Choosing Technology

These days, the equipment foresters use in the field and in the office is changing at a pace that can be mind-boggling. It seems that once a computer is purchased, it is already outmoded by faster models with greater memory capacity. The simple tools of forest measurement have been replaced with hand-held devices and synthesized GIS systems that save time and money, but that can appear daunting to the uninitiated. Even the equipment used to harvest trees has become more complex and changes more rapidly.

When the equipment we use in the forest is so important, and in many cases such a major investment, it is imperative that those responsible for making purchasing decisions be well informed regarding not only what technology exists today, but what questions should be asked before a major purchase decision is reached. In this issue of the JOURNAL, we present valuable information on both of these important considerations.

We begin this “Choosing Technology” section with brief articles on four major types of equipment used by foresters and forest industries. These articles offer overviews of technological developments in such areas as GIS, measurement, harvesting, and computer hardware and software. Appropriate questions to consider before purchasing new equipment are also included.

Following these articles is our first annual Buyers Guide, a resource for foresters and natural resource professionals who are in the market for a number of different kinds of technological equipment. We received an excellent response from both manufacturers and suppliers, who have provided descriptions of their products, as well as contact names and addresses, for the reader’s convenience. The JOURNAL staff hope readers will find this guide useful. We welcome both reader and participant feedback, so we can further enhance the guide and make it an annual spring feature.