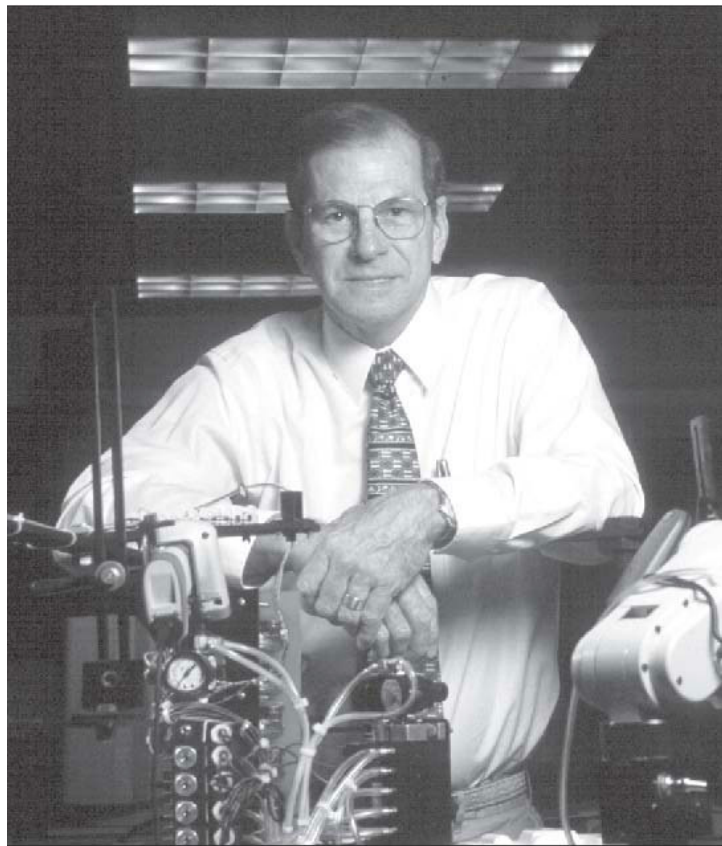# AIDC Memoirs

of

Dr. James Fales

as
Published by Ohio University

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR: *Based on a passion for AIDC technologies and in response to the need for a testing and research facility focused on the same, Dr. James Fales established the Center for Automatic Identification in 1988.*

Building on Success: The Fales Era
James Fales 1986-2006

With extensive teaching experience from Purdue University and Texas A & M University, Dr. James Fales joined the Department of Industrial Technology as Professor and Chair in 1986. As he began to give it a new direction, he found himself immersed in a department struggling through two major changes. First, the department was changing buildings for the third time in its lifetime. Professors and students were adjusting to the newly renovated Stocker Center. The change in location consolidated the department with six other departments that had been scattered in different buildings across campus, and brought about an atmosphere of camaraderie.

The resulting interaction has had a positive influence, said Professor Emeritus William Reeves. "It created a broader view among the faculty of our roles." Record-keeping, student services and department office operations were also "drastically improved" when Fales came on board, he added. The second major change awaiting Fales, and the one which called for the most leadership, was the selection of new faculty. Fales coined the phrase "current and relevant" to describe the IT program as well as its faculty during his time as Chair. This phrase is still our operating guideline today.

New Faces

During the 1980s, all but one long-time faculty member retired. This gave Fales a chance to establish major goals for hiring new faculty members. An important goal was to find professors who not only had the right academic credentials but had also worked in industry and could bring that first-hand knowledge into the classroom. New faculty members hired in the late '80s and '90s included Patrick McCuistion, Peter Klein, Tom Scott, Dinesh Dhamija and Todd Myers. Mark Rowe and Kevin Berisso joined the faculty in the 21st century. All new faculty members have intensive experience in industry. "The faculty that was recruited is a strong one and bodes well for the future of the department," said T. Richard Robe, then Dean of the Russ College of Engineering and Technology (1980-1996). Myers, Rowe and Berisso were all alumni from this department with excellent industrial experience.

"I wanted people who had real professional experience, the kind of experience that students seek and pursue," explained Fales. Most of the new faculty members were responsible for hiring in the companies they came from. "That lends a high degree of credibility to our department," he said. "It brings the right kind of focus to what we should be doing." Combine that background with strong academic credentials, and you get faculty who have consistently earned outstanding professor awards, including the College's top honor, the Russ Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award. During Fales term as Chair, six IT professors received this award; John Deno has received it twice and Tom Scott has received it three times.

Current and Relevant

"The two key words in our department are 'current' and 'relevant,'" said Fales. "If it isn't current, it's history. If it isn't relevant, it's not helping students get jobs today, so why teach it?" With this philosophy, Fales spent much of the time on the road, drumming up contacts for the department while ensuring that the department kept abreast of current technological and

educational standards. The focus on current and relevant is reflected in the research and academic pursuits of faculty members, the inputs of the Industrial Advisory Board, department facilities, and the IT curriculum.

Continuous is Evolving

During Fales twenty year tenure as Chair, the department continued to evolve. Due to his diligence and drive, the department continued to improve its stature in the college and university. Industrial support increased including more Co-Ops for our students and better jobs for our graduates. The Industrial Advisory Board was developed as a true extension of our program. Fales realized that getting advice from people really doing the work was critical to maintaining the "current and relevant" philosophy. Fales was well known in the college for his passion for students and their success both in school and on the job. He worked tirelessly with students in what we call "student services" and tried to stay in touch with all graduates. He began the "business card folders," which are updated whenever alumni send new cards. This is an excellent recruiting method as well as a great way to answer the old question "What is Industrial Technology?"

Fales also developed excellent relationships in the College of Business. This led to the requirement that all IT grads also earn a Business Minor. OU may still be the only IT program in the country with this valuable requirement.

Added Focus Area –
Manufacturing Information Technology

Although IT at OU had a great history of providing industry very capable professionals in the manufacturing industry, Fales realized many grads were focusing more on computer applications. Following very lengthy discussions with faculty and industrial advisors, a new focus area was born. Manufacturing Information Technology provided students to develop greater depth in areas such as database applications, networks, communications and automatic identification and data capture.
Alumni from this focus area hold positions as Hospital Senior Systems Analyst, Head Information Technologist for Large Professional Recruiting Firm, and Information Technology Manager for Medical School.

The Center for Automatic Identification
1988-2007

Ohio University's Center for Automatic Identification, established in 1988 by Dr James Fales, was the nation's first research and education center devoted solely to the study of AIDC technologies, including bar coding, RFID, voice recognition, card technologies and biometrics. The Center was established to meet the increasing demands of business and industrial users of bar coding and other AIDC technologies. These technology tools are being applied in virtually all business channels to improve productivity by increasing data accuracy and timeliness. The mission of the Center was to provide a venue for open, unbiased research and education related to all aspects of automatic identification and data capture.

One of the Center's primary activities had been the Automatic Identification and Data Capture Technical Institute (AIDCTI) held each summer at Ohio University. These week-long educational activities have been funded and jointly sponsored by the Automatic Identification Manufacturers, Inc., (AIM Global) and the Uniform Code Council, Inc., (UCC) as a means of helping university, college, and community college professors better understand the technical aspects of keyless data collection. Professors of engineering, technology, management, retailing, animal sciences, and health care have taken advantage of these institutes. End users and technical equipment and service providers also attend the annual AIDCTI to strengthen their grasp of the automatic identification technologies as business tools and enablers.

Because the Center is well-stocked with representative state-of-the-art equipment, research opportunities abound. Major studies of bar code symbology robustness have been conducted by the Center. Graduate students from other departments in the College occasionally select topics in auto identification for their research, conducting in areas of voice recognition, radio data transmission and bar coding. Industrial Technology undergraduate students use the Automatic Identification Lab both as a classroom and resource center for individual and team-based assignments and projects. As the use of automatic identification continues to increase in all forms of applications worldwide, it is expected that the Center can and will provide answers to AIDC questions, both general and specific.

Deans' Perspectives

"Under the continued leadership of Jim Fales, the Industrial Technology program is among the best, if not the best, program of its kind in the country," says Dennis Irwin, Dean of the Russ College of Engineering and Technology. He further adds, "Many of its graduates hold industrial positions at the highest levels of responsibility in their companies and these graduates are among the most loyal in the Russ College. Industrial Technology faculty is extremely dedicated to their students and are, rightly so, proud of their rapport with students."

Former Dean T. Richard Robe (1980-1996) says "without a question Fales has had a very positive impact on the department," says "He has done much to modernize the curriculum." Several changes have been made in the BSIT curriculum since 1986, when Fales joined the department. "Thanks to his vision and leadership, the department recognized as one of the strongest industrial technology programs in the country." "Fales' accomplishments in the area of automated identification techniques have given him and the university recognition throughout the world," asserted former Dean W. Kent Wray (1996-2000). Former interim Dean Jerrel Mitchell (2000-2002) adds "Under Dr. Fales' leadership the Department of Industrial Technology continues to be accredited by the National Association of Industrial Technology (NAIT), receiving high praise by the accrediting teams." The department was originally accredited by NAIT in 1978 and has maintained accreditation throughout, the most recent reaccreditation being in 2003. "It is very clear that excellent administrative leadership is being provided for the Industrial Technology program," visiting team members of NAIT commented.

FLASHBACK

Assistant Directors of the Center for Automatic Identification
Jorge Salcedo, Roger Vincent, Luis Quiroga, Andrew Neill, Michael Michael,
Todd Myers, Bruce Philpot, Kevin Berisso

Outstanding Professors

Industrial Technology professors are certainly no strangers to being honored for their exemplary work. One example of an outstanding professor in the department is Dr. William Reeves, who, in addition to winning various other awards, presented the Class of 1950 Teaching Excellence Award in 1985, was distinguished as a university professor 1985 and was a two-time recipient of the Russ Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award, the highest teaching honor in the college.

Other awards that distinguish IT faculty members include named professors. Since 1993, Dr. Fales has been recognized with the special distinction of Loehr Professor, 1993-2006, which was named in honor of Gerald Loehr a 1952 engineering graduate, to recognize excellence in engineering education.

In 2000, Dr. Scott was named the first Kraft Family Scholar, an endowment created by Robert and Marie Kraft to benefit faculty members in the department. In 2004, Dr. Klein was also named a Kraft Family Scholar.

Several IT faculty members also have been awarded honors in industry. Dinesh Dhamija, who served as an Assistant Professor from 1988 to 2000, was presented the Sargent Americanism Award by the Society of Manufacturing Engineers in 2000. This award recognizes faculty who have developed significant and innovative course work that creates a better understanding of business skills related to manufacturing.

In 1998, Dr. Fales was honored with the Don Percival Award from the user community in recognition of outstanding contributions to the application of AIDC technologies.