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Introduction

The Second International Conference on Environmentally Conscious Manufacturing (ECM) took place in Newton, Massachusetts, USA during October 28-29, 2001. Unfortunately, just weeks before the conference a significant number of papers were withdrawn due to a fear of flying and uncertainties affected by the violent events perpetrated in New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001. The civilized world is still shell-shocked over the incidents and is finding ways to adjust to it. It was, however, essential for us to move on and continue with our work as planned.

ECM is concerned with developing methods for manufacturing new products from conceptual design to final delivery and ultimately to the end-of-life disposal so that all the environmental standards and requirements are satisfied. In recent years, environmental awareness and recycling regulations have been putting pressure on many manufacturers and consumers, forcing them to produce and dispose of products in an environmentally responsible manner. This has created a need to design products that are friendly towards the environment, develop models for disassembly process planning, develop algorithms, heuristics and software to support disassembly planning as well as address other issues such as the logistic and economic viability of disassembly, recycling and remanufacturing.

This volume is a compilation of the papers selected for the conference. The papers included here represent the wide variety of fronts where research activity is taking place in the general area of ECM. Based on the quality and variety of papers included in this volume, it is clear that the conference was a success, despite the recent acts of terrorism.

Both academicians and the industrial community in the United States and abroad participated in this very timely conference. The conference provided a forum for the latest developments in the field of ECM. I hope that this volume will inspire further research in ECM and motivate new researchers to develop interest in this all too important field of study.

The conference and this volume would not have been possible without the devotion and commitment of the authors. They have been very patient in preparing their manuscripts. I would also like to express my appreciation for having been given the opportunity to organize and chair this conference. I especially want to thank the SPIE staff for providing seamless support in unraveling all of the obstacles that arose in putting the conference and this volume together.

Surendra M. Gupta

