Dear Readers,

As the American author and inspirational leader, John C. Maxwell, once said, “Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.” Over its 23-year history, the International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment has seen both change and fantastic growth. This is due in large part to the hard work and dedication of the Journal’s editors and editorial board who ensure the constant direction of our publications. And of course, starting a journal in a new field, as we did in 1996, offers a wealth of material with which to work. From the beginning, the Journal was the first technical journal devoted entirely to the science and practice of life cycle assessment (LCA), and continues in that role today. The founding editor, Walter Klöpffer, explained that it was conceived as an international scientific journal with some elements of a magazine. As the first journal in the field, there was a broad range of “terra incognita” to be explored with the help of the Editorial Board and all contributors (Klöpffer 1996).

Walter served as the sole Editor-in-Chief from the inception of the Journal in 1996 through 2012. To design, develop, and fully implement an international journal is an impressive feat! The Journal has certainly flourished over the years in keeping with Walter’s original vision. The most significant change has been in how we view case studies, that is, applied LCAs. In the early years, seeing a full LCA case study was somewhat of a rarity. The advent of international databases made the conduct of LCA much easier. We found ourselves in the position of having to deal with many case studies being submitted to the Journal. So, we proposed refining the editorial policy and adopting general criteria for our submission editors to follow when accepting papers on applied LCAs. As a result, our editors and reviewers look for how a paper on applied LCA, especially a case study, offers new knowledge and new insight.

Mary Ann Curran
macurran5137@gmail.com

1 BAMAC Ltd., 2899 Fox Trail Rd., York, SC 29745, USA
2 Department of Environmental Technology, Technical University Berlin, Straße des 17. Juni 135, 10623 Berlin, Germany
3 Environmental & Earth Sciences, Springer Nature, P.O. Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, The Netherlands

Published online: 27 February 2019
Effective January 2020, Matthias Dr. Matthias Finkbeiner of the Technical University Berlin. I will be passing the baton as Editor-in-Chief to Prof. and development of LCA methodology during most of my ca-

1 Mary Ann Curran: from the beginning

I myself have been fortunate to have been a part of the Journal since its inception and published an early conference report on streamlining LCA in the inaugural issue (Curran and Young 1996). In 2013, Walter asked me to join him in heading up the JILCA (Klöpffer et al. 2013). I immediately accepted his invitation without hesitation. Having dedicated myself to the research and development of LCA methodology during most of my career, being asked to oversee THE journal of LCA was an honor.

This editorial announces a change in the editorial staff that is underway. I will be passing the baton as Editor-in-Chief to Prof. Dr. Matthias Finkbeiner of the Technical University Berlin. Effective January 2020, Matthias’s role with the International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment team will change from subject editor to Editor-in-Chief, at which point I will step down. We will work together for the current year, gradually turning over the duties of the Editor-in-Chief to Matthias.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Editor-in-Chief and feel fortunate having had the chance to work closely with the leaders in the field of life cycle assessment, organizational life cycle assessment, life cycle costing, life cycle management, and life cycle sustainability assessment. It has also been quite rewarding seeing the number of entrants in the field grow over the years. My whole goal as Editor-in-Chief was simply to maintain the scientific integrity of our research papers while balancing the research side and the practical application side of methodology and application. I feel confident as I transition into my last year at the helm that I have been able to accomplish those goals.

I would like to extend my sincere, hearty thanks to those colleagues who agreed to serve as members of the Editorial Board and to the authors of the many issues. I very much look forward to working with Matthias in his new capacity. Matthias is well known to the LCA community and to the Journal as well. He has served as our Subject Editor for Carbon Footprinting since 2013. We anticipate a smooth transition during 2019 and expect the Journal to continue along the same path as always. Please join me in welcoming Matthias to his new role!

2 Matthias Finkbeiner: the incoming Editor-in-Chief

At the end of last year, I was approached by Springer with a request to consider taking on the editorship of the journal when Mary Ann steps down at the end of the current year. I felt really honored and full of beans to take this new challenge. So my heart immediately said “yes.” It felt quite natural to say “yes” after such a long-standing relationship with the journal. I published my first paper there in 1998, i.e., more than 20 years ago and have been involved with it in one way or another ever since.

After the meeting, my consciousness kicked in and tried to control the emotions by raising questions like what the exact job description of an Editor-in-Chief actually is and whether I am capable of delivering the goods. The brain also reminded me of the work-life-balance issue. It brought up the associated commitment to say “no” more often to additional duties. In a nutshell, my brain said “yes, but....”

For important decisions, I tend to neither fully trust my brain nor my heart, but my gut. This may sound neither very intellectual nor romantic, but so far, luckily, my heart and brain usually agree in the long run, that the gut feeling was pointing in the right direction. After a good night’s sleep and the decision to disband two of my other extra-jobs, there was the “all-clear” from head to toe.

It is a great honor for me to follow Walter and Mary Ann as the third Editor-in-Chief of the journal. I will do my best to keep up with their spirit and leadership. The journal is in good shape and there is no need for radical changes of its scope and content. However, as Lauren Bacall said: “Standing still is the fastest way of moving backwards in a rapidly changing world.” In other words, there is always room for improvement. Mary Ann did an excellent job in fine-tuning some of the processes and directions of the journal and I intend to follow her also in this respect. For this continuous improvement process, we will keep our editors and editorial board engaged, but we are also happy to consider any feedback or suggestions from you, i.e., the authors and readers of the journal.

One key thing for me is protecting diversity. The journal covers a broad spectrum of topics—from carbon and water footprints via classical LCA and LCM to Life Cycle Costing, Social LCA, and even Life Cycle Sustainability Assessments. It covers methods, data, case studies, applications in industry and policy. It has authors and readers from not only academia but also industry, government, and other stakeholders. For me, this diversity is a real asset, but I am aware that some people in the community may see this as a liability. As Mary Ann also referenced above, we had early debates on whether the journal should focus on basic science or applied science (rather narrowly translated by some into methods and case studies...), which was first addressed by the famous “Two Planets and One Journal” editorial by Walter Klöpffer and Almut Heinrich back in 2001 (Klöpffer and Heinrich 2001). Nowadays, we even have more schools and more habitats in the LCA community so it should read today rather as “many planets and one journal.” I personally would prefer “one planet with a (bio)diverse LCA community with one journal.” I believe that our journal should continue striving to get the best and most relevant papers of the LCA community in the broadest possible sense, be it basic or...
applied science, be it this type of LCA or another, be it from this school or another, be it from industry, government, or academia. As long as the life cycle perspective is there, we should just focus on content, quality, and scientific merit, not particular schools of thought and we should serve the whole community, not just specific parts of it.

I am grateful for the significant contributions of all editors and authors as well as the interest of our readers. Together with you, I look forward to doing my bit for the sustainable development of our International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment. Thank you very much for your continued support!

3 Fritz Schmuhl: looking forward

Applying Einstein’s aphorism that “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving” to a journal, our forward movement here too is defined by keeping sufficient momentum and also changing pace periodically. For the last seven years, Mary Ann has kept the journal on a steady and increasing course of development, traversing all of the terrain that defines our remit but also steering the journal toward new areas. And as she then steps down in just under a year, it falls to our new “cyclist-in-chief” Matthias to ensure that the journal’s focus remains comprehensive, that it observes an inclusive approach both in terms of thought and practice, and, above all, that it remains the premier mode for communicating the many advances in life cycle assessment to all the relevant communities.

I invite all to thank Mary Ann both for her past work and her continued leadership this year, and, in tandem, warmly welcome Matthias.

References


Publisher’s note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.