

# editor's note



**WHILE CHECKING MY FOURTH-GRADE DAUGHTER'S HOMEWORK RECENTLY, I REMEMBERED THE OLD LESSON THAT NOTHING IS EVER AS SIMPLE AS IT SEEMS.** Julia's math homework involved a table of winning times, over a period of years, of a women's Olympic racing event. The assignment was to chart a curve and also determine the mean and median winning times.

The curve was fine—except for the time from 1968, which was much faster than would have been expected. Despite my daughter's eye-rolling, I launched into a long-winded explanation of the geopolitical situation at the time and the East German doping abuses (kind of ironic, given recent U.S. Olympic history).

Similar complexities exist in the world of sustainability. Even something as seemingly wonderful as the Kyoto Accords is in reality fraught with intertwined causes and effects. Of course it's a good thing to reduce pollution. But would implementation of the Kyoto Accord actually do so? Consider this: If U.S. manufacturing costs increase as a result of the need to decrease emissions, then it's likely that production will move to less expensive factories, such as those in China. But U.S. factories already produce eight to ten times less pollution than their counterparts in China. So if manufacturing moves from our relatively efficient plants to China, which does not have to reduce emissions under Kyoto, then the net effect might actually be increased pollution. Added to that is the issue of economy of scale. As production moves offshore, the cost of domestic production increases further, thereby driving even more production offshore and further increasing pollution. Wow. Some of the discussions I've heard make my head spin.

And the new world of BIM and virtual prototyping is almost as confusing. We've all heard the promises of huge time and cost savings. But

there are hard questions about who will save money, who will save time, and who will profit from the new technology. A good place to start looking for these answers is this year's NASCC: The Steel Conference, April 18-20 in New Orleans (visit [www.aisc.org/nascc](http://www.aisc.org/nascc) for information or to register). Will the sessions—even with their very practical slant—give you all the answers you need? No. But they're a good start. Even better is the opportunity to talk with others at the conference—designers, detailers, fabricators, and software vendors—about what they're doing, as well as the practical ways to implement this brave new world.

Of course, BIM isn't the only focus at NASCC. The conference kicks off with a panel discussion from mill leaders; it's a chance to ask all those hard questions about the state of the steel industry. And while we divide the conference into tracks for engineers, fabricators, detailers, and erectors, there's no need to pigeonhole yourself. A lot of sessions are of interest and value to all attendees, so make sure you review the entire program.

The conference is a great opportunity for everyone—whether you're looking for continuing education (yes, you can almost completely satisfy your CEU requirements by attending the technical sessions at the conference), exchanging ideas (with peers, clients, and employers), or looking for a new beam line or software upgrade.

I look forward to seeing you in New Orleans!

**SCOTT MELNICK**  
EDITOR

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