From the President: a busy year ahead

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From the President

A busy year ahead

I'm writing this fresh from this year's IEHF's Ergonomics & Human Factors Conference in Southampton, where the President's year begins. And what a good conference it was; one of the best I have been to in a while.

On the one hand, it was nice to arrive to a reasonably comfortable hotel room, without needing to negotiate the phonebox sized, all-in-one, sink, shower and WC cubicle found in student rooms at University conferences. As one delegate elegantly put it to me over breakfast, "There's a novelty about being able to shower and shave without moving from the spot, but I'm getting far too old for that."

The conference is a major activity in the Institute's calendar. We need it to be of value to our members and it is a big ticket item of financial turnover. The Institute can ill-afford the cost if the event fails to break even.

With this in mind, the small group who organise the conference made real efforts this year to bring in new ideas, experimenting with different formats, aiming to invigorate the programme and provide something of quality for everyone. Judging from the numbers and the buzz among delegates I'd say the organisers are on to something.

If you missed the conference this year, do look out for the next one from 13th to 16th April 2015 in the Midlands.

Reflecting on becoming President, it feels very much like I have grown up professionally with the Institute. I joined in 1982/83 as a final year undergraduate student, primarily thinking about finding a job. I attended my first annual conference in 1984 in Exeter, with a paper based on my final year project in the proceedings. My experience at this first conference was so good that counting up the copies of Contemporary Ergonomics (now Contemporary Ergonomics and Human Factors) on my bookshelf, it looks like I've been to 28 now all told. I wonder who holds the record?

I was roped into joining the Membership Committee in the early 90s, somewhat reluctantly, after I finished my PhD. This led me to chair PAB and then Council.

I have given a good deal of time to the Institute over the years, but this has been more than rewarded with the friendships and other professional support and opportunities that have stemmed from this. I am glad to have got involved and very grateful to where it has led.

It is also a privilege to become President at this time. The Institute has the prospect of celebrating a Royal Charter. We will be appointing a new Chief Executive to succeed Dave O'Neill, who is stepping down later this year. We also have the task of drawing up a strategic plan to guide the Institute's activities to 2020, being clear about our purpose and priorities.

I feel it could be a busy year!