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Preface

The papers presented to this symposium describe large buildings and arenas around the world and some of the special considerations which these present for the large assemblies of people who make use of them.

Such large buildings and arenas are symbols of local and national pride and are usually expected to use the best current practices and if possible produce imaginative solutions. This implies competition between buildings having a similar purpose. Designers are attracted to ideas, methods and materials which offer opportunities to innovate. These innovations may result in visually stunning results, in even larger column free assembly areas, or in more economic results per unit of use.

IABSE has at its annual symposium drawn together international experience in the design, construction and maintenance of many different types of buildings and structures and these have provided valuable references as to the current state of the art in these types.

There are now increasingly numerous mega competitions, concerts, rallies and other assemblies where star performers can appear before large audiences. Airports in particular, but also railway stations, have to cater for rising numbers of users arriving and departing in the same time scales. Shopping malls and markets attract increasing numbers of people and more combustible merchandise in enclosed and interconnected areas.

Such buildings are now used in any weather conditions and in fact are particularly attractive when the weather rules out external alternative activities. The buildings have therefore to provide safe and comfortable conditions for large numbers when the external conditions may be at temperature extremes, very windy or precipitating rain or snow. In such extremes they may require the provision of superior cladding and large mechanical services to provide appropriate internal environments.

People in large areas require peace of mind and not have to consider the possibility of emergencies, whether emergencies are likely to arise, or how they will cope should they do so. So our places of assembly should anticipate safety of the people as much as safety of the building and structure. Signing of routes and exits, guide arrangements, removal of obstructions, non-slip flooring, adequate audio communication systems, emergency lighting should be provided. Active fire and smoke safety provisions should prevent the spread of these hazards, fight them at source and keep escape routes clear for emergency escapes. These safety provisions should consider the needs of the physically weaker users. People do not like items swaying above their heads.

Long-span structures may be reliant on the continuing integrity of individual structural members with no alternative load paths or reliant on the continuing integrity of a stressed skin membrane. In such cases the frequency and nature of maintenance and inspections must provide an adequate level of confidence to the owner, operator and licensing authority.



The papers presented to us describe exciting buildings and structures. Some have been in use and the experiences of use are being shared with us. Others are in the course of erection or recently completed and we shall benefit from learning how the challenges have been answered.

The public we serve take for granted the buildings and structures we conceive and provide for them but they are quick to condemn our shortcomings. By the exchange of experiences and ideas we hope to encourage confidence in them and us, so that we continue to design and build with imagination and safety.

Salisbury, July 1994

D W Quinion
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