

The INSTITUTION of ANALYSTS & PROGRAMMERS



CHARLES HOUSE, 36 CUMMINGTON ROAD, LONDON W13 9NH, ENGLAND
Telephone: 081-567 2118 Fax and messages 081-567 4372

INSTITUTION NEWSLETTER

September 1990

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Member,

At the end of last year I had the distressing duty of writing to all of you following the unexpected death of Mr. R. Charles, who, as General Secretary, was mainly responsible for creating the Institution as we know it today. His death left a huge hole in the management structure of the Institution which it has been difficult to fill, and many members have written expressing their concern about the future of the Institution without Mr. Charles at the helm. We have all been through a very difficult period.

Now at last I can tell you that we have found the man to succeed Mr. Charles, and that he took up his duties in a newly created post as Director General of the Institution on 1st July, 1990.

Mr. Michael Ryan is a professional civil engineer, now aged 53. He is married, and lives in West London with his wife and two teenage children. He also has two married daughters. I have known Mr. Ryan as a business associate for over 20 years, and he was a close personal friend of Mr. Charles. He has not previously been involved with the Institution, but I know from our extended discussions that he will bring energy and enthusiasm to his new job.

In recent years Mr. Ryan has worked as a consultant, specialising in the planning and control of very large construction projects. The Council felt he ought to find management of the Institution a comparatively simple task; nevertheless it is bound to take some time for him to find his feet and tackle the backlog that has built up since Mr. Charles' death. I would ask you all to give Mr. Ryan whatever support you can in the coming months.

Yours very sincerely,

D. COLVILLE WALLINGTON President.

CURRENT NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTION, BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

Firstly I should like to thank the President and other Members of the Council of the Institution, for their support during my initial few weeks as your Director General. Many members, also, have written or telephoned, and said some very kind and encouraging words. Thank you.

I should perhaps tell you a little more about myself. My professional background is basically in the construction business. At one time I was Chief Engineer for one of the major contractors, but for many years now I have been running my own consulting company. We work mainly in the project management field, for construction and also other kinds of projects. My experience of computers has been mainly with the giant project control systems used for offshore work. We also spent several years on a computerised cost estimating system for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Like my predecessor, I am in the fortunate position of having the kind of business that allows me to spend some of my time on other things that interest me. So when I was approached by the Council, I jumped at the chance to take over the management of the Institution. Initially this will be a part time appointment, but at the present rate of growth it should not be too long before the Institution needs a full time Director General, and when that happens I am committed to respond.

Mr. Charles was a very good friend who helped me in the past as he has helped many of you. He enjoyed a good lunch, and we would meet and he would tell me all about the Institution and his plans for it. I never thought that one day I should find myself as Director General.

Our new Secretary

My predecessor Mr. Charles was such a hard act to follow that the Council decided they needed two people to do the job. As Director General I have overall executive responsibility, but, I am glad to say, I can pass the routine work to our new Secretary, Mrs. Virginia Luckett. Virginia is a very well organised and helpful person, as I am sure many of you will soon find out for yourselves. Virginia's husband is a computer consultant, but Virginia's background is in marketing, and I am hoping she will help me with building up the public image of the Institution.

Telephoning the office

We receive a lot of telephone calls from members most days, and are concerned that occasionally people may ring us and get no reply. There are usually at least two people in the office, but there are times when, due to an unfortunate combination of circumstances (lunch breaks, holidays, illness etc.) there will be nobody to take your call.

With this problem in mind, and for the convenience of overseas members who sometimes find it difficult to call in normal office hours, the Institution has installed a telephone answering machine on a separate line (081-567 4379) which we also use for our fax machine.

Administration problems

The Institution's old offices in Twickenham had to close in July because the site is being redeveloped. It was agreed that everything would be moved to new premises in Ealing, and the Secretary and I would take up our duties all at the same time. The plan was to have just one lot of disruption, and to have it in the summer holidays when things are supposed to be fairly quiet.

In the event we have been fighting a backlog of problems stretching back several months, and this has highlighted shortcomings of the Institution's administrative systems. These difficulties have arisen mainly because in its early years when the Institution was growing rapidly, the systems were designed principally to facilitate recruitment.

Now of course the situation is rather different. The Institution is well established with a good body of long standing members; our systems need to be designed principally to service their needs. Recruitment will always be important, but it will absorb a progressively smaller proportion of our total administrative effort. Mr. Charles was well aware of this, and was in the process of completely reorganising the Institution's database and supporting systems. Unfortunately he died leaving the job unfinished and in a somewhat confused state.

I have decided that we should cut our losses and transfer everything to a new database. Hopefully this will be simpler to operate and do a number of useful things the old system was not designed to do. It will, for example, assist in the growing task of monitoring members' annual subscriptions. In the future it will greatly simplify the task of producing and operating a directory of members who offer consulting services. We will, for example, be able to locate people offering particular skills in a particular geographical area. This may sound rather basic, but it is something the old system was not designed to do.

Unfortunately the existing database has degraded somewhat, and it is necessary for the Secretary or me to go through our extensive hard copy filing system by hand, checking what we have on disc. The Institution keeps a correspondence file for every member, and all your letters are retained.

While we are attending to this the usual daily flood of letters from existing and prospective members continues. So please be patient with us: if things go wrong, we are working on it!

The future of the Institution

The Institution of Analysts and Programmers is already a success. Amongst our members we can number some of the world's top computer professionals. Membership of the Institution is deservedly recognised as a hallmark of professional competence and integrity. This is because we maintain our standards, as laid down by the Council.

However, the Institution needs to continue to grow for two main reasons. Firstly, a bigger Institution will be more visible and thus more influential, further boosting the prestige of existing members. Secondly, the attendant growth in income will allow us to employ more staff and, due to the economies of scale, greatly to improve services to without the need for an attendant increase in Subscriptions beyond the rate of inflation.

There are three areas where I see an urgent need for improvement. The Institution receives a large volume of mail from members. A lot of this is routine, and hopefully a streamlined administration system will allow it to be handled with a minimum of staff input. But we also receive requests for help and advice on a staggeringly broad front. Some of the problems are extremely difficult to resolve, being sent to us, we suspect, only after everyone else the member knows has tried and failed. In my view the Institution should be the place where the buck stops, but to provide this quality of service we shall need to be able to mobilise expert support.

The second area where I know more time is urgently needed is in liaison with the increasing number of universities, colleges and other establishments offering training courses specifically designed to qualify students for membership of this Institution. This is an important task, and I want you to know that it will be one of my top priorities.

A significant proportion of our calls from individual members concern jobs or salaries. We even get calls from prospective employers! One of the main purposes of the Institution is to help members better themselves, not merely in the academic field but also in a more immediate sense. As a professional body, the Institution cannot be seen to align itself with crude commercialism. But this is the third area where I feel perhaps we could do something more than we are doing now, and that it would be in members' interests for us to try.

Directory of members

I realize that a new directory is long overdue, and that to most members it is one of the most valuable benefits the Institution provides, after membership itself. Mr. Charles was working on a new and much more comprehensive directory, which would have been sent out at the beginning of the current year.

Production of a directory involves a large input of staff time and other resources. Each issue has to last for at least 2 years, so it is important that when it is produced the information is as complete and up-to-date as we can make it. It is not practical now to start on a new directory until the current snapshot of our database is completed, probably early in 1991. But be assured that I appreciate the urgency of this task. In the meantime please ensure that we have your latest address, plus any updated information you would like us to include in the Consultants' section.

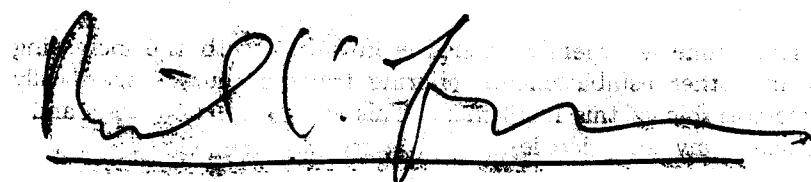
Institution Journal

My commission from the Council is to get the Institution onto a self financing basis, so that our growth is not dependent on a subsidy. This may take a little time, but eventually we should be in the happy situation where we can do anything we like, provided it is within our financial resources.

I would like the Institution to produce a good quality journal, and members often write asking when we are going to do something about it. There are two big problems. Firstly our members are widely spread, across all sectors of industry, commerce and the public services, and they live all over the world. It is hard to see what kind of publication (except perhaps a very large one) would have something in it to interest them all. Secondly, the production, printing and distribution of a journal worthy of the Institution would be beyond our present resources.

If we had a lot more members I am sure both these problems could be overcome. With a large readership it should be possible to vary income from advertising, possibly to the point where the journal paid for itself. With only three thousand members it is a more difficult problem, but I would be interested to hear from anyone who thinks he or she might have an answer.

I must apologise that this Newsletter has been so long in coming. I know many members have been anxious to hear what has been going on, but everything is back on track, and I shall be writing to all of you again at Christmas time, when we distribute the Institution diaries. In the meantime I wish you well.



MICHAEL C. RYAN Director General