

Welcome to ISG 2014 on Taiwan

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'Cultural and social diversity in Gerontechnology' is the theme of the 9th World Conference of the International Society for Gerontechnology scheduled for June 2014 on Taiwan.

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the 9th World Conference of the International Society for Gerontechnology, ISG 2014 on Taiwan!

As a professor in mechanical engineering, I was asked many times: "How did you get involved in gerontechnology?" I prefer to see myself as a mechanical designer. For me, gerontechnology is actually a design field. I love this definition by the International Society for Gerontechnology (ISG): "Gerontechnology: designing technology and environment for independent living and social participation of older persons in good health, comfort and safety."

While design tasks in industry often focus on designing components or systems to meet certain technical specifications, gerontechnology emphasizes designing for people. People are of great diversity. Gerontechnology product/service design requires a broader view than technology alone.

Understanding the users, the changes in physical and psychological conditions, the interaction with the environment, as well as understanding cultural and social differences in providing that internal motivation for older adults and their caregivers to use the gerontechnology product/service, are all important design tasks.

With the main theme 'Cultural and social diversity in Gerontechnology', ISG 2014 is not a pure technical conference. Roughly half of the papers in ISG 2014 present research from gerontology, social sciences and even business prospective, with implications on the design needs of gerontechnology products/services.

Gerontechnology product/service designs are often need-driven rather than technology-driven. ISG conferences and journals have a long tradition of using needs of older adults rather than technological fields to classify tracks of papers. In ISG 2014, we maintain the five tracks including health & self-esteem, housing & daily activities, communication & governance, mobility &

transport, work & leisure, as well as a special track for ISG Sinophone Chapter dedicated to the current issues and development of gerontechnology in the Sinophone World.

The technology part in gerontechnology is also interdisciplinary in nature. In the paper 'Gerontechnology in perspective' published in the Gerontechnology Journal back in 2007, Bouma, Fozard, Bouwhuis and Taipale listed the disciplines of related technology: Chemistry and biochemistry, architecture and building, communication and information, mechatronics and robotics, design and ergonomics, and business management. It also states: "Management science has established itself as an indispensable enabling discipline to bring the fruits of technology to the global market place, and ensuring that the products, services, and infrastructures are realized". Gerontechnology is not just about academic research.

In addition to keynote speeches, symposia and regular oral sessions, ISG conferences have two special types of presentations emphasizing the realization of gerontechnology research into products/services. "Leading Edge Technologies" is designed for interactive demonstrations of the well-tested prototypes of products or services, while "GeronTechno Platform" features demonstrations of newly-developed products with target end-users through interactive exhibitions. Besides, ISG 2014 is held along with SenCARE (Taiwan International Senior Lifestyle and Health Care Show) and MEDICARE (Taiwan International Medical & Healthcare Exhibition), the two major annual trade fairs in related fields organized by Taiwan External Trade Development Council, which opens the doors to audience from the industry.

In the long process of preparing for ISG 2014, I often imagine this event as the "Olympics" in the field of Gerontechnology -- sharing, exchange, growing, and maybe some competition. With that thought, I am proud to present to you this conference issue of Gerontechnology, which represents the state-of-the-art of the field of gerontechnology in 2014.