Y. Ian Noy
President, 1997-2000

In my candidacy speech at the Tampere Council meeting during the NES Congress in 1997, I indicated my desire for two important initiatives. These were based on insight of the IEA that I gained having served on the IEA Executive for the previous 14 years, first as Chair of Policy and Planning Committee (1983-1991) and then as Treasurer (1991-1997). The first was to create a strategic plan that would pave the way for enhancing the role of the IEA as the internationally-recognized authority on ergonomics. With the new millennium approaching, the time was ripe for a fundamental re-examination of our goals, objectives and activities (beyond the triennial Congress) with a view to positioning the Association to be able to respond effectively to the changing needs of federated societies, the discipline and society as a whole. Additionally, the work of the Association was growing beyond our capacity and we needed to prioritize our goals. We also needed to think outside the box and explore new ways to achieve our objectives. The second major initiative was to involve the member societies more directly in the work of the IEA. We needed to find ways to involve societies more meaningfully in the various activities being organized on their behalf by the Executive.

In the course of my term as president a number of other opportunities and challenges arose, as they invariably do, and we pursued a variety of important initiatives aimed at promoting the discipline within the developed world and in industrially developing countries while at the same time modernizing the way we functioned. We also began to document the history of the IEA and establish our formal archives. It was a very busy time for the IEA. I look back with satisfaction at the tremendous amount of work we achieved, largely through a shared sense of purpose and cooperation. The accomplishments of the IEA during my presidency that come most readily to mind are enumerated below.

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- Developed definitions for the discipline of ergonomics and its domains of specialization. Concerned over growing ambiguity over what ergonomics and human factors was about, partly due to regional differences in focus and approach, I felt a compelling need to clarify the field and promote understanding and communication within the ergonomics community as well as with professionals and lay people outside the field. This was a highly controversial initiative that, because of divergent philosophical views marked by different linguistic preferences around the world, stimulated intense intellectual debate and demanded a great deal of effort and compromise to arrive at an international consensus. What was truly remarkable and healthy from my perspective was the level of engagement by individuals and societies. The consensus building process, by creating dialogue and collaboration, was as important as the tangible product of our deliberations.
- Together with the IEA Council, we developed the first comprehensive strategic plan. This plan took about two years to develop and served as a template for the IEA in subsequent terms. I was especially pleased that the development of the strategic plan engaged the federated societies of the IEA in a participatory

process. This approach resulted in a plan which truly reflected the range of interests and views of the ergonomics community

- Introduced Council workshops to engage member societies in the work of the IEA and to facilitate international dialogue on the issues of the day. These workshops were instituted to supplement the business agenda of the annual Council meetings as a means to promote high-level discussions on topics of scientific or professional interest and to encourage members to interact more closely on matters of substance
- Through an initiative of Liberty Mutual Insurance, created the coveted IEA-Liberty Mutual Prize and Medal in Occupational Safety and Ergonomics to recognize individuals whose research efforts contributed to the reduction or mitigation of work-related injuries.
- Produced the first comprehensive Triennial Report that showcased the IEA to outside stakeholders such as other organizations, the media, etc.
- Restructured subcommittees to align with IEA priorities
- Together with HFES, we planned what was to be the largest IEA Congress for many years to come, with a planned attendance of 3,000 participants. Special initiatives, such as the Presidents' Forum, were planned to encourage interaction among the various leaders of ergonomics societies. We also held strategic meetings with WHO, ILO and sister organizations such as ICOH to explore new collaborative opportunities.
- Reconstructed the web-site in conjunction with ErgoWeb to be more informative and user friendly
- Progressed efforts to create the Federation of European Ergonomics Societies (FEES) to influence the European Commission on matters related to ergonomics research and education
- Initiated plans for the establishment of an IEA office, although this was not fully implemented during my term of presidency. It appeared necessary to begin planning for permanent, albeit temporary, office and staff to handle the growing administrative burden and to provide the support and stability necessary for the effective functioning of the IEA

It is also worth noting that we became concerned over lack of growth and a declining number of volunteers at the level of national societies. To be sure the number of member societies grew over this period, but the new societies were small and the total number of ergonomists represented by the IEA reached a plateau. The lack of active volunteers reflected increased work pressures on the part of individuals as well as changing priorities among employment, family and community service responsibilities. However, I was convinced that the main reason for the lack of growth of the ergonomics community affiliated with the IEA was the nearly complete lack of infrastructure devoted to training and education in ergonomics. Most ergonomics training was (and still is) embedded within diverse academic departments such as psychology, engineering, medicine, anthropology, kinesiology and others. There were and continue to be very few university departments or faculties that provided degrees in ergonomics as a unique discipline or profession. Consequently, even affiliated ergonomists considered themselves, first and foremost something else (i.e., psychologists or engineers, etc.)

What was needed for the discipline to flourish were programs dedicated specifically to the science of ergonomics, and centres of scholarship in ergonomics. Alas, a project on which I did not manage to make much progress was aimed at influencing academic institutions to recognize the need and value of creating degree programs in ergonomics.

On a personal level, my presidency was perhaps the most rewarding experience of my life. I am grateful to the many people (on and off the Executive Committee) who inspired me with their passion and who supported me with their ideas. I cherish the memories, but more so I cherish their friendships.