
Editorial: Moving in a connected world

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According to Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat* and will never be the same again (Friedman, 2005). The ten forces that flattened the world were the fall of the Berlin Wall, the IPO of Netscape, work flow software, open-sourcing, outsourcing, offshoring, supply-chaining, insourcing, in-forming, and steroids. This new flat world is faster, more connected, more confusing, and more unforgiving than the world we left behind. It will require us to think longer, harder, and smarter about everything we do in business and our personal life. It will require us to work together in ways that we never have before and do so more effectively and efficiently than we ever thought possible. Transportation is an integral part of this flat world; it is one of the key connectors that make flatness possible.

Mankind has been travelling and trading since the beginning of time. Whether on foot, by horse, cart, train or plane, man has moved himself and his goods around the globe. Improvements in transportation have made the process faster and allowed the volume of people and goods to increase, but the basic reasons for this movement remain the same. In the 1970 classic *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler noted that the fastest mode of transportation available in 6000 BC was the camel caravan which averaged 8 miles a day (Toffler, 1970). By 1600 BC the chariot was racing us along at 20 miles per hour. Although the first steam engine in the 18th century allowed us to carry more goods than ever before, it was only capable of approximately 13 miles per hour. Then things began to change. On December 17, 1903, Orville Wright flew a plane for only 120 feet and kicked the world into high gear. In less than 30 years, airplanes would fly over 400 miles per hour. By the 1960s, aircraft would be approaching speeds of 4,000 miles per hour and space craft would be circling the earth at 18,000 miles per hour.

While improvements in transportation have made it possible to move faster, they have not changed the reasons why we move – people still seek a better life, more choices, new markets, and new sights. Whether people move seeking a new life in another land or simply the excitement of seeing people and things different from their home, transportation is there. Stephen Page (1994) reminds us that transportation is one of the most significant factors in international tourism which has continued to grow (with one minor glitch after September 11th) at a steady pace since the end of World War II. For many areas of the world, tourism is a key engine of economic growth and employment. Where people go, goods follow and they are following at a rapidly increasing rate which is challenging the ability of the transportation infrastructure to keep up.

The recently published book, *The Box: How the Shipping Container made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (Levinson, 2006), looks at one of the most significant developments in the history of trade – the container. Containerisation made intermodalism possible and lowered the cost of connecting people and goods more than most people ever thought possible, unless you were a visionary like Malcom McLean. The decrease in shipping costs created by this box makes outsourcing and offshoring a paying proposition. The growing complexity of the transportation options available to

companies has made insourcing a new opportunity for many companies. Companies like UPS are now embedding themselves in companies who make exceptional widgets, but are lost in the complex logistics of moving them to markets. Managing the supply chain in ways that allow your company to efficiently and effectively connect suppliers from around the world in an effort to produce the products and services demanded by an increasingly fragmented consumer world has become essential for business success in the flat world.

The *World Review of Intermodal Transportation Research (WRITR)* is an effort to bring together in one place the transportation, supply chain, and logistics threads of the flat world and give researchers and practitioners a forum to discuss and debate the changing landscape. The goal is to attract contributions from around the world in the belief that best practice can happen anywhere. While some of the papers in this maiden issue deal primarily with a single mode of transportation, it is hoped that greater understanding of the challenges each mode faces will help create the links within the system and lead to a more thoughtful consideration of the transportation system needed in a flat world. The book review in this issue, *Wedding of the Waters* (Bernstein, 2005), was chosen not because it is a fascinating history of the making of the Erie Canal, but because it reminds us of the power of transportation to move people and goods, creating connections and economic prosperity. It also reminds us of the value of government involvement in transportation planning for infrastructure development and maintenance.

The papers in this maiden issue of *WRITR* were selected to represent the key regions of the world and transportation/supply chain issues facing the flat world of the 21st century. On behalf of the Editorial Board, I want to welcome you to this first issue and ask you to take the journey with us. Your comments, suggestions, ideas, and articles are welcome at *WRITR*.

References

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