

Book Review

Richard Pieper, Marja Vaarama, James L.Fozard, editors, 2002. *Gerontechnology: Technology and Aging - Starting into the Third Millenium*. Aachen: Shaker. 332 pp. ISBN 3-8322-0895-X. €35.—

The book may also be obtained through the ISG office, e-mail: l.g.h.koren@tue.nl

The Proceedings of the 3rd International Congress on Gerontechnology held in Munich, Germany in 1999 have been divided in four parts: (i) The field of Gerontechnology, 8 papers; (ii) Design in Gerontechnology, 9 papers; (iii) Physiological, Psychological, and Medical Issues, 12 papers; and (iv) Technology and the Social Environment, 8 papers. These sections provide a view of active research issues in Gerontechnology and at the same time represent the views of the editors as to what parts of the wide and very interdisciplinary field could be seen as fruitful subdivisions. The book has an author index but no subject index.

The first section is the more general one. It starts with Richard Pieper's keynote question: 'The paradigm of Gerontechnology: a philosophy, a science, a technology, or a practice?' He illuminates the different faces of the field and sketches the development in the nineties by comparing the Munich conference with the proceedings of the two earlier conferences in Helsinki, 1996, and Eindhoven, 1991. One of his conclusions is that the characteristics of the interdisciplinary field have evolved. It is intriguing to project this view now onto the program of the 4th international Gerontechnology conference in Miami in November 2002. The keynote does not end before considering the ethical dimension of gerontechnology, touching on the important issue of the responsibility of scientists and designers, to direct the content of their work toward the good of society rather than developing it for its own sake, or worse.

Looking backwards in reflection finds its counterpart in Jim Fozard's: *The future of Gerontechnology*: "What a wonderful world". Starting with UN Kofi Annan's statement at the international year of the older person: 'creating an enabling environment for healthy life styles', the content of the field is firmly sketched including the important themes within the main domains of daily life. Also, the types of advantage are indicated that are envisaged for the older persons, not the least because of their improved enabling environments. The infrastructure built for Gerontechnology makes one anxious to see the future progress, but: "They 'll learn much more than I'll ever know..." as Louis Armstrong sung long ago.

In between these two visionary papers, valuable views are provided on general themes of Gerontechnology such as social perspectives, user interfaces, education, work, and ethics.

Section ii is devoted to the third item of the R.D.&D triad: Research, Development, and Design. For gerontechnology, design is as important as the other two, and includes elements of the creative arts next to functionality and economy. User involvement is an important issue here, not only because younger designers may be missing insight in ageing human functions, but also because existing knowledge and experience must be completed by real experiences of real users in real environments. Transgenerational design is one of the options that are being tried, both useful and insufficient. Section iii concentrates on developmental issues in older age and technological options for compensation of quite a few decreasing physical functions: the more classic section of Gerontechnology. Section iv takes the perspective of the social sciences, concentrating on satisfaction, mobility and transport, and, as encompassing value of old age in particular: quality of life.

The book provides a rich spectrum of ongoing activities and ongoing reflection on the interplay between developments in society stemming from demography and developments stemming from technology. Fascination by these two mainstreams in society, usually so far apart but here so close and intertwined, is radiated throughout this valuable volume that fortunately has now appeared.

Herman Bouma
e-mail: heebouma@xs4all.nl

ISG BUSINESS

Fourth International Congress on Gerontechnology is a Success!

The presentations were inspiring...the collegiality was pleasurable...the surroundings were beautiful...by all accounts the Fourth International Conference held in Miami in November 2002 was a great success!

One of the unique characteristics of the Gerontechnology Congress is its international flavor. There were 172 attendees at the congress representing: Brazil, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and 20 of the United States.

The scope of the topics covered at the congress illustrates the breadth of the topic of gerontechnology. This is exemplified by the keynote addresses as were published in the congress issue of this Journal, Gerontechnology 2(1): Life-Long Learning, Technology Based Caregiver Research, Aging and Technology in Brazil, Mobility and Safety, the Older Worker, Elderly and Computers, Assistive Technology, Global Networking Dynamics, and Smart Home Technology.

Gerontechnology is a multidisciplinary field focusing on effectiveness in creating technological environments for innovative and independent living and social partici-

pation in good health, comfort, and safety. An important function of ISG international congresses is to enable the exchange of ideas amongst people from different countries as well as across disciplines and work contexts. Attendees at the congress were employees of universities, national funding agencies, private industries, nursing homes, research centers, and medical facilities. These individuals represented the disciplines of architecture, computer science, engineering, ergonomics, gerontology, human factors, management, medicine, nursing, psychology, psychiatry, rehabilitation engineering, robotics, and telecommunications. These facets represent the essence of the International Society for Gerontechnology (ISG).

Tremendous efforts are required for a conference of this scope to be successful. We offer our thanks to all of the people who contributed in so many ways to this meeting including all of the presenters and attendees. Thanks especially to Darnella Campbell, Betty McGehee, and Tracy Bestor from the Florida State University Center for Professional Development. We especially appreciate the hard work of the student/research associate volunteers (you may remember these folks who were there to assist with audiovisual needs, session timing, and overall support). From Florida State University: Patricia Holley and Tiffany Jastrzembski; from the University of Miami: Trinidad Argüelles, Chin Chin Lee, and Mario Hernandez; and from Georgia Institute of Technology: Travis Bowles, Jamye Hickman, Anne McLaughlin, Tim Nichols, Rich Pak, Julian Sanchez, and Aideen Stronge. Also, thanks to Beth Charness for all her support (and feeding) of the Program Committee.

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