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In this issue we have five quite varied articles. The first written by R.J. Fuller has a technical flavor and considers the operating experiences with the first advanced fabric energy storage system in Australia. The paper presents a single case study and considers issues such as temperature, airflow, energy use and operational issues. While the limitations of a single case-study approach must be considered when interpreting the results of this paper, it would seem that it is not yet possible to say with certainty whether FES systems are able to reduce energy consumption while maintaining occupant comfort. Other studies of similar depth are obviously needed in other situations to confirm these findings.

The second article is written by Therese Daddow and Martin Skitmore and tackles the important subject of value management. Value management is about the efficient use of time and resources to achieve best value for money for clients in terms of the resultant product and is a technique which is increasingly used in practice. However, there have been challenges in translating the theory of value management into practice. In particular, there is a considerable overlap between the theory of risk management and the theory of value management and some confusion as to where the boundaries lie. This paper confirms this and reports the results of an interview survey of 17 professionals working in the property and construction industry. It concludes that the use of value management has become synonymous with risk management in the construction industry which is a diversion from value management's original use in manufacturing.

Article three is written by Patrick Zou and presents the results of two case studies of the knowledge management practices of two large Australian architecture, engineering and construction companies. Knowledge management is the effective management of human resources and knowledge to facilitate an innovative and efficient work environment and to achieve improved business performance. The results indicate that while technology plays an increasingly important role in knowledge management, top management commitment, total employee involvement, performance assessment and the culture of knowledge-learning are also important factors in the success of a knowledge management initiative. This is typical of research findings relating to the effective introduction of many other types of management systems.

In contrast the previous articles, the fourth article is a theoretical piece which is written by Eric Hu, Linda Zou and Craig Langston. It presents a new interlink decision making index (IDMI) for making multi-criteria decisions and represents early developmental research into a tool which may one day be used to aid decision-making about sustainability issues. The use of IDMI forms a strategic decision making tool that subsumes techniques such as cost benefit analysis, lifecycle cost analysis and environmental impact analysis and enables multiple criteria to be evaluated in an objective and dispassionate manner. Results of the two hypothetical examples appear to support the integrative and all-encompassing nature of the IDMI index as presented by the authors and its ability to overcome the limitations inherent in the subjective weighting process by giving priority to chosen critical criteria (CC), thereby enabling multiple criteria to be evaluated in an objective manner.

The final article is written by James Wong, Albert Chan and Chan Chiang and addresses the critically important issue of manpower forecasting and planning. Skills forecasting is an essential process to underpin effective business planning. Never the less, this has become a vexed issue and serious constraint on growth for many Australian professional and contracting companies which are currently experiencing severe shortages of skilled labor. It is therefore timely to review the forecasting approaches which are available and to do so considering the advanced statistical techniques and computer programs which have brought about significant advances in methods over the last decade. To this end, this paper assesses the latest employment and manpower demand estimating methods by examining their rationale, strengths and constraints. The authors anticipate that qualitative information and labor market signals will be increasingly incorporated in the quantitative modeling. Given the improvement of the data available, advanced modeling techniques and computer programs, manpower planning is likely to be more accessible with improved accuracy at every level of business.

Kind regards,
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December 2004