ICDE'2000

As many of you perhaps are aware, the deadline for the ICDE'2000 conference, which is the flagship conference of our technical committee, was June 16. I am co-PC chair along with Gerhard Weikum. We had almost 300 submissions, so this promises to be a very selective and high quality conference. Our PC members are now just beginning the reviewing of the submissions, with authors notified of acceptance by October first. ICDE'2000 will be held in San Diego, California from Feb. 28 to March 3. San Diego is a great place (even more so in the winter when the weather is tough in many other places) and the conference will have an excellent program. While we will not know the complete technical program for a while, we do know that there will be two great keynote speakers,

Jim Gray: Senior Researcher in Microsoft Research, and 1999 ACM Turing Award winner;

Dennis Tsichritzis: Chairman of the Executive Board of GMD German National Research Center for Information Technology.

Both are terrific speakers with great insights and much useful information to convey. I would encourage you to plan to attend.

This Issue

Database performance has long been a topic of great practical importance. This is attested to by our industry history of benchmark wars. Initially, it was the transaction processing benchmarks, TPC-A and TPC-B (variants of the debit-credit benchmark). Subsequently, transaction processing benchmarking has moved to TPC-C (the order-entry benchmark). To gain insights into database performance on decision support applications, the TPC-D benchmark was introduced (recently transformed into two variants, TPC-H and TPC-R). In all the benchmarking, database systems are meticulously hand-tuned for optimal performance, frequently by system developers who know the systems inside out.

But times are changing. Good performance continues as an industry goal. But many users cannot afford the level of technical expertise that is required to achieve vendor benchmark performance levels. The small pool of experts, and their large expense, hence is substantial barriers to ordinary customers' ability to achieve satisfactory performance. This is where pre-tuning, self-tuning, and tuning tools enter the picture. There has been a substantial increase in interest in this area over the past few years. And this interest spans both academic and commercial worlds.

The current issue, ably edited by Surajit Chaudhuri, provides a good cross-section of the exciting and commercially important work now going on in this kind of performance tuning. The issue contains articles from a number of leading vendors as well as leading researchers. The result is that the issue provides a very good sense of the status of this field. I want to thank Surajit for his fine job and hard editorial work in organizing this issue.