

Announcement

Professor Nigel Cross – Lifetime Achievement Award 2005☆



In 2004 the Design Research Society introduced their first Lifetime Achievement Awards for design research. The purpose of these awards is to celebrate the outstanding ability of individuals who have effected significant change in the development of design research, coupled with the determination to pursue their vision over a lifetime.

The first awards were presented to two of the pioneers of design research, Bruce Archer and John Chris Jones.

For 2005 the award was made to Nigel Cross, who is no less well known for his innovative

work over many years. He has had, indeed continues to have, a busy and fruitful academic life with extensive outputs.

Originally, Nigel took degrees in Architecture and Industrial Design Technology, and then a PhD in Computer Aided Design from UMIST in 1974.

He worked professionally in architecture for several years, where his design work included houses and apartments, office buildings, a sports centre and a library. He was then appointed as a Research Assistant at University College, London, and invited to return to UMIST as a Lecturer in Industrial Design Technology, before his long association with the Open University – first as a Lecturer in

☆ This is a shortened version of the address given by Professor David Durling, Chair of Design Research Society, in making the 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award.



Design, as head of department, and of course being awarded a personal Chair in Design Studies.

In the early 1990s he also held a part-time Chair in Design Methodology at the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering, at the University of Delft.

The esteem in which he is held may be gauged by invitations to six other, international visiting academic appointments: three in the USA (Yale University, California State Polytechnic University and North Carolina State University); two in Australia (University of Sydney and University of Technology, Sydney); and one in Malaysia (Malaysia University of Technology).

Nigel's research interests have lain principally in computer-aided design, design methodology and design cognition. In recent years, these interests have coalesced in research based on empirical studies of design activity, including examples of outstanding designers. His main concern is with understanding the nature of design ability, for application in education, methodology and computer support tools. In fact his PhD thesis was developed into a well-known book on computer-aided architectural design, *The Automated Architect*, published in 1977.

His involvement in design methodology resulted in him editing a book of the major papers in the field, *Developments in Design Methodology*. His later textbook *Engineering Design Methods* is still used widely around the world as a text for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses in engineering design and industrial design.

He has edited or co-edited several other books such as: *Design Participation*; *Design and Society*; *Design Methodology and Relationships with*

Science. His total publications list includes more than 120 items, plus numerous teaching texts for Open University courses, and he has planned and participated in BBC-OU TV and radio broadcasts, video and audio productions. Some of his books and papers have been translated and published in French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Italian, Hungarian, Korean and Japanese. A search of any university library in the world usually turns up several books of his authorship.

In 1991 he initiated the series of international workshops on design cognition, titled *Research in Design Thinking*. The first workshop was held in Delft. A second Delft workshop, on protocol analysis in design research, was published as *Analyzing Design Activity*. Subsequent workshops were held in Istanbul, Turkey, Cambridge, USA, and then once again in Delft. The sixth workshop, Expertise in Design, was held in Sydney, in 2003.

I have mentioned Nigel's long association with the Open University (OU). For those who are not so conversant with this unique university, it provides distance-education degree courses to some 200,000 students across the UK and, increasingly, Europe and the rest of the world. Nigel has chaired course teams and written or co-authored a number of key texts for undergraduate teaching through the OU, including '*Man-made Futures: Design and Technology*' which was the first Design course presented by the Open University in 1975.

These texts have had a wider, and perhaps little known, influence beyond the OU and its students. I remember well that, in the early 1990s when I was a quality inspector with FEFC in colleges of Further Education, that the OU design textbooks were often on course leader's shelves. They had taken these as the

model from which they would develop their own courses. They had done so because the OU texts were systematic, clear and understandable.

In 1997, at the OU, he initiated the expansion and change of name from *Design Discipline* to *Department of Design and Innovation*. The Department has one of the strongest research records in the Art and Design university sector in the UK, gaining the highest rating (grade 5) in national Research Assessment Exercises.

He has been active in other academic editorial roles, both nationally and internationally. He has served on many scientific and advisory Boards for major international conferences, and is frequently a referee for research project applications for Research Councils in the UK and abroad. He has long been involved in PhD supervision and examination, and has experience of over 30 examinations.

Nigel joined DRS shortly after it was formed in 1967, when he was a postgraduate student in John Chris Jones's Design Research Laboratory at UMIST. But DRS soon began to falter, mired in discussions on 'what is design?' 'what is research?', etc. By 1970 Nigel was fed up with the inaction and suggested to Chris Jones that they organise a DRS conference in Manchester. Chris was on DRS Council, and was able to get the proposal accepted. Nigel suggested the trendy topic of user participation in design, and so it became '*The DRS Conference on Design Participation*', held in Manchester in September 1971.

Chris Jones was able to attract some distinguished speakers such as Reyner Banham and Yona Friedman, and Nigel was able to attract some of his new colleagues in computer-aided design, such as Nicholas Negroponte, Chuck Eastman, Bill Mitchell and Tom Maver (all

then pioneers in one form or another of computer-aided design). They introduced several changes of conference format, and the conference was a great success, with a published book of proceedings.

During the conference, a meeting was held of those DRS members present, and they were able to draft a request to the then-secretary of DRS for a General Meeting which resulted in Nigel being elected to the secretary position, and a few other new people, such as Tom Maver, joining the Council. Tom organised the next conference, jointly with the USA Design Methods Group, on The Design Activity, held in London in 1973, and DRS was then well into one of its major periods of activity.

Nigel was also of course a co-founder of *Design Studies*. With Don Grant of the Design Methods Group, he started a joint DRS-DMG journal, *Design Research and Methods*, which continued for a few years until Tom Maver interested the publishers of the journal of *Computer Aided Design* in starting a new journal in collaboration with DRS, which was launched as *Design Studies* in 1979. Sydney Gregory was the first editor, with Nigel, James Powell, Reg Talbot and Barrie Evans as co-editors. This is now the leading international journal of design research, and he became its Editor-in-Chief in 1994.

He has remained active in the Design Research Society for many years, with periods as Secretary (1971–1974), Vice-Chair (1977–1980) and Chair (1980–1982). He remains a Council Member of the Society. Nigel was recently elected the first President of the newly formed International Association of Societies of Design Research (IASDR).

Nigel has, over a long period, helped shape design research through his teachings, his books

and many other publications, organisation of events, and as a significant gatekeeper of quality in his role as editor of the journal *Design Studies*. He continues to have influence on this Society in helping to position us as part of a growing international collaboration through IASDR. In his vision he is a beacon to us all.

For all these contributions, it is with great pleasure that the Design Research Society presents Nigel Cross with its 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Professor David Durling
Chair, Design Research Society