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Preface

The 16th International Conference on Flexible Automation and Intelligent Manufacturing, FAIM 2006, returns to its founding University in Limerick, Ireland. The 1st International FAIM conference in 1991 resulted from collaboration between the University in Limerick and the Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Prof. Munir Ahmad (then UL), and Prof. Bill Sullivan (then Virginia Tech.) have been central to the development of the Conference since its inception That year delegates from 18 Countries were in attendance and 100 papers were published in the conference proceedings. Since 1991 FAIM has been hosted in many prestigious Universities on either side of the Atlantic:

- 1991 University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland
- 1992 Virginia Tech (in Washington DC), USA
- 1993 University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland
- 1994 Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA
- 1995 University of Stuttgart, Germany
- 1996 Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA
- 1997 University of Teeside, Middlesbrough, UK
- 1998 Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA
- 1999 Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands
- 2000 University of Maryland, Maryland, USA
- 2001 Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland
- 2002 Dresden University of Technology, Dresden, Germany
- 2003 University of South Florida, Tampa, USA
- 2004 Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada
- 2005 University of Duesto, Bilbao, Spain

In 2006, University of Limerick plays host to delegates from 34 countries with approximately 150 papers successfully passing through the stringent refereeing process, enabling them to be presented at the Conference and published in the Conference proceedings. The Conference continues to bring together International expertise from the academic and industrial fields, who push forward the boundaries of research knowledge and manufacturing best practice in a world of changing demographics, energy generation and supply demands, developing technologies and supply chain systems, in the context of sustainable environmental strategies.

The accepted papers for this year’s Conference in University of Limerick have all been peer reviewed, and selected from the 180 papers submitted, which resulted from the 225 abstracts considered for the Conference. The topics, which are considered in the papers include:

- Engineering for Sustainability
- Supply Chain Strategies
- Change Management
- Simulation, Manufacturing Systems
- Manufacturing Processes and Technology
- Materials Technology
- Product Design/Design for Manufacture/Assembly
- Product Development, Rapid Protoyping,
- Concurrent Engineering
- Business Process Re-Engineering,
- Lean & Agile Manufacture
- Industrial Automation and Process Control
- Quality Control, Quality Management TQM
- IT & Internet Applications, E–Manufacturing
- Human Factors and Human Resources in Manufacturing
- Environment Engineering, Health and Safety
- Manufacturing Education and Training
- CAD/CAM Flexible Manufacturing, CIM

FAIM 2006 addresses contemporary best practices in manufacturing in the context of dynamic world markets, which require creative and innovative solutions and strategies. Emerging trends and challenges are discussed, and special workshops include, Trading with China, and Engineering for sustainability.
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The continued success of FAIM can be attributed to the guidance of its two founders, Prof M.M. Ahmad and Prof. W. G. Sullivan, whom we would like to acknowledge and thank.

We would further like to acknowledge the contribution of the International programme, and local organising committee, for their work in paper reviewing, scheduling, the preparation of the papers, session moderators, organisation of the social events, and the general operation involved in the running an international conference.

We would like to acknowledge the role of the University of Limerick, in being able to run such a prestigious conference, and thank all the support staff, who often go unnoticed.

Finally, we would like to thank Deborah Tudge, Plassey Campus Centre, and Louise Mulcahy, Limerick Travel, for their support; Siobhan Harris, Susan Murphy, and Anne, O’Brien, the conference secretariat; and our many sponsors.
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