
ISL 20

Guest editorial

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The 20th International Symposium on Logistics was held in the beautiful and ancient University of Bologna, Italy from 5 to 8 July 2015. Focussing on the theme of “Designing responsible and innovative global supply chains”, the conference was attended by 113 delegates from 26 countries, representing perspectives from Europe, Asia, North American and Australia/New Zealand. The conference included a fascinating tour of the Ducati Motorcycle factory, where cellular manufacturing principles were being employed to produce a broad range of high-performance machines. Of the 92 papers presented at the conference, 23 were shortlisted for development into a journal article and 19 full papers were submitted.

This issue contains five articles developed from conference presentations. The article by Penazzi, Accorsi, Ferrari, Manzini and Dunstall addresses job shop design in food processing, in a business context requiring increased variety and responsiveness. A discrete event simulation approach has been developed, to support decision making via scenario modelling and what-if analyses, as managers seek to optimise cost, quality, energy consumption (carbon emissions) and food safety.

The conference’s responsibility theme is explored by Nilsson, Sternberg and Klaas-Wissing who have researched the relationship between 3PL environmental policies and the approaches taken by their road haulage contractors. The innovative supply chain design theme is reflected in Dapiran and Kam’s investigation into product returns management. In an area where value and retailer margin can so easily be destroyed, they have researched the interactions between supplier, retailer and 3PL, identifying six drivers for developing and appropriating value.

Warehouse managers face complex decisions that affect the customer service and cost performance of warehouse operations. Increasing the number of order pickers can improve customer service, but can also cause congestion and inefficiency via “picker blocking”. Franzke, Grosse, Glock and Elbert have developed an agent-based simulation model to help managers to understand the interactions between routing policies, storage assignment, and number of pickers employed, with a view to optimising performance through design.

Environmental concerns are further developed in the field of reverse logistics for charity retailers in research by Pal, which reveals a number of interesting and sophisticated ways of adding and capturing value in used clothing supply chains.

Please be inspired by these papers which address important topics, and employing a variety of research methodologies, in the challenging and multi-disciplinary field of logistics and supply chain management.

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