EDITORIAL

This Special Issue of *IJME* is the first in a series of three, comprising papers presented at the 8th World Conference on Transport Research (WCTR), held in Antwerp in the summer of 1998. The issue has been painstakingly edited by the two Guest Editors, Dr. M. Kavoussanos of City University and Dr. H. Thanopoulou of Cardiff University.

The WCTR is a major triennial event in the world of transport research that has always managed to attract hundreds of researchers from around the world. Papers presented there are rigorously refereed and they represent the state-of-the-art in applied and fundamental transport research.

The WCTR comprises a number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) one of which being the special interest group on maritime transport and ports (SIG2). The Group was established in 1989 at the Yokohama WCTR and since then it has brought important contributions to all subsequent conferences in Lyon, Sydney and Antwerp. Particularly in the latter conference, SIG2 had one of the strongest inputs with about 60 papers distributed over 14 sessions that ran throughout the week. And it is a selection from these papers that is included in this and the subsequent two issues of *IJME*.

The significant and consistent contributions of SIG2 members to the WCTR have raised expectations even further. Thus, two meetings were recently held to explore possibilities of additional activities in research and networking. The meetings took place at Erasmus and Sorbonne and were attended by S. Pettersen-Stranden (Norwegian School of Economics); L. Ojala (Turku School of Economics); W. Sjostrom (University College Cork); E. Musso (University of Genoa) and N. Terrassier (Institute of Shipping and Maritime Economics, St. Nazaire).

Both meetings felt very positively on a number of initiatives including a pre-Seoul (9th WCTR, 2001) workshop, to be held in Genoa in June 2000 (see advertisement at the end), the establishment of a home page (already now in place: www.isemar.asso.fr/sig2/index.htm) to be linked to that of WCTRS, the development of a membership database with information on current research, publications of special issues in scientific journals and regular contributions to the WCTRS Newsletter. *IJME* strongly endorses such activities, as evidenced by the present and forthcoming volumes.

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