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Afterword: the process of this memorial

The production of this memorial to Gordon Pask has taken both a considerable time and the effort, respect and love that are apparent in the many distinguished contributions. In closing this publication, we, the editors, believe it is appropriate to give a brief account for the record of the process by which this memorial was made.

Initiation and editorial team

Shortly after Gordon Pask's death (28 March 1996), Bernard Scott was invited by B. Gaines, editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies (IJHCS)*, formerly, the *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies (IJMMS)*, to act as guest editor for a special issue of that journal to be a memorial to – and celebration of – Gordon Pask's life and achievement. Connections were quite deep: Pask had been external examiner for Gaines' PhD; Gaines had been external examiner for Scott's PhD. Both PhDs were largely based in Pask's practical and theoretical work on adaptive teaching systems.

There was to be no restriction on the number of contributions nor on the length of individual articles. This honoured Pask's own practices: his journal articles (especially those appearing in the *IJMMS*) and conference papers were often mini-monographs, 50 or 100 pages in length.

Bernard Scott quickly recruited Ranulph Glanville to be co-editor. Both had been PhD students of Pask. Glanville brought with him the experience of having served as guest editor of two special issues of the journal *Systems Research*; one in honour of Gordon Pask (Plate 1), delivered in time for his official retirement (Pask's own copy was delivered by Santa Claus, in his Christmas stocking); the other honouring Heinz von Foerster (Glanville (Ed.), 1993, 1996). The editorial work has been divided: Bernard Scott has done the bulk of the administrative work, with Ranulph Glanville acting more as an editorial consultant providing support, experience, advice, enthusiasm and encouragement. A major plus of this joint working was that a larger number of potential contributors was identified than would

have been the case had either editor worked alone. Another was that when one ran out of energy, the other was there to provide impetus.



Plate 1 Gordon Pask (used with permission of Dr Robert Glück)

Invitations

It was decided that there should be, broadly, two different types of material. Accordingly, two distinct forms of invitation were sent out. One went to those who had known Gordon personally, soliciting personal reminiscences and tributes. The core message was:

As one of Gordon's friends and peers ... we would welcome something personal or anecdotal about Gordon and your relationship with him. This could be a relatively short piece ... Alternatively or in addition, you might wish to make a contribution that would take the form of a more formal academic paper. This could be a description or critique of Gordon's world or even an appraisal of his whole *oeuvre*. It might be a more direct account of your own work which includes a statement of how your work relates to, or draws inspiration from, that of Gordon. Or you might wish to combine the two, that is, combine something personal and something formal, into one document.

The second set went to scholars and researchers whom we believed were familiar with at least certain aspects of Pask's work and had drawn inspiration from it. The core message was:

We are looking for papers of high academic standard that draw their inspiration from Gordon's work. The contribution could be a direct description and appraisal of some particular aspect of Gordon's work or indeed an appraisal of his whole *oeuvre*. Alternatively, it could be a more direct account of your own work; including a statement of how your work relates to, or draws inspiration from, Gordon's work.

Authors were told that, in the case of all "formal" papers, contributions offered would be refereed, to ensure the highest standard of publication.

Contributions and refereeing

A total of 40 contributions were thus accumulated (see the Contents List), of which 15 are short tributes and 25 are substantial articles. Referees were, generally, drawn from the pool of contributors themselves (but not entirely so, depending on the area of interest covered). This choice of referees from within the project was both deliberate and intentional: the editors considered it crucial to use, as referees, those who were truly familiar with Pask's work in depth and were sympathetic to it. By

definition, the contributors fitted this bill. There were between two and five referees per article. Referees' comments were returned to authors to facilitate improvement: many papers were substantially modified in the light of these comments, and we are more than grateful to all those who acted as referees in helping us achieve a high standard of publication[1].

Contingencies

Memorials usually appear either rather soon after the commemorated's death, or with a certain delay. We chose to be deliberate in our actions, giving up the immediacy and sentiment of the moment of Gordon Pask's death in favour of a more matured consideration of his work resulting from a longer reflection. There were other factors, too, that have prolonged the process. We wanted to get as wide a range of contributors and coverage of areas and understandings as we could, so there were additions to the original list of contributors, the editors feeling a strong desire to be as extensively inclusive as possible, as the net spread wider. Our work conditions also altered: Scott changed jobs (and computers!) twice, Glanville took to commuting to Australia.

When the bulk of the material was assembled (December 1999), Brian Gaines no longer felt the Pask memorial issue fitted *IJHCS*'s editorial policy. Thankfully, a home was instantly found for the memorial here, in *Kybernetes*. We are, therefore, specially grateful to the editor-in-chief, Brian Rudall, who, as soon as he understood the nature of the project, agreed it was most fitting that a journal dedicated to cybernetics should honour the memory of a great and original cybernetician.

Range

The large number of high quality contributions to this collection covering such a wide range of topics is, we believe, extraordinary. It is a testament to the efforts of the authors, and we thank them profoundly. But it is, also and equally, testimony to Gordon Pask's stature. He was a giant – a multi-faceted giant. Few (most of them have a presence in these pages) could claim to know the full range of his interests and passions. It may not, then, seem surprising that he was often misunderstood and dismissed by those occupying narrower, more conventional positions. This memorial attempts, in the breadth of its authorship and the depth, quality and originality of its contributions, to at least provide some way into the full roundness of Pask's endeavours.

We hope that in reaching the end of this Afterword, you may have already discovered this for yourself – if you did not already know it!

Bernard Scott, Ranulph Glanville 15 March 2001

Note

1. 1.

We would like to apologise for some inconsistencies in the arrangement of contributions. Our intention was to arrange the papers alphabetically by their authors' last names but, as readers will no doubt have noticed, three entries were received at a late stage and thus feature, of necessity, at the very end of the second volume. In the case of Ernst von Glasersfeld's paper, human error has crept in. Instead of *G* for "Glasersfeld", as originally planned, his paper appears under *V* for "von". At the time of writing this note it is unfortunately too late to change

the running order, but we trust that such small aberrations will not detract from our readers' enjoyment of these two volumes of *Kybernetes*.

References

1.
Glanville, R. (Ed.) (1993), "A *Festschrift* for Gordon Pask", *Systems Research*, Vol. 10, p. 3.
2.
Glanville, R. (Ed.) (1996), "A *Festschrift* for Heinz von Foerster", *Systems Research*, Vol. 13, p. 3.