

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2003

I have had the privilege of serving as President of the IFMBE for the last 3 years. Most professional organizations limit the term of officers, and particularly that of the President to one or, at most, two years. While a 3-year term is long and very demanding, it has the advantage of enabling the President to implement a reasonable number of strategic objectives, which would be extremely difficult if the appointment were for a shorter duration. Even so, my ability to advance the objectives of the Federation has not been possible without the support and help of the officers and the council members, for which I am immensely grateful.

I would like to use this opportunity to touch upon the important advances in the last three years for which the Federation can be most proud. The most important milestone in our recent history was the acceptance of the International Union for Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine (of which we are members) into the International Council of Science (ICSU). It has taken close to two decades of hard work and considerable efforts before our contributions to science and to health were accepted by the most prestigious scientific umbrella organization. Our admittance to ICSU also represents the true maturing of our profession and our acceptance as equals in the global scientific establishment.

The other important accomplishment was the establishment of the European Alliance for Medical and Biological Engineering and Science (EAMBES). Supported by the IFMBE, the European national societies have been working on the creation of a European Alliance, which will represent the interests of the biomedical engineering community that are unique to Europe. The formation of this Alliance has been endorsed by almost every European national society as well as some trans-European organizations. It is expected that by "speaking with one voice" the Alliance will gain increased influence with the European Commission and the European Parliament and be able to effectively represent the interests of the biomedical engineering community. We are waiting for the EAMBES to become a member of IFMBE. The IFMBE would like to see similar entities formed in other regions of the world to give strength to our colleagues by creating a larger representation and a larger voice than is possible in a single country.

An important event that took place in the United States is beginning to have influence in other countries. During the last days of the year 2000, the United States Congress passed legislation to create a new Institute for Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIH is the major Federal Government Agency that funds biomedical research in the United States. This legislation is already having profound implications for the future of biomedical engineering in the United States and will eventually impact the profession all over the world as other governments recognize the uniqueness of our profession and its importance to health and health care as well as to the economy of the country.

Thanks to a vigorous committee on publications, the IFMBE has recently launched a new Conference Proceedings Series. We would like to be able to include all our regional

conferences, the World Congress and other conferences wishing to have sponsorship of the Federation in this Series. In addition to providing better visibility to our conferences, we also hope that the Series would generate income to the conference and to the Federation. The committee also prepared a document to provide conference organizers with guidelines on how to take part in the Series.

The Federation Journal, Medical and Biological Engineering and Computing, has undergone considerable improvements since Alan Murray became editor. It is attracting a larger number of manuscripts in new areas of biomedical engineering and has increased its standing in comparison with other publications in the field. We have initiated a multi-faceted project to increase the visibility of the Journal. We carried out a mass mailing to libraries all over the world and last year we instituted free access to the electronic version of our Journal. Free access is continuing for a while but will be terminated soon. We expect that people who were able to read articles using the free promotion, would either become subscribers to the journal or convince their library or their company to subscribe. Those of us who have not done so yet, are urged to help the Federation increase the subscription base.

The Federation Newsletter has a new appearance thanks to our new editor, Ratko Magjarevic. Ratko is working hard to attract material for the News, which now contains important articles and news items from our various national members.

Our Cellular Engineering working group has been very active. Dr. Artmann organized a very successful meeting in 2001 in Aachen, Germany. The 2003 meeting is being held in Sydney in conjunction with the World Congress. We are seeing an increase in the flow of manuscripts on cell and tissue engineering to the Federation Journal and our working group is continuing its efforts to maintain and increase the number of papers submitted for review.

We have established a new working group on Neuroengineering. Its activities, chaired by Karen Moxon, began with an email discussion whose purpose was to formulate a definition of the field. The group has identified two initial objectives: To raise awareness among the scientific and engineering community of the advances of neuroengineering and to examine the education structure of neural engineering programs and develop a set of recommendations. So far, the group's deliberations have taken place electronically. They have a face-to-face meeting during the Sydney Congress. In addition, there are sessions on neuroengineering taking place during the meeting.

During the last 3 years we have seen a succession of excellent IFMBE regional conferences: Medicon in 2001, and Nordic-Baltic, Asia-Pacific and EMBEC in 2002. We have also co-sponsored and endorsed a number of other conferences on biomedical engineering topics. We have clear guidelines for sponsorship of conferences and it is important that conference organizers are aware of these guidelines, which are part of our Policies and Procedures. This information should be conveyed especially to those conferences that are organized at regular intervals so that they can benefit from the endorsement or sponsorship of the Federation.

The IFMBE has added an award to recognize an individual who made outstanding contributions to the field. This award will be given for the first time in 2003. We now have 2 awards: the Otto Schmitt Award and the Vladimir K. Zworykin Award. In addition, the IFMBE is eligible to nominate a biomedical engineering for the IUPESM Merit Award. All awards are presented during the World Congress.

We have changed our logo. The new logo includes the wording “International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering”, which appear around the old logo. Individuals who see the logo for the first time, will no longer wonder what the acronym IFMBE stands for. The new logo, which now appears on our web site, will be part of all our publications and conferences.

The General Assembly, through mail ballot, approved a number of extremely important changes to the IFMBE Bylaws. The Council and the General Assembly are now allowed to use electronic mail instead of regular postal mail to conduct business and voting. The Federation will now be able to admit multiple societies from the same country, thus embracing more practicing biomedical engineers than in the past. On a number of occasions, we have experienced a situation in which a Council member became inactive in the Federation. The new bylaws now allow for replacement of this individual with a new Council member. Societies which do not pay their dues in time will lose their voting rights at the General Assembly and finally, the Federation will accept individual membership in countries where a professional society does not exist. Once a Society is formed and becomes a member of IFMBE, such individuals will forfeit their individual membership and be represented by the society.

We have accomplished much but there are many new challenges that face us as an organization. The IFMBE is a federation that forms an umbrella to unite national and trans-national societies. Except for very few individuals who are members of its International Academy, and potentially a few individuals who might become members under the new bylaw, IFMBE does not have individual members. This presents the first major challenge to the Federation namely, identifying individuals who will devote time and effort to the organization. We have been very fortunate in the past. Many of our best known and most respected biomedical engineers have volunteered their time to the betterment of our profession. As time demands on our colleagues constantly increase, so does the challenge to find both established and young engineers who recognize the importance of working for the Federation. I do hope that the tradition of dedication and service, established decades ago will be maintained by individuals in our member societies who are entering the profession and are learning about the importance of the Federation.

Dov Jaron, President.