

## ISG\*ISARC2012 of June 2012 in short

The combined forces of ISG (International Society of Gerontechnology) and the ISARC organization (International Symposium on Automation and Robotics in Construction) resulted in a successful world conference with 362 presentations and an attendance of 368 delegates from 32 different countries. Acceptance percentage of presentations amounted to 86%. Of 110 presentations not only an abstract could be published but also the full paper after successful peer-review<sup>1</sup>. As many as 106 peer reviewers assisted the organizers. By January 21, 2013, more than 32,000 visitors were counted at the conference website<sup>2</sup>.

Special events included a Gerontechnology ART exhibition by Jacqueline Hillen (France), the Tucker-Hasegawa awards for excellence in Robotics and Automation in Construction bestowed upon Pär Åhman (Sweden) and Koshy Varghese (India), and the ISG Grandmaster title that was presented to Herman Bouma (The Netherlands) during the presidential symposium. In addition 2 best poster awards, 4 best paper awards and 3 best Sweet Dining Design awards were earned by the delegates. An ISG Master class for young researchers and designers preceded the conference.

### References

1. <http://gerontechnology.info/index.php/journal/issue/view/gt.2012.11.02.000.00>; retrieved January 21, 2013
2. [www.isg-isarc2012.org](http://www.isg-isarc2012.org); retrieved January 21, 2013

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## Productive exchange at ISG\*ISARC2012

For the first time the 2-yearly international conference of the ISG has been combined with another technical discipline: automation and robotics in construction. Exchanges between the two domains appeared especially lively and fruitful during moderated poster-and-prototype events that took place at prime time in between coffee break and lunch time. Engineers, gerontologists and physicians of all sorts discovered their common grounds and taught each other. A clear similarity existed, technically speaking, between a robot handing over a cup of tea at home without spilling, and a robot placing a window frame correctly on a construction site. And how small is the difference between monitoring the whereabouts of floating objects in a sewer tube, and of persons in a room? Conference tracks, such as 'Information technology', 'Robotics', 'Work – Leisure – Volunteering', 'Housing – Building – Daily living' and 'Communication – Management – Governance' contained several contributions from both ISARC and ISG delegates.



In contrast, the tracks 'Automation' and 'Application systems – Realities' were mostly devoted to the construction industry, while 'Health – Comfort – Self-esteem' and 'Mobility – Transport – Travel' had a strong gerontechnology taste<sup>1</sup>.

The plenary keynotes were attended by delegates from both domains and showed clearly future trends and societal concerns. Symposia became micro worlds in which viewpoints from different domains came along, presenters and participants formulated new scientific challenges together, with researchers and students broadening their understanding. Free communications came in 9 to 11 simultaneous sessions and were usually attended by a smaller but strongly interested audience. For the future, we recommend more combinations of conferences that are technically speaking much related, but culturally far apart. It will foster out-of-the box thinking in science as well as the creativity needed to solve current societal problems such as the adaptation to demographic, cultural and climatic change.

Of course, it has been a challenge to organize a conference in which both domains are integrated, and although we knew this from the start, resistance was stronger than expected. It had not only to do with differences in habits and format. Multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and integral are commonly used adjectives when describing endeavors expected to be successful in the future, but it still proved hard to get ourselves and our colleagues out of their comfort zones to cross the borders of their own (mono)discipline. The fact that we tried, and were at least partly successful makes the conference even more valuable for the participants and satisfactory for the organizers.

### References

1. <http://gerontechnology.info/index.php/journal/issue/view/gt.2012.11.02.000.00>; retrieved January 21, 2013

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