



## Can AMSC Finally Make Its Technology Pay Off?

BY LIVIA GERSON  
Worcester Business Journal Staff Writer

American Superconductor was founded in 1987 on the basis of the idea that superconducting materials could revolutionize the way electricity is transported. Twenty-two years later, the Devens-based company finally turned a profit for the first time, but only because of revenues from a wind power business that it acquired in the interim.

Now, a new deal to provide the pipelines for a major renewable energy project raises the question of whether the superconductor business can succeed in its own right.

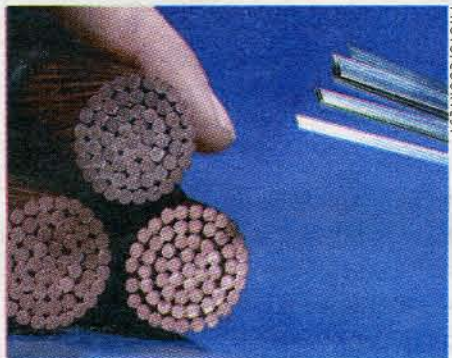
### Making Friends

In October, the company announced that its ceramic superconducting fiber will form the basis of a renewable energy hub in New Mexico, known as Tres Amigas. The hub is designed to connect the three power grids that transport electricity around the country, allowing green energy to move from one region to another.

"This is a big national project," said American Superconductor spokesman Jason Fredette. "It's a first-of-its-kind kind of system."

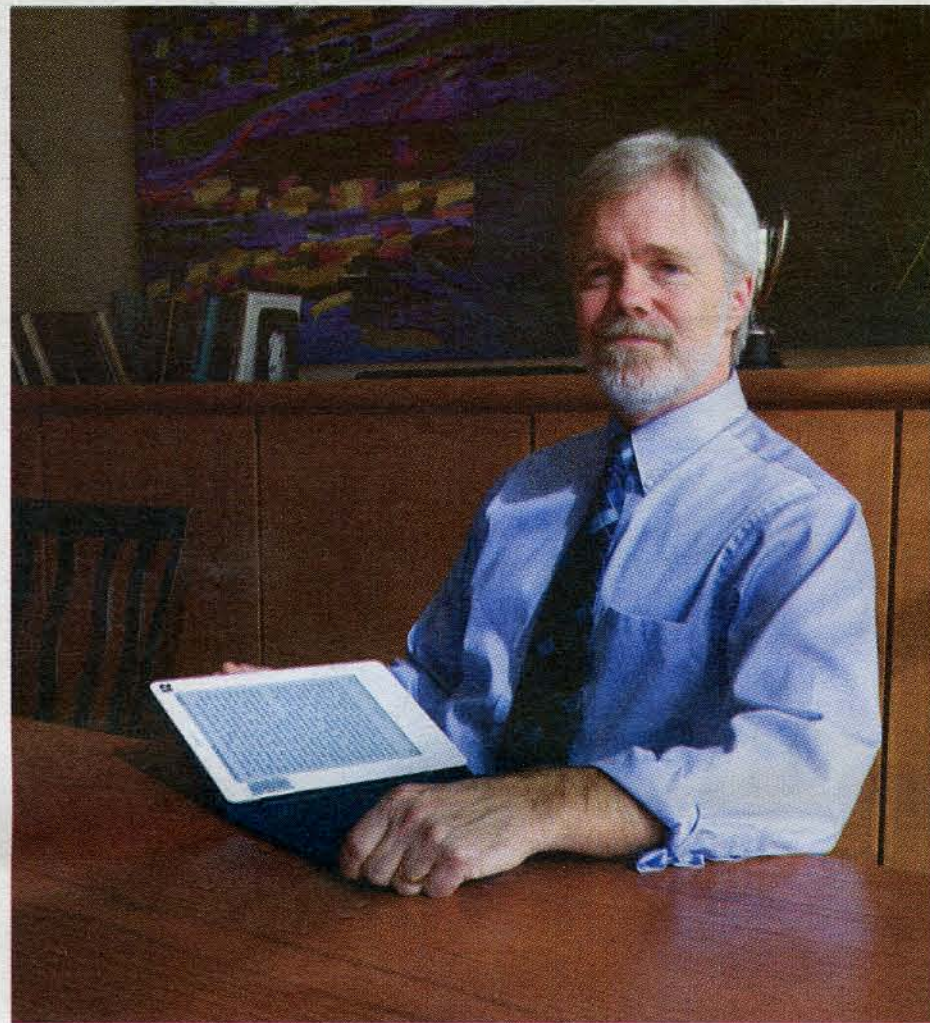
Fredette said the company can't provide any estimates of what Tres Amigas, which is still negotiating with potential customers and waiting on regulatory approvals, could mean to its bottom line. But he said the environment for the company's supercon-

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PHOTO/COURTESY

Superconductors are far smaller and lighter than the amount of copper wire that would be required to do the same job.



PHOTO/CHARLES STERNAMOLO

Tom Corbett, library director at Cushing Academy in Ashburnham, holds an electronic reader called a Kindle. The school now has 8,000 fewer bound books and 68 electronic readers after a \$100,000 tech investment.

## The Rise Of The E-Book

Cushing Academy leads the way in new tech adoption, but will anyone follow?

BY BRANDON BUTLER  
Worcester Business Journal Staff Writer

Stand and watch the circulation desk at Cushing Academy's library in Ashburnham and before long a student will come up and request to check out not a book, but a Kindle.

About 68 of the electronic readers, which retail for about \$259, are distributed throughout the campus after the school's headmaster, James Tracy, invested about \$100,000 in the library and technology budgets to embrace a digital future in education. And the gizmos are so hot, they're hard to find.

"I haven't even been able to check one out yet," said Katie Kasper, 19, a senior at the school.

In front of that circulation desk, hang three flat-screen televisions showing news stations and programs about emerging technologies. And there are more computer stations than there are book stacks, which are huddled in an isolated corner of the room.

### Market Penetration

As the e-book industry continues to grow, some local educators see an opportunity for the technology in education. Others are not as enthused by the idea.

"Will e-readers have an application in education? Absolutely," said Michael Welch, headmaster at Saint John High School in Shrewsbury. "Will a textbook ever lose its place in a classroom? I don't think so."

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## Solar Too Popular For Its Own Good

Funding dries up – businesses, communities left hanging

BY SHAUN TOLSON  
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Up until a few weeks ago, the town of Leicester had big plans for its three public school buildings.

With a rebate through the state's Commonwealth Solar program as incentive, the town had planned to lease the roofs of three school buildings to a private contractor to install solar panels.

But Leicester was a victim of Commonwealth Solar's own popularity. The \$68 million in state funding set aside for the rebates — which was expected to last until 2012 — was exhausted in October.

"The frustrating thing for the communities was all the time that went into putting

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## Surviving In A Tough Sector

Machine shops that survive recession may find themselves with two-year-old problems

BY MATTHEW L. BROWN  
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These days, Steve Leighton gets two or three calls every week from employees he's had to lay off asking when they can come back to work at H.T. Machine in Webster.

Leighton, the company's general manager, has brought the company's employee count from about 31 down to 19 during the recession and he considers H.T. lucky to be one of the machine shops that comes out of the downturn alive.

If the economy comes back strong, Leighton will hire back to pre-recession levels. But, he predicted, "a lot of places won't be hiring back. They have closed."

The Massachusetts manufacturing sector

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