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Lean Construction Journal Editors' Note: 2022 Issue

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2022 Lean Construction Journal (LCJ) Issue

The published papers in the 2022 LCJ issue, similar to those in previous issues, are the ones that underwent and successfully completed an iterative double-blind peer review process resulting in a wonderful and enriching exchange between author(s), reviewers and editors. The review process is intended to make sure that a manuscript outlines a convincing argument for how the work leads to a contribution to knowledge. To get a sense of what each paper has to offer, we encourage starting with the structured abstract section. A synopsis, or the cliff notes, of each paper is provided in this section. For some, the insights provided will suffice. For academic and practitioner scholars, the abstract section will be an invite to get into more details for their own research.

Since the inaugural issue of LCJ, we have decided against providing the typical paper-by-paper editorial summary. This is because our authors have spent the time and effort to summarize their work in the structured abstracts as well as detail it in the manuscripts. We would like the LCJ readership to make their own conclusions. Any summary we write will reflect our experience of each manuscript going from initial submission to final publication. We don't believe our role as editors is to write such intermediated narratives.

Our role has been a topic of discussion over the years with the late, beloved Professor Howell and Dr. Ballard. They have entrusted us with being custodians of this publication venue as an outlet for academic and practitioner scholars working to share and advance the fundamentals of Lean Thinking in the construction industry (theories, principles, concepts, practices, methods, and approaches). Therefore, our primary role as editors is to initially make sure that a manuscript is treating Lean Thinking in the construction industry with the rigor of the scientific process (Observe, Hypothesize, Experiment, Repeat, or Plan-Do-Check/Study-Act). We then move the manuscript to the peer-review process. This is relaxed slightly for the Forum Essay paper type where

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we allow more latitude for authors to reflect and state their opinion on the state of academic and practical knowledge.

IGLC/LCJ Collaboration

Since the launch of LCJ, collaboration with the International Group for Lean Construction (IGLC) consisted of entertaining proceeding papers with modifications or as is if they were papers selected for longer presentations or what is now called 'plenary sessions.' In many ways, this was an unofficial policy. This year, we discovered in conversation with Drs Gonzalez, Drevland, and Hamzeh that this policy was unknown to many IGLC colleagues, and they also pointed out other concerns.

In the spirit of continuing the strong collaboration and unbreakable ties between IGLC and LCJ, the LCJ editors met with the Lean Construction Institute (LCI) Leadership and LCI Research Committee, as well as the IGLC Leadership and IGLC 30 Organizers. These meetings involved the following colleagues, and not everyone was there in all meetings: IGLC (Frode Drevland, Farook Hamzeh, and Vicente Gonzalez); LCI (Rob Leicht and Dan Heinemeier); and LCJ (Katherine Copeland, Alan Mossman, and Tariq Abdelhamid). Two main topics were discussed in said meetings: (1) The concerns voiced about LCJ by some of our IGLC colleagues; (2) LCJ standing and pending list of improvements with LCI.

In the interest of full transparency, these meetings led to the following action items:

1. LCJ to restructure the Editorial Board to have Associate Editors in specialty Lean Construction areas.
    - Dr. Gonzalez emailed the IGLC membership with an expression of interest request for LCJ Associate Editors. Five colleagues have expressed interest to fulfill this role. The focus and areas of specialty are under discussion.
2. Updates to the LCJ website (www.leanconstructionjournal.org) with various utilities and features were completed.
    - LCI will also make the LCI Webmaster available to the LCJ Editorial staff to assist in final publication stage.
    - Formally captured the ongoing IGLC/LCJ agreement that guides the publication and re-publication of IGLC proceedings (see https://leanconstruction.org/resources/lean-construction-journal/ heading "IGLC Proceedings in LCJ Issues").
    - Practitioner Editors to receive an honorarium for their time. Academic Editors get promotion/reappointment/merit credit for serving as outreach/service to industry.
    - LCI will fund the cost (annual or otherwise) to secure the DOI subscription and assign DOI #s for all the LCJ papers.

Frequent Inquiries

We field many inquiries from new authors interested in the Lean Construction field. They send us abstracts and complete papers to evaluate suitability for LCJ and its

audience. In 70% of the cases, we find the paper topic is not inspired by Lean Thinking and practices in the construction industry (all phases of a project). We encourage prospective authors taking interest in the discipline of Lean Construction to consider prior publications at LCJ (www.leanconstructionjournal.org – the first editorial - Vol 1 # 1 October 2004) and the International Group for Lean Construction (IGLC) conferences at www.iglc.net.

In conducting initial editors' reviews, we still find wide discrepancies in the narrative regarding the origin of Lean Construction. We essentially see two camps. The first camp writes a story wherein a narrow interpretation of "Lean Construction" by construction professionals and researchers is presented. This interpretation claims that "Lean Construction" is a construction site application of Lean Manufacturing methods and tools that were pioneered by Toyota on the production floor. This view simplifies Lean Construction to a grafting of Lean Manufacturing onto the construction phase of a project – some call it a productivity improvement effort. Categorically, this was not the impetus and the vision of the early pioneers (Lauri Koskela, Glenn Ballard, Luis Alarcón, and Greg Howell). In fact, they often stated that "we found our way to Toyota," after the gaps and problem root causes in conventional construction project management were established.

The second camp embraces Lean Construction as the adaptation of Lean Thinking to the construction industry. Most of those in this camp consider Lean Construction to have two concurrent development paths. The first path started in the late 80s/early 90s, when Dr. Lauri Koskela, a construction academic, questioned the inability of the construction industry to deliver projects on time, on budget, and at desired quality. He attributed this inability to the lack of a theory of production in construction and put forth the Transformation-Flow-Value (TFV) theory. The second concurrent path is the one where Prof. Greg Howell and Dr. Glenn Ballard experimented with a management system that can provide reliable workflow on construction sites (this is now known as the Last Planner System®). These two efforts formed the beginning of the Lean Construction community, represented in the International Group for Lean Construction (established in 1993), and the Lean Construction Institute (LCI), Founded in 1997. Both groups are the main powerhouses supporting practice and conducting research on Lean Construction. It is true that there may be some regrets about using the phrase "Lean Construction" because of the narrow interpretation mentioned earlier – hindsight is 20/20 as they say.

This brings us to the two other frequent questions we receive: Why capitalize Lean Construction in LCJ papers? What is Lean Construction?

On the issue of capitalization, we believe that "Lean Construction" deserves to be a proper noun because it refers to a specific set of principles, concepts, and practices utilized to understand and maximize what and how people think about their work that generates value for the intended recipient.

While capitalizing "Lean Construction" or not will remain controversial, it really shouldn't matter. What matters is the crux of what the lean philosophy is about. This is aptly captured by a statement I heard Professor Greg Howell, co-founder of the Lean Construction Institute, say a number of times: "Lean is a new way to see, understand and act in the world."

We posit here that the controversy over the proper or common noun relates to the existence of multiple definitions that have been suggested for Lean Construction. This is not a criticism. Many reasons contribute to Lean Construction escaping a canonical definition (see Mossman (2018) for an insightful discussion on this topic). One reason is the state of flux the practice and research of Lean Construction continues to experience. Another is that while following a specific definition will corral a group around specific aims to pursue, it can also be limiting. Therefore, different parties and organizations have found it in their interest to develop their own definition.

Still, there is a common denominator amongst the different definitions that have been proposed by authors, companies, associations, and institutes (for a flavor, visit the cyber spaces of the Lean Construction Institute, the International Group for Lean Construction, and the Associated General Contractors of America Lean Forum). In essence, maximizing value to the recipient is emphasized through consideration of more efficient and effective system thinking based means. The definition that helps us understand and practice Lean Construction is as follows:

> *As a philosophy, Lean in the Construction industry seeks the ideal state of designing and constructing a facility that generates the best value to the client by:*
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> - *Achieving a state of early and common understanding of client needs and wants among all project participants; and*
> - *Doing the right things right the first time during all phases.*

It is important to mention that embracing Lean Construction does not mean the abandonment of tools and methods in construction management, such as conceptual estimating, CPM and work breakdown structure, etc. With a stretch goal of generating the maximum value possible to the recipient in the most efficient/effective manner, then this means tools found in any discipline are acceptable if they are used in fulfillment of the Lean Construction principles. Some of these principles are captured in the following quotes:

- "Lean project delivery changes the job site concept of reliability, eliminating the 'systemic lying' that pervades traditional project management," and that "with Lean, control means ensuring outcomes starting at the crew level. A project is truly under control when you do what you say you're going to do and minimize project disruptions." Dr. Glen Ballard, co-founder of LCI.
- "Understanding the reliable workflow imperative in Lean production runs counter to the construction industry's 'can do' culture. But we must move beyond the deep cultural aspects of that mentality and create a system that cultivates judgment and reliability. We'll never trust each other if we don't become more reliable." Prof. Greg Howell, co-founder of LCI

References

Mossman, A. 2018, 'What Is Lean Construction: Another Look - 2018' In:, *26th Annual Conference of the International Group for Lean Construction.* Chennai, India, 18-20 Jul 2018. pp 1240-1250