From the President:  
**promulgating the science**

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From the President

Promulgating the science

Ergonomics or, if you prefer, human factors, is both a profession and a scientific discipline. The science being there to provide knowledge and evidence in support of the practical aim of optimising human interaction with products, equipment, environments and systems. There are two primary research strands: (i) advancing understanding of relevant aspects of human function, attributes, capabilities and limitations and (ii) developing and evaluating tools, techniques and strategies needed to utilise this knowledge. Academic journals are the lifeblood of scientific endeavour and our discipline is underpinned by several high quality international publications. Amongst these, Ergonomics has been around the longest, approaching its 60th year. It’s currently my considerable privilege to be the journal’s lead editor.

As well as their role disseminating science, the journals Applied Ergonomics and Ergonomics are an important source of revenue for the Institute, supporting its other activities. As co-owner of both titles, IEHF receives substantial royalties from the publishers, a major element of our income. On the editorial side, Ergonomics receives 350 or so manuscripts each year of which around 120 make it through to publication. It’s quite a task for the team of editors to put the papers through peer review and reach decisions on the submissions, all within an average time from submission to first decision of six to seven weeks.

Although EHF is an applied discipline with a focus on addressing real world problems, there is still a tension between drivers in academia leading to research for research sake and practitioners looking for research with utility. This is nothing new, with EHF historians indicating it to be a source of disquiet since the 1960s. Looking back, however, at editions of Applied Ergonomics and Ergonomics from 30 to 40 years ago, the content does feel much closer to practice than nowadays, with more of a dialogue between the two. Ergonomics asks authors to consider the relevance of their studies, requiring succinct practitioner summaries, which then go on to be published in this magazine each month. It’s notable how many authors struggle to explain the point of their research in this way. Ergonomics continues to work on this and has other initiatives in train which we hope will help bridge the research-practice gap. As of 2015, our new membership package will offer online access to our journals past and present. Readers interested in looking back at how things have changed over the years will soon be readily able to do so.

It is appropriate for me to end this month by remembering Dr Ivan Brown who died recently. As well as a term as Chair of Council of the Ergonomics Society in the 1970s and becoming its first President in 1982, Ivan made another significant contribution as General Editor of Ergonomics from 1975 to 1980.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

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