

Editorial

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Several series of conferences and symposia are organised on a regular basis to cover fire safety science and fire safety engineering. These include the Interflam conferences, the IAFSS symposia and the International Seminars on Fire and Explosion Hazards. They attract papers covering the entire range of topics that fall within the field of fire safety and provide the opportunity for scientists working in different aspects of the subject to learn of the progress that is being made in areas of which they have less experience. This is very beneficial to the development of "Fire Safety Engineering" as a holistic engineering discipline, but there is insufficient time available at these events to explore in depth each subject within the broader field.

Conferences that are organised around one material such as steel or concrete often dedicate one session to the behaviour of the material under fire conditions. The specialists attending such sessions are very often small in number and their presentations do not receive wide exposure.

For this reason, the need emerged to organise a workshop specifically dedicated to the behaviour of structures in fires. The first event was a workshop "Structures in Fire", organised quite informally in 2000 at DIFT in Copenhagen, and the general impression of the delegates was very positive. The second and third workshops were held at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2002 and at the National Research Council in Ottawa, Canada, in 2004. The success of these meetings can be judged by the increasing numbers in attendance.

The Fourth Workshop was organised in May 2006 by the Department of Civil Engineering of the University of Aveiro. It proved to be a landmark in the development of this series of meetings because the numbers of delegates and papers presented exceeded the totals of the three first workshops. From the 133 abstracts that were received, 91 technical papers were published in the proceedings after selection by the Scientific Committee: 25 on Steel, Stainless Steel and Aluminium Structural Members, 6 on Steel Connections, 8 on Composite Structures, 13 on Structural Behaviour, 21 on Concrete Structures, 9 on Timber Structures, 5 on Fire Safety Engineering in general and 4 on various other topics.

At the end of the workshop, the delegates were given the opportunity to vote for the selection of the 10 best papers to be presented for possible publication in a special edition of Fire Safety Journal. These papers then followed the normal procedure of peer review for the Journal and are presented here. The complete proceedings of the conference can be downloaded from <http://www2.civil.ua.pt/Downloads/Downloads.asp>.

The 5th Workshop will be organised in Singapore from 28th to 30th May 2008 by the Nanyang Technological University, see <http://www.ntu.edu.sg/cee/sif-08/index.htm>. It will take the form of a conference but the same principles that formed the style of the SIF workshops will be maintained, namely the possibility to present very recent information by an abstract submitted as late as 5 months before the meeting, a paper copy of the proceedings available on the day of the conference, and time allowed for discussion after each presentation.