ICDE'2001

The International Conference on Data Engineering is being held in Heidelburg, Germany from April 2 to April 6, 2001. This conference is the flagship conference for the Technical Committee on Data Engineering, the organization that sponsors the Data Engineering Bulletin. This conference is one of the three key annual database conferences, covering the entire database field. Alex Buchmann and Dimitrios Georgakopoulos, the program committee chairs, have selected a very strong research program, and there is also a fine industrial program, together with strong invited speakers from IBM, SAP, and Dresdner Bank. Heidelburg is a major tourist attraction in Germany and provides a wonderful venue for the conference. Visit the conference web site at `https://www.icde2001.org/guest` for additional details. I personally am very much looking forward to attending this conference, which should be enjoyable technically, socially, and touristically.

The Current Issue

Our world is in the process of being transformed from a world where businesses and consumers communicate with each other via paper and extensive human "intervention" into a world in which the communication is electronic and mostly automated. This is the world of e-services, epitomized for most of us by Amazon.com, which is, of course, a B2C business. Hidden from the general public is a wider world of e-services in which businesses are streamlining the way in which they interact with each other, the B2B world. The B2B e-services are probably even more important in the short term than B2C, as businesses automate the way that they deal with their suppliers and business customers.

E-services have very large TP and database technical elements. Hence it should not be a surprise that many people from our "data engineering" community have become involved in one way or another in building, or working with folks who build e-services. Indeed, many of the concerns that have long been part of the TP and database area, scaleability, reliability, availability, performance, and data integration, are major concerns in the provision of e-services as well. Also, a new round of standards activity involving interactions between autonomous organizations is also under way, so that businesses (and their computing infrastructure) can understand each other. This standards activity is mostly centered around XML (broadly defined). These areas are parts of the "infrastructure" that is needed for e-services to succeed.

Gerhard Weikum, our issue editor, has succeeded in his solicitation of papers from research groups that are engaged in building substantial research prototypes. More surprisingly, he has induced technical folks working at companies actively engaged in building and selling parts of the e-services infrastructure to submit articles as well. Hence the current issue provides a good balance between research and what is currently happening "in the trenches". This is an explosive area for our field, with very substantial activity. I want to thank Gerhard for his hard work and successful efforts.