



Focus

Handing over the watch

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This is the last opportunity to talk to you through the Focus section as a Director of the Institute and as Head of Publishing and Information. I am retiring after 13 years guiding the publications through sometimes stormy and sometimes calmer waters, and after 45 years in the maritime industry.

It’s not just my pending retirement that has prompted a reflective mood. I have also been editing a special book to commemorate the Institute’s 50th anniversary. Although my career is a little shorter than the Institute’s own history it’s close enough for many of the events I’ve seen chronicled to resonate.

Looking back over the last 50 years I can only admire the vision of the founding fathers – and they were all men – from those now seemingly far off days. The book charts how the Institute has changed down the years.

At the start the images are all of men of rather mature years from the UK merchant marine. And that was very much my experience in the early years of my career. I would always be the only woman at events and, when I started, no women were allowed on the trading floor of the Baltic Exchange. I know – I tried to access it one day and didn’t get very far!

However, the photographs and articles show that it took only a short time for the Institute to build its membership internationally. Now the photographs increasingly reflect the narrowing of the gender divide and the increasing participation of younger people. This has been given impetus by the foundation of the Younger Members’ Council.

As our designer, Phil McAllister, pointed out – it’s an impressive transformation and one the Institute should be proud of. And it is the members that make the Institute. Their drive to improve safety through the promotion of best practice, to exchange experiences and expertise, has made it the influential body it is today.

And it is the members that I wish to come to when I reflect on my time here guiding the publications. Their generosity in sharing what they have learned has ensured the books retain a practical appeal and therefore their influence.

And the generosity of spirit that the authors have shown in accepting peer review has also been crucial to the standing the publications have earned in the maritime world. Although it has to be said that a peer reviewer’s path is not always smooth and I have witnessed some robust discussions down the years! The publications have been all the better for it.

It is just not possible to pick out one author or peer reviewer from the many who have been involved in the tens of books I have brought to production. Several books involved at least 50 authors and peer reviewers and I have to thank the sterling work of Technical and Book Editors for helping to keep everything on track.

One door closes and another opens. I welcome Vivien Antwi to the Institute as she takes on the publications and information role. I know she will have your support. The Institute’s ambitions for the next four years are set out in the strategic plan. The debates and discussions at the 50th anniversary events will help set the scene for the next 50 years.

I will be at some of these events and hope to say goodbye in person to those who have been kind enough to send me messages. It has been an honour to serve the Institute in a small way. I wish you all the very best for the future! 🌐



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