

Literally . . .

In one of my previous editorials a misprint transformed my wording 'prediction of service life' into 'production of service life'. Such a mishap can first come to the victim as a painful surprise. Indeed, my initial intention was to write something sensible, reasonable, even commonplace, using one of those expressions that technique invents to better word an aspiration, failing progress and not something unpredictable since due to chance and a printing 'slip of the tongue'.

This type of misprint which in fact really replaces one word by another produces the most artful effects, because often it does not remove meaning from the sentence, it covers the writer's thoughts over with another meaning or distorts it. Precisely the sort of flights of fancy continuously woven into 'Alice in Wonderland'. Now the wonder is that I have finally come to detect a meaning in 'production of service life' which takes my fancy, just two letters propelling us from the intellectual level of prediction to the concrete stage of production.

But, you will say, service life is not an artifact which we produce. It can certainly be forecast as a result, expected and prepared by providing all the conditions necessary to obtain it, once the methods to identify it and the means to achieve it have been determined.

It seems to me that this is precisely where the concept of 'production' comes in: 'production' of the knowledge and the information necessary to integrate the assurance of service life into the design of structures on a par with stability. This all convinces me that a mistake, even as a misprint, can be used as a by-product of fact.