Organizational Changes

This issue contains letters from the incoming and outgoing chairs of the two key organizations within the IEEE Computer Society that are involved in the database area. I urge you to read these letters. The organizations are:

- the Technical Committee on Data Engineering (TCDE), which is the sponsoring organization for both this publication (the Bulletin) and for the International Conference on Data Engineering (ICDE). The outgoing chair is Erich Neuhold of the University of Vienna, the incoming chair is Paul Larson of Microsoft.

- the International Conference on Data Engineering Steering Committee (StC). The outgoing chair is again Erich Neuhold, the incoming chair is Calton Pu of the Georgia Institute of Technology.

I'd like to thank Erich for the enormous role that he has played in chairing so successfully both of these organizations, and to wish the new chairs, Paul and Calton, all the best in their ongoing efforts to build on the foundation that Erich as provided.

The Current Issue

The current issue of the Bulletin is on the topic of multi-lingual support within information systems. This is a topic that is important now and will only continue to grow in importance over time. The world is now "flat" as Thomas Friedman reminds us in his book. This means there are users and developers of information systems all over the world. Further there is clearly source material in a very wide variety of languages. Accessing this source material via a database or over the web is of increasing importance as people throughout the world expect to be able to find virtually everything ever written anywhere.

What makes this topic an interesting technical area, even a research area, is how extraordinarily difficult it is to deal with the entire gamut of languages. Many languages and language families have idiosyncracies that make things complicated. Simple alphabets are all too frequently the exception rather than the rule. Dealing with these diverse languages within a common framework is a very challenging problem.

Jayant Haritsa has done a fine job of bringing together a some of the work in this area, from a sampling of the languages that we need to be able to deal with. This work comes from both academic and industrial organizations, which indicates to me that there is both great practical interest and real technical challenges in providing multi-lingual support within information systems. I think you will find this issue to be a real eye-opener in terms of both the difficulty of multi-lingual issues and the ingenuity of systems that support it.