

Editorial

The 3rd World Conference on Engineering Education

The conference, held at the University of Portsmouth, 20–25 September 1992, is a sequel to the Sydney conference held in 1989, organized by Zenon Pudlowski and the first conference held in 1984, organized by the editor. This year's conference was chaired by Professor Terry Duggan, a member of our editorial board. The venue was the historic Guildhall in Portsmouth. There were over 420 registered delegates with a contingent from Central Europe supported by the European Commission's TEMPUS programme. The largest groups came from the UK, Australia, Poland, and the USA. The conference was also supported by IBM and the University of Portsmouth. In contrast to previous conferences, the themes were more directly concerned with engineering education issues such as international quality, environment, innovation, teaching and management, industrial links, and computers and design. In previous conferences more technical papers were presented with a narrower professional appeal. The format of the conference consisted of keynote addresses, and parallel paper sessions with an accompanying exhibition. For the first time the conference was a joint event incorporating the SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education) annual conference. This was also the first conference organized within the overall framework of the International Liaison Group for Engineering Education, which was established in the wake of the Sydney meeting in 1989. Some outstanding keynote addresses were presented. Professor Duggan, in his opening address called for changes in our approach required by a change from research and development to a development and manufacture reality in engineering higher education. Professor Ohashi, President of the Japanese Society of Mechanical Engineering (see also his joint paper with Latorre and Hatamura in Vol. 8, No. 2 of this journal) presented a comparison between the American and Japanese engineering education systems. He maintained that the Japanese system produces generalists, who are then trained by industry, whereas in the USA early specialization is already common in undergraduate education. The Japanese education system does not seem to satisfy student expectations, yet the system seems to produce the desired results. Another international comparison was presented by Leighton Sissom, President of the American Society for Engineering Education. He summarized his experiences of a tour of Russian engineering education and referred to the comparative US scene. The contrast between high-class technological achievement and the lack of infrastructure and equipment in many Russian institutions results in peak achievements in space and in disasters such as Chernobyl. The Russians are looking at the possibility of restructuring their system along US lines. Other keynote addresses of major interest were delivered by Professor Trevor Cole of Sydney, Dr W. B. Manly of the Institution of Electrical Engineers and by J. A. Lorrinan from the Centre for Consultancy. The conference had many interesting sessions, and as usual parallel sessions made it difficult to attend all those one may have wanted to, in spite of excellent timekeeping by session chairmen. The conference produced a very commendable three-volume proceedings of the presented papers. We anticipate the publication of a number of these in expanded form in our journal. In addition to the SEFI business meetings, the International Liaison Group also met for discussions concentrating on the next, the 4th World Conference, for which bids are invited. The meeting also elected a new board for the group. The new Chairman is Professor Duggan who follows Professor Hugo Messerle of the University of Sydney with three vice-chairmen, including Professor Russel Jones of the University of Delaware, a representative from Poland, as well as the editor of this journal. A highlight was the presentation of this year's SEFI Leonardo da Vinci medal to Sir Robert Telford, who has a lifelong association with the Marconi Company, and was instrumental in the introduction of many electronic developments. He is also an outstanding supporter of engineering education and training, and a prime mover in the concept of the European Community Education and Training Programme for Technology—COMETT. The conference was an outstanding achievement for the organizers and a memorable experience for the participants. It augurs well for future international understanding of the issues in engineering education, and this journal will continue to serve as the communication platform for the issues of concern to engineering educators. A concurrent expanded review of the conference by the Associate Editor is also included in this issue.

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