It is with great sadness that we announce that Emeritus Professor HJ (Jack) Cowan, the world’s first Professor of Architectural Science and founding editor of the *Architectural Science Review*, died on Sunday the 15th of July 2007 in Sydney, Australia.

In the eulogy delivered at Macquarie Park, Australia, Rabbi Paul Jacobson offered these words: “Nestled within the pages of the Hebrew Bible is a beautiful story about King Solomon, the third King of Israel. Solomon was often known for overseeing the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, as well as for his sagely wisdom. One story in the Book of First Kings explains how he became so wise. One night, very early into his reign, God visited Solomon in a dream and asked, ‘What shall I grant you?’ Solomon’s reply was, ‘O Lord, my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David; but I am a young lad, with no experience in leadership. Your servant finds himself in the midst of the people you have chosen, a people too numerous to be numbered or counted. Grant, then, your servant an understanding mind to judge your people, to distinguish between good and bad; for who can judge this vast people of yours?’ (I Kings 3:7-9). God is rather pleased with Solomon’s request and grants his wish. Solomon is thus blessed with a discerning, thoughtful, wise mind.”

As Rabbi Jacobson continued, “This particular story of Solomon is beautiful in its own right and most appropriate when we consider it as a lens through which to view the life of Professor HJ Cowan, husband, father, grandfather, uncle, professor, teacher, researcher, colleague and friend of so many people. On one level, Jack was incredibly intelligent, a discerning and thoughtful man. On another level, he was beautifully modest, unassuming, and if God asked him, ‘What shall I grant you?’ we might imagine him saying with enthusiasm, ‘Knowledge, intellectual conversation, time with my family,’ and to these intangible, yet precious items, he might simply add, ‘A good bottle of red, some roast beef and the beautiful music of Mozart.’”

Henry Jacob Cowan, known to his colleagues around the world as Professor HJ Cowen, to his colleagues, staff and students at the University of Sydney as ‘Prof’, and to friends and family as ‘Jack’, was born on the 21st of August 1919 in Glogau, Silesia, a region of Germany that is now part of Poland. His father Arthur was a local doctor, and Jack and his family lived a traditional Jewish life. Jack was particularly fond of his father, whom he mentioned on many occasions throughout his life.

In 1934, when he was fifteen years old, Jack’s parents knew that their son would face grave danger if he remained on the mainland of Europe. Jack received a scholarship to Whittingehame College in Brighton, England, a school accustomed to offering scholarships to bright German Jewish boys, and went away to school. Later, he earned his first degree – a first class honours degree in Civil and Mechanical Engineering – from Manchester University, at only nineteen years of age, the youngest man ever to achieve such an honour. He proceeded to earn his master’s degree two years after that, in 1940. Throughout his time in university, Jack’s pursuit of knowledge defined his life. On many occasions, as he dedicated
himself tirelessly to his academic studies, he could not afford to buy himself a cup of coffee, and often he would subsist on only two hot meals per week.

New challenges arose in 1940. Many German men, including Jack, were interned as ‘enemy aliens’ and found themselves deported to Canada. Fortunately, Jack’s antecedents were cleared, and he was not found to be an enemy of the state. He was given a choice of staying in Canada, elsewhere in North America or returning to England. Many men decided to remain, but Jack was a man of great courage, and he returned to Europe, to join others in the struggle for a common cause.

Jack joined the Pioneer Corps, a group of released prisoners and refugee Jewish soldiers in 1941. When his sergeant learned that he was an engineer, Jack was appointed to the Royal Engineers’ Corps in 1942, and given the responsibility of defusing mines during the war. Jack and the Royal Engineers’ Corps went across Europe and cleared the mines ahead of the rest of the regiment.

Nevertheless, throughout all of his wartime trials and tribulations, Jack’s mind never stopped working. Before, in Canada, he had worked out in his mind what would become the subject of his
Given the reports from the continent, it seemed as if this terrible accident saved him from an even worse death. After being honourably discharged from military service and recovering from his injuries, Jack's first occupation outside of the military saw him venture into industry. However, once he realised that "punching a time clock was not for him," he decided to pursue an academic career. What became an illustrious career as a professor began slowly. In 1946, he accepted a position as PhD. Moreover, when going through Belgium with the Royal Engineers' Corps, Jack noted lovely places like cathedrals and other buildings that he intended to come back and visit, under better circumstances.

However, Jack's ventures through Europe would come to a halt on the 1st of January 1945. Outside of Eindhoven, Netherlands, a mine exploded, and Jack's hearing and sight were damaged. He was returned to England and it took him months to recover.
Assistant Lecturer at the University of Cardiff in Wales, teaching many war veterans. By 1949, he was serving as a Lecturer at Sheffield University in England.

Fortunately though, Jack was not ‘all business’ when it came to his studies and teaching. During his time at Sheffield University, Jack first encountered Renate, a woman who would become his wife and life partner for the next fifty-five years. In the middle of 1951, both Jack and Renate were moving on from previous relationships, both seeking further professional development, Jack in academia and Renate in nursing. Renate recalled that Jack chased her up and down the hills of Wales. On the 23rd of June 1952, Jack, a lecturer, and Renate, now a qualified nurse, were married in the registry office, a low-key affair with seven good friends present. Less than a week later, Renate and Jack celebrated another remarkable accomplishment – award of Jack’s PhD from Sheffield University.

Both Jack and Renate had suffered through tough experiences in their lives. After seeing his wife’s family decimated, and his family forced to leave Germany, both wanted stability, and an opportunity to rebuild. Jack’s parents, sister and her husband were able to leave Germany, but for different parts of the world, and none of them lived in the same country as Jack again.

As Rabbi Jacobson said, one might surmise, based on these details of Jack’s life, that he would have addressed these needs pragmatically. However, one significant “leap of faith” changed his life and his immediate family’s lives forever. Shortly after their wedding, Jack informed Renate of a Chair at the University of Sydney in Architectural Science. On the 1st of January 1954, Jack and Renate relocated to Sydney. Professor HJ Cowan became the Australasian Foundation Professor of Architectural Science, and to the best of our knowledge, held the first chair of Architectural Science anywhere in the world. He certainly defined the term and the field.

From the moment of their arrival at the University of Sydney, Jack’s career blossomed. Over the years, he became a highly distinguished Professor, focusing on understanding, first, the structures of tall buildings as well as torsion and concrete in its prestressed and reinforced forms. He moved more generally to other aspects of the quickly expanding field of architectural science, and built a department and series of laboratories that were on the cutting edge of architectural science not only of structures and concrete, but also of building science including materials, illumination, thermal systems, building services, building climatology and later audio and acoustics.
As Professor, Jack Cowan not only taught degree students, he was equally concerned with the extension of education for professionals in practice. The Architectural Science Review (ASR) originated more than 50 years ago from a collection of essays gathered from extension courses for practising architects he had initiated. After accepting the Chair in Architectural Science at Sydney, he initially had little support. The story of the founding of ASR is etched with his tenacious battles against obstacles, the courage to break through the then jealously guarded borders of disciplines and professions, the ability to employ loyal staff and to turn a difficult situation into an opportunity. Coupled with an enduring passion for the inter-relationship of the history of architecture and technology – he set about enriching the body of knowledge – and knowledge especially based on scientific study – held by architects.

A few years ago, Jack reflected on his foundation Chair, and wrote in these pages that the idea of a Chair of Architectural Science originated with the Royal Institute of British Architecture in the early years of World War II, “When it became clear that the reason for Britain holding out against Hitler was its superior radar, Spitfire and so forth. Never before or since has science been held in such high esteem in Britain,” he said. The War saw rapid developments in most technologies, including the realisation in the UK that architecture needed a strong research base and education in the sciences and technologies of building. “The RIBA set up a Science Committee which reported that architects risked losing the leadership in the building industry unless they learnt more science. Its solution was to create chairs of architectural science.” The idea spread to Australia, where the first such chair was opened, which Jack was invited to hold.

“I was a lecturer in reinforced concrete in England before I got the chair, and I acquired an international reputation for research as a result of my PhD project. It included a theory for the torsional resistance of reinforced concrete, but more importantly, I managed to measure the strain in the reinforcement with electric resistance strain gauges without cutting a hole in the concrete to expose it,” he wrote. “The committee for the chair was University-wide and I guess that impressed its scientific members, as did my list of publications. Unlike my predecessors, I taught reinforced concrete to architecture students with visual aids rather than mathematics, with financial support from the concrete industry who were keen to persuade more architects to use it rather than structural steel,” Professor Cowan said.

Prior to the Second World War, the construction of buildings in Sydney was mainly steel-framed and the height limited to 150 feet (now 45m). “The height restriction was removed in 1955 and Sydney and Melbourne thus acquired some tall buildings and these created new technical problems, as did the introduction of light curtain walls,” he said.

Jack created architectural science in Sydney when the main
means of communication were by ship and letter. After a short time, the University created the Department of Architectural Science and Jack started a program of graduate education, undertaken by many of Sydney’s leading architects. He was confident he had much to offer architecture students and positioned his growing Department of Architectural Science at the nexus of architecture, science and technology. That program evolved into the Master of Building Science which has provided a strong foundation in building science and technology to hundreds of graduates from Australia and internationally.

Professor Cowan also initiated extension courses for practising architects on building materials, environmental science and knowledge necessary for ‘buildings to work’. Studies in computer design, sustainable design, passive solar design, acoustics, illumination and thermal properties evolved later. It was the notes from these popular courses – given by Jack Cowan, other lecturers from chemical and civil engineering and industry experts in aluminium, stainless steel, glass, thermal qualities and acoustics – that drove the need for the original version of this journal.

Publisher William Ingleby approached Jack Cowan and agreed to publish and distribute a magazine in exchange for the rights to take paid advertising. Professor Cowan started compiling what would become paid subscribers and a subscriber-funded journal by sending complimentary issues to many of the major libraries in the world. “After a few years, Ingleby sold ASR to a technical magazine publisher, who charged subscribers, but gave me about 200 copies to post at my expense, so that I could keep up the more prestigious overseas recipients.”

“Then there was a severe recession which meant the loss of building advertising revenue. I found another publisher in Melbourne, whose most prestigious magazine was one for the hairdressers’ union who was willing to publish at a loss because of the prestige of publishing a professional magazine,” Professor Cowan said. After the publisher had a serious car accident, Jack was offered to take the magazine back at no charge. “I went to see the VC [Vice-Chancellor of the University] and told him we now had a prestigious refereed journal, and he agreed that the Uni would publish it,” Jack added.

The graduate courses he established not only provided impetus for the founding of ASR, but established ground work for the faculty’s research profile – the Faculty now boasts one of the largest proportions of graduate coursework students in the University and close to 100 PhD research students. He also pioneered Masters research, PhD research and later Masters coursework degrees in the Faculty.
Peter Smith was Professor Cowan’s first Master of Building Science student and in 1963 was the first person in Australia to be awarded a PhD in Architecture. He subsequently co-authored eight books with Jack, and is now Associate Editor of ASR.

Speaking about Jack’s beloved journal, ASR, Peter Smith said, “ASR has always emphasised the international nature of its Editorial Board and sought papers from all parts of the world. At the same time, it has maintained a close connection with both Asia and Africa, a legacy of some of our earlier research students, who came from these areas and returned in many cases to become senior researchers and administrators. ASR therefore occupies a unique position, enabling discourse between researchers in the diverse range of disciplines that contribute to Architectural Science, and combining contributions from both established and emerging research groups”, he said. “Architectural Science gained a name and an identity due to the name of the chair and Jack’s promotion of teaching and research across the range of individual subjects of building physics, structures and materials.”

Despite his monumental achievements in these domains, he once mentioned that he felt partially misunderstood. He never
meant architectural science to be only about building sciences and technology. He always meant architectural science to be "the science of anything and everything architectural."

On Professor Cowan's retirement in 1984, now Associate Professor Peter Smith succeeded him as Head of the Department of Architectural Science and Dr John Gero was appointed to the Chair of Architectural Science changing its name to Design Science as the Faculty's foundation Chair of Environment-Behaviour Studies, and having stepped down as Dean at the end of 2005, I was invited to succeed Professor Cowan as editor of ASR in 2006. Jack said at the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of ASR that he felt ASR is set to flourish and continue to move with the currents of cutting-edge architectural science research and publication.

'Prof' loved teaching and had an extraordinary tolerance for his students. If a man or woman deserved to be taught, he would teach them. He saw it as his obligation to help give them a start in professional or academic life. His career as Professor spanned thirty-one years, but he continued as Emeritus Professor another twenty-three years, visiting the University weekly, later only fortnightly. Several weeks before his death he was planning two lectures on structures and selecting models to use for demonstrating structural principles to undergraduate architecture students.

As mentioned in introductory remarks I gave on the 50th Anniversary of ASR, Jack "Established the field of architectural science in the world, as well as at the University. In doing so, he made the University of Sydney a worldwide centre of science in architecture. He demonstrated over fifty years, through his teaching, his research and his scholarly publications, that this discipline that bridges architecture and applied sciences is not a contradiction in terms." ¹

In addition to his work as a Professor, Jack continued with his own studies. In the classroom, Jack had many older students who were pursuing masters degrees or beginning doctoral work, all while tending to crying children at home. Not wanting to forget his studies, Jack decided to pursue another doctorate, this time in engineering.

A new field of study also needed textbooks and throughout his career, Jack authored and co-authored many books, with the last, *The World's Greatest Buildings*, appearing this year.

He was the author of twenty-one books, over two hundred articles and book chapters, and over four and a half thousand book reviews. Not only founding *Architectural Science Review* in 1959 and serving as its editor until 2006, he continued serving as the book review editor up to and including having prepared the book reviews appearing in this September 2007 issue of ASR. Whereas most academic journals that include book reviews have a stable of reviewers around the world, Jack chose to do all the reviews himself, amassing a staggering total of 4,569 personally written book reviews, culminating very sadly on the final page of this issue of ASR.

Over the course of his rich and varied academic career, Jack established the Technion Society of NSW, was a fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and of the Institute of Engineers Australia, remained a corresponding member of the Royal Society of Arts, and offered his services to innumerable international editorial advisory boards and committees.


In recognition of his contribution to architecture, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects made Jack an Honorary Fellow and for services to engineering, the Institution of Engineers, Australia, awarded him the Chapman and Monash medals. He was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Engineering by the University of Sheffield in 1963. In 2003, we awarded him an honorary Doctor of Architecture for his outstanding contribution to the University of Sydney. He was the recipient of many other awards and honours throughout his career.

Jack's life off-campus was also filled with special moments as he and Renate raised two daughters, Judith and Kitty, and played an active part in the lives of their granddaughters, Eleanor and Isabel.

Jack and Renate had a mutually supportive marriage of work, shared interests and goals. Judith, their elder daughter, who also gained a PhD from the University of Sydney, her husband David, and their daughters Eleanor and Isabel, all gave Jack a happy family life.

Jack was always kind and gentle to his children and he never raised a voice. He always supported Kitty, who suffers from cerebral palsy, both at home and through charity by his contributions to the Spastic Centre of New South Wales. Jack and Renate became much involved in disability issues, particularly wheelchair accessibility, and gave strong support to the Spastic Centre. He looked forward to those occasions when Kitty would come home from the Spastic Centre, and they could share weekends, holidays and Jewish festivals together. In addition, Judith said, "He was a wonderful father. I loved my Dad's study. He used to give me books, and he had such enthusiasm. He loved sharing his knowledge with me," a practice that endured well into the present.

Jack adored Eleanor and Isabel, always showing them tools of his old trade, like slide rules and sextants. Perhaps, he even influenced his granddaughters too, as Isabel is interested in mathematics, and Eleanor is preparing for a term of study on Pompeii and ancient Rome, aided by many of her grandfather's vast collection of books.

The family, and the staff of the Faculty recall a recent time, in 2006, when Jack took Eleanor and Isabel to the University's architectural and technical service centre laboratories showing them experiments, including the extraordinary eggshell machine he designed and had built to demonstrate the egg's enormous structural strength and resistance to pressure.

In his spare time, Jack loved the music of Mozart and he enjoyed attending classical music concerts with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony and Musical Viva. He also loved to travel, making a number of overseas trips, returning to the UK, and travelling to Italy and to other locations. He loved attending conferences in faraway places and kept on being invited back. Judith recalled that her father loved sharing the architecture of faraway places and on one of his trips, he delighted in introducing her to English cathedrals and the Basilica of St Peter's. When he became too old to share these places in person, Jack shared their magnificence through books.

One of Jack's many journeys back to Europe occurred in 1990, fifty years after he qualified for his Master's Degree from Manchester University. Because in 1940, England was experiencing the height of the 'blitz,' graduation exercises for the class of 1940 were cancelled. In 1990, Jack received a letter from the university explaining that if he were still alive, it would be wonderful for him to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his degree and attend graduation with the graduating class. Jack attended the ceremony.

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and received his master’s, humorously enough, after having already earned three doctorates.

All the while, because of his extreme, quiet modesty, it has been said that Jack never quite understood his own greatness, the scope of his wisdom, and was unaware of his countless accomplishments. He became an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1983, Australia’s highest honour, and Renate remembers the expression on Jack’s face when he received the letter. Jack said, “Good Lord.” Then he asked Renate, “You really think so? You really think I’m worth this?” Renate nodded, acknowledging, as Renate said, “her wonderful, multi-faceted husband”, of whom she was very proud.

In remembering his long-time friend and colleague, Associate Professor Warren Julian wrote in his recent obituary for Australian newspapers, “I had the pleasure of working with Jack since 1971 when, unexpectedly, he invited me to fill a position of temporary lecturer in architectural science…. A counterintuitive nature was a hallmark of Jack’s life. He was full of surprises.”

“Superficially, Jack appeared conservative, with the manners of the educated central European: formal, proper and a little aloof. This was far from the real person, who was essentially modest and shy but a liberal with a wicked sense of humour and a strong social conscience. He was an inspired risk-taker in the appointments that he made to the staff. It might be expected that, due to his experiences before and during World War II, he would tend to appoint people similar to himself. He didn’t and I was amazed at not only my appointment but at most of the others he made. However, he built an outstanding group that made his Department the jewel in the Faculty of Architecture’s crown and the leader in Australia and most of the world”, wrote Warren Julian.

“All who met him, especially generations of students, found a man with an intense interest in architecture who had the knack of inspiring others through his passion. He is always remembered with affection.”

“In many ways,” Rabbi Jacobson concluded his eulogy, “Jack Cowan was similar to Solomon. He was an engineer, a scientist, a man inclined toward construction, who was blessed with wisdom, sensibility, compassion and humility. On a Sunday night in July 2007, in Sydney, Australia, his life came to a peaceful, dignified, good ending. Throughout his life, Jack always had a way of acknowledging situations pragmatically, and he would say, ‘It is as it is.’ And so, we too acknowledge how ‘it is.’ We celebrate the beautiful, productive and distinguished life Professor Jack Cowan lived, all the while feeling the sadness in our hearts, allowing ourselves to be present with the void that has been created through his passing. May we
follow his brilliant example, both in his pursuit of knowledge, and his life of beautiful modesty, enabling that Jack’s memory will continue to abide as a blessing for generations to come.”

Emeritus Professor Henry Jacob (Jack) Cowan, AO, died on Sunday, 15 July 2007 at Mosman Private Hospital where he had been since the 25th of June. His family were with him that afternoon. He was sleeping. His doctor visited him about half an hour before he died, and asked if he were in pain and asked if he were having trouble breathing. Prof Cowan answered “No” to both questions. He just stopped breathing about half an hour after that.

The funeral was on Thursday, 19 July 2007, at Palm Chapel, Macquarie Park, Sydney. Jack Cowan was preceded in death by his sister, Charlotte (d. 1989). He is survived by his wife, Renate (married 55 years), his daughters Dr Judith Cowan (PhD, University of Sydney, 1985) and Kitty Cowan, Judith’s husband David Hartstein, granddaughters Eleanor (16) and Isabel (13) and nieces and nephews in the USA and the UK.

In the first few days after Professor Cowan’s death, ASR received a number of letters of grief and condolence to the family from members of the Editorial Advisory Board around the world. Below are excerpts from some of them. The letters were given to Mrs Renate Cowan, who has placed them into a special In Memoriam box. Editor

I am so sad to get the message. All of us will remember Prof Cowan forever.

Professor Zeng Saixing
Head, Department of Management Science
Antai School of Management
Shanghai Jiao Tong University
Shanghai, China

I am very sad to hear the late news. Prof Jack Cowan was the first person who showed me that there is a scientific side in architecture, when he came to Israel during the early 1960s and gave a lecture about the important and interesting research that was carried on by him and his students in his department at Sydney. Shortly later, I got my BArch degree and went to the USA, where I choose to do my graduate studying at Cornell University in Architectural Sciences. This is much due to his inspiration. For this, I am very thankful for him and I am sorry that I did not have the chance to tell it to him personally. I will miss him very much,

Professor Edna Shaviv
The Alfred and Marion Bar Chair in Architecture
Head, Climate and Energy Laboratory in Architecture
Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning
Technion - Israel Institute of Technology
Haifa, Israel

I am deeply sorry for the death of Henry Cowan. I never met him, but I have used his books for years. A book is a reflection of its author and I admire and appreciate very much Henry Cowan. Please transmit my sincerest condolences to his family.

Professor Santiago Huerta
Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid
Madrid, Spain

We will all remember Jack Cowan as the world’s first Professor of Architectural Science, the founder of the Department of Architectural Science at the University of Sydney, founding editor of the Architectural Science Review, a scholar, an intellect, a world leader in his field, and a wonderful person who loved his family dearly and achieved so much in his life. With his family, we will miss him very much.

Professor Gary T. Moore

Compiled from notes by and used with permission of Mrs HJ (Renate) Cowan, Dr Judith Cowan, Mr David Hartstein, Associate Professor Warren Julian, Associate Professor Peter Smith and Rabbi Paul J Jacobson, and based in part on the Eulogy delivered by and used with permission of Rabbi Jacobson from Emanuel Synagogue, Woollahra, delivered at Palm Chapel, Macquarie Park, Australia, 19 July 2007, prepared by Professor Gary Moore, 25 July 2007.

I am sorry to hear this sad news. I knew Jack Cowan since 1992 in connection with CTBUH [the Council for Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat] and his contribution to a book, Architecture of Tall Buildings. I met him last in 2001 in Melbourne. He was kind enough to send me his book of autobiography several years ago. I know very few people who have been so active and continued to work until the end. The good thing is: he lived a long and meaningful life. He will be remembered around the world for a long time.

Professor Mir Ali
Structures Section, School of Architecture
University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana
Champaign-Urbana, USA

It is very sad to hear that Professor Cowan passed away. I have known him for more than thirty years. He has been so kind to me every time when I see him, meet him and hear from him. Not only through ASR but also through personal relations, I always respected his sincere conduct of life. Professor Cowan will be admired as the father of architectural science of the world. I wish he has peacefully passed away with a fruitful, long life. Please convey my condolences to his beloved family.

Professor Ken-ichi Kimura
International Institute on Human Environment
Waseda University
Tokyo, Japan

We were much saddened to hear that Jack had died, but I am glad that his passing was peaceful. It is, I am sure, as he would have wished. When I last talked with him about two years ago, I said that he looked very well and seemed to be as active as ever. Gently reproving me for my lack of observation, he told me he was getting old and was ready to go soon. He knew, he said, that when people get into their nineties they lose a lot of their intellect and ability, and he did not want that. We shall miss him a great deal.

Professor Peter R. Tregenza
Professor Emeritus
University of Sheffield
Sheffield, England