It is my pleasure to write a few words for a special issue on LIMMS (Laboratory for Integrated Micromechatronic Systems) on the year for its 20th anniversary. LIMMS is the joint research laboratory between Institute of Industrial Science (IIS) of the University of Tokyo and Institut des sciences de l’ingénierie et des systèmes (INSIS) in Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Its primary aim is to welcome researchers from CNRS in the University of Tokyo, mainly in IIS, and to conduct joint research on MEMS (micro electromechanical systems) devices and fabrication as well as MEMS applications in biomedical and nano technologies. Those researchers are allocated in the laboratories studying MEMS and jointly work with a counterpart from the UTokyo side. The typical length of their stay is two years which is enough to complete a research theme and to publish a joint paper or two. The total number of researchers who have been accommodated in LIMMS exceed 150.

This special issue includes memorial papers on LIMMS history and its French founder, Prof. Jean-Jacques Gagnepain, and reports on the latest project SMMiL-E to establish a joint research lab in Lille, France. Concerning the recent research activities, many review papers are included especially on bio-MEMS and scanning probe microscopy. I hope the readers become familiar with LIMMS achievement over two decades and the variety and quality of our current research.

The 20-year anniversary ceremony was held on Thursday January 29, 2015 in IIS site of the Komaba Campus in Tokyo. The event was highlighted by the presences of Prof. Yoshiaki Nakano, Director General of IIS, Prof. Jean-Yves Marzin, Director of the Institute of Engineering Sciences and Systems of CNRS and the Ambassador of France in Japan, his Excellency Thierry Dana. A large delegation of CNRS researchers and directors from France joined the event. During the celebration, a room of the IIS was dedicated to the memory of the Prof. Jean-Jacques Gagnepain and a plaque was unveiled.

Acknowledgement

This issue was made possible by the dedicated effort of LIMMS co-directors, Prof. Hideki Kawakatsu and Prof. Dominique Collard supported by secretaries of LIMMS. I also want to thank all the officers in IIS who have taken care of our joint research over twenty years. Last but not least, all those who conducted research in LIMMS are acknowledged; their dedicated work is the key to LIMMS success.

LIMMS have been operating thanks to the great support of:
- Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science
- Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
- Institute of Industrial of the University of Tokyo
- Center for International Research on Micronano Mechatronics
- VLSI Design and Education Center, The University of Tokyo

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Foreword for Special Issue on LIMMS