

Editorial

ENGINEERING EDUCATION IN IRELAND

This issue is devoted to Ireland, a beautiful island which recently has become a modern, enterprising and high-tech country. Engineering education is a top priority in the island which has had a traditionally high level of general education. Modern technology has also brought unprecedented prosperity to Ireland. Most big-name computer and chip manufacturers have production facilities there. Other flourishing industries include pharmaceuticals, automotive parts, electronics, forest products and aerospace services.

The educational system is similar to but not the same as that of the United Kingdom. A number of universities have engineering departments; Trinity College, National University of Ireland Galway, National University of Ireland Dublin, University College Cork, University of Limerick, University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast. There are also a number of Institutes of Technology, mainly supplying engineering manpower for production, sales and engineering services. These institutes are akin to the old polytechnics in the United Kingdom. They are developing links to the universities in order to provide a continuous educational opportunity to engineering students aiming for more advanced degrees.

I would like to point out two aspects of this issue. First, there are a number of contributions from Northern Ireland. We wanted to demonstrate that collaboration between north and south comes naturally. There is no political divide between the north and the south in education, as indeed in many other areas. Secondly, this issue is in many respects not particularly Irish. Engineering is not a parochial trade it is international, and a country that is establishing itself as a technology-oriented supplier of goods and services has to provide international standards in engineering education. Consequently, most papers are quite similar in type and content to regular issues of the journal. Essentially, this is a regular issue with all contributions coming from an island with a total population of about 5 million and a GNP per capita which in 1997 had overtaken that of the United Kingdom. It is a deserving development for a country that last century experienced a devastating famine, was desperately poor and lost most of its citizens to emigration and disease.

The editor wishes to thank all those who have contributed to this issue. My particular gratitude goes to **Ivan Gibson** of the National University of Ireland Galway, who spent many hours and persevered in selecting the papers and chasing authors with relentless energy, exchanging countless e-mails with contributors and with me. Putting together a special issue is a daunting task, and only the daring will do it more than once.

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