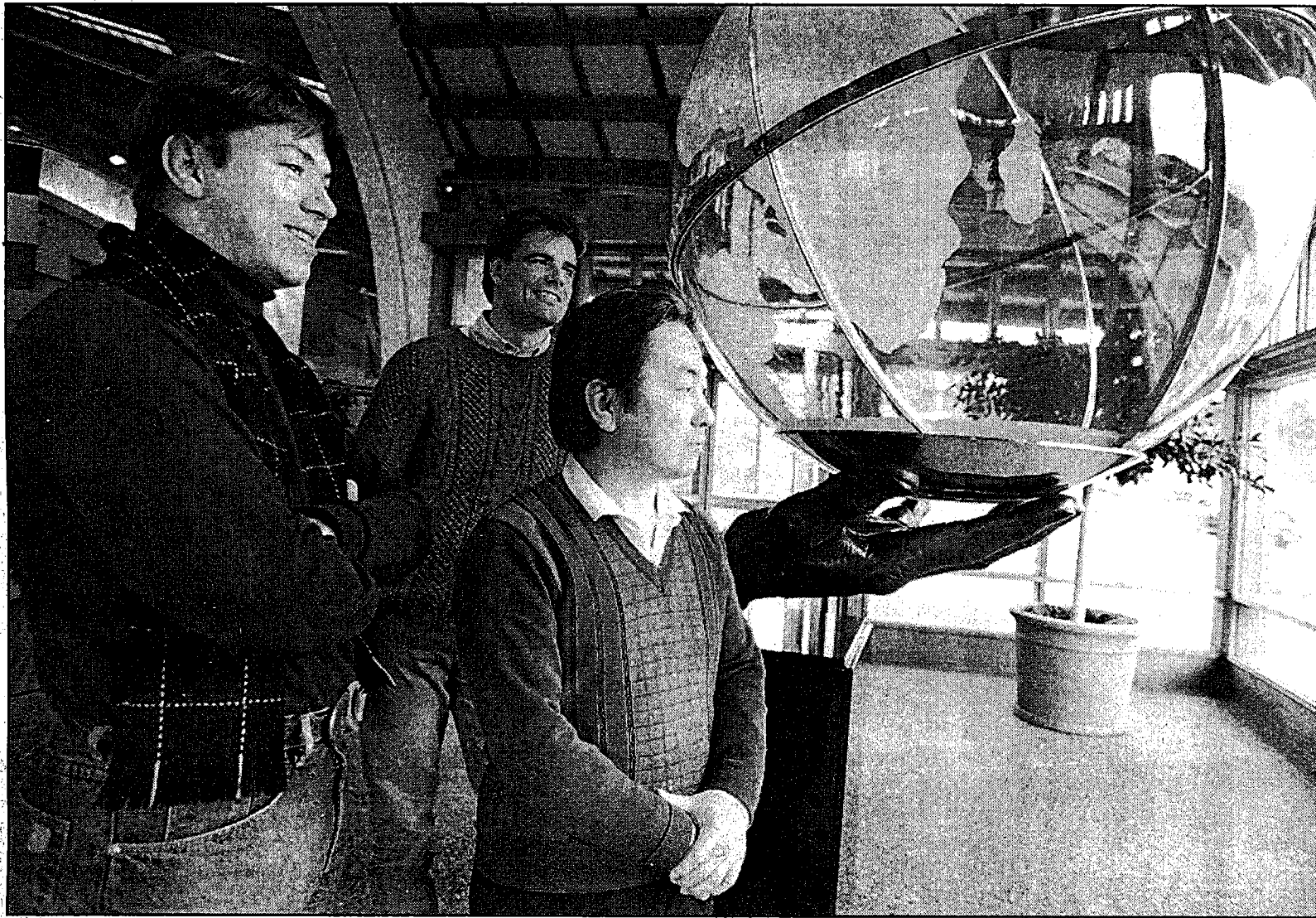


PORTLAND

Community
news and
features



PATRICIA CORDELL/The Oregonian

Alexandre Battistella of Brazil, Rainer Hummel of Germany and Li Weidong of China (from left) have recently taken part in the World Forest Institute Internship program. They are college-educated professionals from around the world who are pursuing careers in the field of forestry.

Institute's foreign specialists seek out and share a world of information and technology

By MICHELLE L. KLAMPE,
of The Oregonian staff

After Alexandre Battistella graduated from a university in Brazil, he decided he wanted to go abroad. His degree in forest engineering led him to Portland, where he took a job as an information specialist at the World Forest Institute.

Now he spends his days researching and passing on the latest information on forestry, and spends his nights enjoying the Portland night life.

"It's an experience you cannot measure," Battistella said.

Battistella is one of eight international forestry, forest product or forest resource specialists working at the institute, which is associated with the World Forestry Center.

"It is in an internship, but they aren't interns," said Eric Landis, institute director. They are college-educated professionals from around the world who have select-

Seeing the forest and the trees

ed and are pursuing careers in the field of forestry.

These specialists represent their countries at the institute's country desks and are the "guts" of its programs.

They come from Brazil, Denmark, Germany, Mexico, Indonesia, Russia, China and Taiwan, and spend 12 to 18 months in Portland working with clients worldwide.

The specialists belong to an information-sharing program used by businesses and environmental and professional organizations. Organizations request information searches on the forestry industry.

"The information our clients want is information so current it probably isn't even in publication," Landis said. A business that needs

to know the availability of a type of wood found only in South America may call and request a search, or an environmental organization wondering about the current status of a near-extinct tree species may ask for the institute's help.

The researchers take over once a request has been made; projects are assigned based on the geographical and educational knowledge of the specialists.

The institute's library has only a couple of hundred magazines, and fewer books. The specialists must be comfortable with current computer technology, fax machines and telephone systems. To access information they make calls, use databases and ride the information superhighway.

TREE PEOPLE

■ **THE PROGRAM:** The World Forest Institute's international intern program is designed to provide further exposure to a field in which an individual already has experience. To be accepted in the institute's program, candidates must possess the following minimum qualifications, as determined by the institute:

■ **EDUCATION:** Have a minimum of a bachelor of science degree, master's preferred, with emphasis in natural resource management or business and two years experience in a natural resource-related field. The minimum two years' experience enables the institute to determine the level of interest and commitment to the field of forest information.

■ **LANGUAGE:** Proficiency in English, both written and spoken. Conversational English is required not only for the institute, but also to obtain the proper visa.

■ **PROPOSAL:** Preparation of an initial research proposal, emphasizing a modern approach to international forestry and/or natural resources.

■ **FUNDING:** Before consideration for acceptance in the institute's internship program, candidates must secure funding for round-trip air transportation, housing, food and related personal expenses. In some cases, the institute grants scholarships. Scholarships are based on need, candidate qualifications and a personal statement.

■ **AGE:** Minimum 21.

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Eric Landis,
institute director

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"Our vision is to improve the flow of technology and scientific information around the world," Landis said. "We are not a research institute, we are an information institute."

Li Weidong of China spent seven months learning all he could about this technology. He returned home at the end of February. Before he left, he said the time he spent as a specialist was a good chance for him to update his knowledge of forestry.

When he returned to China, he took charge of the computer network for China's forestry industry.

"We get a real sharing of ideas from around the world. It's an excellent situation for the specialists and for our customers," Landis said.

The specialists are an ideal way

to speed the international flow of forestry-related technology and science.

The international flavor is why Rainer Hummel of Germany is happy he came to the program. "The fact that it is so international is what is important to me," he said. "It gives me an idea of what I want to do. It's on-the-job training."

The specialists will continue to be colleagues and friends as well. Past program participants have already been bumping into each other at international forest conferences.

"They'll always be ambassadors of the institute," Landis said.

As Battistella puts it, what really makes the program unique is that "we are going to have friends and colleagues all over the world."