

A Scoot Through IMTS 2024 with a Gear-Industry Veteran

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I limped up to the counter at the Scootaround rental site at McCormick Place and rented one to get around the show with speed and agility without challenging my knee problems or causing any foot pain. I highly recommend this tool for the ability to get around the show to anyone, handicapped or not.



Dan Carleton with senior editor Aaron Fagan.

I have been to many IMTS and EMO shows over my fifty years in the industry; yet the 2024 show proved to be a thrilling and confusing event that left me tired and looking forward to a future that will surpass even my meager manufacturing dreams. At the first manufacturing technology show I attended (even before McCormick Place was built), I was in my early twenties and gobsmacked by the huge milling machines with tool changers that were operated by tape drives—no CNC for the old school. Well, the 2024 show proved to be deep in the new school.

There was an exciting emphasis on showing students and youth in general how the manufacturing technology of the future is evolving. This evolution was evident in the Student Summit section on the lower level of the East Building, where NASA, community colleges, the American Precision Museum, and a few forward-thinking large manufacturers had booths to attract students and other future engineers, service technicians, managers and machinists to the new schools of manufacturing thought.

But future thinking wasn't limited to the Student Summit section of McCormick Place. Upstairs in the East Building were large displays of revolutionary inspection tools, like laser scanning of gear blanks and a race car, plastic fillers to make precision positive models of keyways and splined bores, and simplified Coordinate Measuring Devices that cost less than similar ones did even five years ago.

I cruised over the long bridge from the East to the North Building which featured gear making and gear inspection. I stopped to renew old friendships with pals from Gleason, Liebherr and DVS Technologies as well as from Galdabini and Balance Systems. There were many suppliers from consolidated groups such as Taiwan and India and even a company from Native America.

Across the hall in the South Building, I found even more HUGE exhibits, and still managed to run into old friends from various parts of the industry. From Nidec to Fanuc to Fives to Mazak my scooter powered me through large machining, grinding and controls exhibits. Around the corner from Fanuc, I came upon the entrance to the West Building via a bridge over the main entrance to the show.

The West Building was wild. Besides the tooling, cutters and workholding, the positive deposition of materials from carbon fiber to titanium was a fascinating look into the future. The complexity of the demonstration pieces was indeed amazing. The ability to directly deposit an amazing array of materials in even tiny spaces with thin tubes, tiny passages and blind canyons will free the designers of the future to create the cities, machines, and space travel vehicles to take us flying into a world that we can only imagine from 2024.

Rest assured I have never felt the same way when leaving either IMTS or EMO in the past: as an exhibitor, I always left exhausted from delivering the endless sales pitches; and as a visitor, I was always irritated by my sore feet and inability to see every part of the shows. But after my time at IMTS 2024 was over, and I packed up and headed home to Michigan, I only felt regret that I couldn't go another round with the show the next day!

