Editor:

Many of the issues raised in your January 1984 article "The Ergonomics of Video Display Terminals" apply to CAD/CAM workstations as well as to office systems. Unfortunately, the article was slanted completely toward typed input and ignored the area of graphical data input. It would be helpful to have a similar distillation of the ergonomics of graphics workstations. Especially controversial is the topic of graphical input devices. A comparison of currently available devices would be very useful. Tablets, light pens, mice, trackballs, joysticks, function buttons, thumbwheels, dials, touch pads, and touch screens are all in use on one or more systems. Each has advantages and disadvantages, but the choice of which to use in a CAD system is generally based on emotional and historical factors as opposed to a clear understanding of their effects on users.

In addition to physical devices, there are other interesting areas involving user interface design. Where should menus, prompts, and error messages be located—on the graphics screen? on a second screen? on the surface of a tablet? somewhere else? Again, a distillation of ergonomic study results and existing or pending standards would be quite useful and enlightening.

The area of rational ergonomic design is not frequently discussed in general literature. You have made a good start.

John MacKrell
Information Displays, Inc.
Armonk, N.Y.