

Editorial

It is a privilege to open the nineteenth volume of this journal with a bumper issue on the Social Dimensions of Engineering Design. It is a comprehensive topic-touching every aspect of engineering education, both technical and social. It brings together authors from engineering and humanities faculties, representing sometimes divergent and critical views and approaches. Never before, have the social aspects of engineering design been more important for monitoring, checking as well as charting humanity's progress in quality of life related to technology. The interaction of technology, finances, marketing and time projections of new products with company plans has become so complex, that unpredictable, as well as unfathomable mistakes can be made. I am recalling here the failure of the initial Mercedes baby A-model to stay upright in regular slalom tests.

The instability was found out by a motoring journal test and must have escaped the Mercedes engineers. Or was it the engineers? The model was withdrawn and extensively redesigned. It is now back on the market equipped as standard with an electronic stabiliser system.

How could a company as experienced and technically advanced ignore or overlook the simple laws of gravity? A number of possible reasons come to mind. The model had to be ready for the market by a certain deadline, the problem was not considered serious and the company launched the car for public consumption. Or, the engineers did recognise the fault but were forced by company accountants and the management to release the car for sale. It is quite feasible, that with the involved decision hierarchy of a large corporation irresponsible decisions can be made as individual objections are swamped by a chorus of players who are not involved in a particular consideration-in this case safety.

Of course-safety is just one aspect of social responsibility in designing new products—environmental, ecological and cost of vital products are others.

This issue is edited by Clive Dym and Langdon Winner. It is our second issue relating the exciting happenings at the Harvey-Mudd workshops-the previous issue being Design Education for the 21st Century (Volume 17, 4 & 5). The papers in this issue are revised, expanded and rewritten versions of the workshop papers.

My sincere thanks to the guest editors who are responsible for this-the largest issue of IJEE to date.

Michael Wald