The IEEE Technical Committee on Data Engineering

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The Current Issue

Users have eagerly bought the wonderful technology provided by database vendors while simultaneously struggling to exploit it effectively. So making systems, and particularly database systems, easier to use has been on the hot list of research topics for many years. It is very difficult to make systems simple to use. And the early industrial efforts were not very successful, with systems performing badly "out of the box" and with users required to provide insightful values for dozens of performance parameters to improve on this. Things began to change in the 1990's when Surajit Chaudhuri's insights on automatic index selection led to an explosion of new industrial interest in this area.

Over time, this renewed industrial and research interest in automatic management of database systems led to the formation of the Working Group on Self Managing Database Systems, chaired by Sam Lightstone. Sam, in representing the working group, intended to organize issues of the Bulletin devoted to this topic. By happy circumstance, Natassa Ailamaki, the current issue editor also had an interest in self-managing systems and decided to proceed with an issue on this topic. This was a bit earlier than I had expected, but surely timely considering the importance of the topic. The issue contains articles both from researchers and from technical folks working for the three dominant database vendors. This is the kind of issue that is the strength of the Bulletin, at the intersection of research and industrial practice. I want to thank Natassa Ailamaki for initiating the effort that led to the issue and for her hard work in bringing it to fruition. Readers will be well rewarded by the technical papers presented here.