

"Letter from the invited editor, special issue on Competitiveness in the Marine Industry"

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This is 2012 and the world still struggles with the economic downturn. This affects trade, shipping, and ultimately shipbuilding. The three major shipbuilding countries, China, Korea, and Japan are all struggling with almost zero orders for new ships.

In Colombia, the shipbuilding industry has been showing a stable behavior in the last decade, mainly fueled by domestic needs and through the entrance into new market niches internationally. Nevertheless, the country still faces great challenges in competitiveness, particularly in critical dimensions as regulatory framework, business environment, technological infrastructure and productivity.

Despite this fact, there are organizations in the country like COTECMAR, which is responsible for developing the shipbuilding and ship repair industry. This Organization is unique, in that it is a non-profit organization operating for the benefit of all Colombian shipyards and the maritime industry in general. Any revenue is funneled back into the maritime business through its Technological Development & Innovation Plan.

As part of that Plan, COTECMAR quickly recognized the need for education in the professional fields of ship design and shipbuilding. COTECMAR has been working with important Colombian universities to develop programs to support industry needs. As part of these initiatives, the Ship Science & Technology Journal was introduced to invite authors from all over the world to contribute their knowledge and, thus, ensure that Colombian maritime professionals would be at the forefront of maritime technology. Its success (this is the tenth Regular edition and the second Special edition) is clear by the quality of the papers and the international demand for copies.

Of the papers in this issue, two reflect how the environment is now an important part in the development of any industrial undertaking, especially shipbuilding and in the offshore industry, two focus on performance benchmarking, the remaining three on shipping costs and prediction of near future performance, offshore transfer of containers to smaller ships and/or barges where port facilities are not available, and the final one on optimizing shipyard warehouse layout.

The range of topics reflects that shipbuilding cannot be developed alone; it is part of the overall maritime industry, which must be developed on a wide front and in parallel.

The Editorial Board welcomes suggestions for future contributions and suggestions on how to improve the Journal with the objective of meeting its goal to become an effective tool in the education of Colombian Shipbuilders.

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