

Two captains on the bridge

Walter Klöpffer • Mary Ann Curran • Paul Roos

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Dear readers,

This editorial announces the extension on top of the editorship of this journal from three perspectives: that of Walter Klöpffer, sole editor in chief of volumes 1–17 (1996–2012), that of the incoming editor in chief Mary Ann Curran, and that of the manager responsible for the environmental journals of Springer, Paul Roos. We are in the good position not to have to make radical changes, but to continue and further improve the already now positive development of the journal and all that in a world of growing awareness that life cycle-based assessment methods are without a real alternative in trying to achieve sustainability. Since only a few countries have used the methods on a broad scale, there are great opportunities for life cycle research and applications to be critically accompanied, improved, and published by our journal. It goes without saying that this service to society has for us never been a one-way activity (i.e., publishing manuscripts coming to our desk/in our computer). New developments are actively put forward and encouraged by the editors with special issues and the invitation of new subject editors. With LCA & Co becoming mainstream, we will have to put our main focus on quality rather than quantity.

W. Klöpffer (✉)
LCA Consult & Review, Am Dachsberg 56E,
60435 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
e-mail: walter.kloepffer@t-online.de

M. A. Curran
LCA & Sustainability Consultant BAMAC Ltd.,
5137 Oak Brook Drive,
Cincinnati, OH 45244, USA

P. Roos
Springer, Van Godewijkstraat 30,
3311 GX Dordrecht, The Netherlands

1 Walter Klöpffer: a bit of journal history



The first issue of *The International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment* appeared in December 1995, predated

to 1996 (Klöpffer 1996) at ecomed publishers, Landsberg/L, Bavaria. The journal was initiated and managed until 2010 by Almut B. Heinrich (Klöpffer 2012). A turning point with regard to the publisher occurred in 2007, when negotiations with Springer resulted in the takeover of four ecomed journals, all previously managed by Almut (Roos 2007), which was effected in 2008. The cover picture of vol. 12 (6) shows a pictorial of an incoming sailing ship with four sails, symbolizing the four journals. Hence the marine symbolism also in the title of this editorial and my addressing Mary Ann a few months ago, saying that I was looking for a “co-captain” after I got earlier a hint by Paul that I should look for a partner on top of the journal. There is only to add that there are now really two captains with equal responsibilities and a roughly equal work load, no “co-captain” or “co-editor in chief” in publisher language. The details of our cooperation are being worked out right now and will be evaluated at the end of next year.

Before passing on to Mary Ann, I would like to highlight one important phase in the early years of the journal. Environmental life cycle assessment (LCA) was invented by practitioners around 1970 (Hunt and Franklin 1996) and developed predominantly by practitioners in the following two decades. In the 1990s, increasingly, colleagues from academia took over the leadership, and for them, the newly founded LCA journal was of paramount importance. However, a new journal in a new field, not (yet) listed by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI)—not to speak about an impact factor—was not the ideal place to publish. “Publish and perish”? was the uneasy question one could hear. Finally, after several attempts (one indeed a “petition” to ISI signed by all full professors in the editorial board), the journal was accepted by Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIExp) in the first month of the new century/millennium (January 1, 2001), and Henrikke Baumann calculated the first unofficial impact factor (Baumann 2002). In 2004 we got the first real impact factor which developed well in the following years (2011, 2.362). The impact factor is not an absolute measure for the quality of a journal, but it is much used, and as editor, one has to be pleased with a good one. More important for LCA is that this method has now the rank of an established academic discipline! The application for improving products is equally important, however, and the publication of applied as well as theoretical papers has been editorial policy since the start of the journal.

2 Mary Ann Curran: the incoming editor in chief



Some decisions require extensive deliberation. Others are “no brainers.” When Walter approached me about the idea of joining him in captaining the *International Journal of LCA*, I didn’t have to give it much thought. For me, it is a rare opportunity as well as an immense honor. I have been involved with the journal, initially in the capacity as an author, since the publication of the first issue in 1995. I have stayed intimately involved with the journal ever since, publishing regularly and eventually joining the advisory board. The existence of the journal over the years has been invaluable as it provides a dedicated home for LCA practitioners and researchers to share their work. The journal is the only place where the detailed discussion about methodology, very unique to LCA, can be communicated and shared. Where else would topics such as “attributional versus consequential analysis” or co-product allocation be found?

The growth in interest in the field of LCA over the years has been nothing short of amazing. Although I think everyone involved in the development of the journal in the early years knew we had something special, I doubt anyone could have predicted the immense popularity it would achieve. This growth is a testament to the value life cycle thinking offers to today’s decision makers who are serious about attaining environmental sustainability goals.

With fast growth and success comes the need to expand, which we have seen the journal do through the addition of topics such as life cycle costing, life cycle management, and now social LCA and life cycle sustainability assessment. But even with expansion, the journal has remained as constant as the northern star as a source

of the latest information in the development and application of LCA. To continue the sailing analogy introduced by Walter, as I join him on the bridge of this fast sailing ship, I will work closely with him to stay the course and continue the formula that has worked so well for the LCA community. Anchors aweigh!

3 Paul Roos: status of the journal and outlook

The growth and influence of the *International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment* is impressive. I like to welcome Mary Ann Curran as co-editor in chief and congratulate Walter on the success of the journal under his leadership. I also want to use this occasion to thank all subject editors, regional editors, editorial board members, and last but not least, all the reviewers who did their hard work anonymously. The whole crew together has made this journal a success, and it is wonderful to see how everyone is taking on their responsibilities.

Over the past years, we have seen a change from a print product to a fully electronic journal. In 2011, the number of downloads per article published were impressive and in the top 20 of all Springer journals; this clearly confirms an

interest not only from the authors to publish in the journal but also from readers who are finding the journal articles. I expect that in the next period we will be further growing the journal in terms of quality and also in terms of innovative methods of publishing. The electronic environment will allow us to further develop the journal, e.g., sharing and visualizing data, moving towards continuous article-based publishing.

There is a saying in many languages indicating you cannot have two captains on the same ship; I trust that Mary Ann Curran and Walter Klöpffer will prove the opposite!

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