TCDE Election

As you can see from the short letter from the TCDE nominating committee (on page 2), Erich Neuhold has been elected as chair of the IEEE Techincal Committee on Data Engineering. His term will start in January, 2002. Congratulations Erich on your new position! Erich has been serving as TCDE vice chair, and is the current chair of the ICDE Steering Committee.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Betty Salzberg, our current TCDE chair, whose term ends this month. Betty has done an outstanding job of re-invigorating the technical committee. We have a TCDE web site, we have a regular meeting at our TCDE sponsored conference ICDE. We have also had meetings to discuss issues related to TCDE finances, conference sponsorships, and member services. During Betty's term, two significant decisions were made relative to our publications. First, the Bulletin is now an entirely electronic publication. This is important as it means that our expenses drop dramatically. (The Bulletin was the largest item by far in the TCDE budget.) Second, the TCDE was then able to sponsor the distribution of the SIGMOD Anthology to its members (who were not also SIGMOD members). These were major accomplishments of Betty's leadership over the past four years.

The Current Issue

The database technical field had its start in business data processing. Databases have, over time, gotten faster and faster at handling larger and larger volumes of business transactions. Along with these improvements in performance metrics, databases have evolved into search engines that are increasing capable of dealing with complex, decision support style queries. This gave rise to the OLAP community, data warehouses, and data mining. Increased functionality has also been an on-going theme in database evolution. And we have seen databases applied to time-series data, geographical data, etc.

One of the truly challenging areas to which database have been applied is the area of text search, and its integration with move conventional structured queries. Information retrieval (IR) is a field that is even older than databases. But IR did not attempt this integration. IR itself is a hard problem. Its integration with database search adds additional complication. However, progress is being made. And database vendors sense that there is a real market for this unified search capability. Hence, the current issue on "Text and Databases" is very timely.

Luis Gravano, the December issue editor, has himself worked in this area. He has used his knowledge of the area in bringing together a very interesting sample of the work going on in unifying text and database search. I particularly appreciate that Luis has successfully coaxed database vendors to contribute to this issue, thus keeping our field apprised of the commercial state-of-the-art. I want to thank Luis for his very successful effort in bringing us all this report on where we stand with text and database search.