

Changes to the Bulletin Web Sites

I have never claimed to be a web site developer. But I have been maintaining the Bulletin web sites for many years. Many of you, I am sure, were aware of the relatively amateurish formatting of the web site.

Now, after some consultations, but mostly on my own, I have redesigned the web page that presents access to the papers of an issue. My original intent had been to have this page be a clone of the front cover of the full issue, which includes the table of contents. The table of contents on the web page were to contain links to the articles to which they referred. No one need tell me that I did not succeed. The best that could be said was that it was vaguely reminiscent of the front cover.

I got tired looking at that. So the redesigned page now comes much closer to matching the front cover of the issue. This involved my learning more than I really wanted to know about html. Sigh. But I am quite pleased with the result. If you print out the web page (first in print preview, removing the header and footer, and removing the margins), and compare that printout with the printed front cover of the issue, you should see that they are now strikingly similar. I have converted all 2008 and 2009 issues to this new format.

It would be great if all the old issues could be converted to the new format. I may do that, but it will be done very gradually over an extended period. Should any readers volunteer for this task, I would provide them with the html template and divide up the work among the volunteers. Any volunteer would get a hearty "thank you" from in my issue letter.

The Current Issue

Workflows have been studied since the days when much of the technology was tied to systems with TP monitors, beginning in the late 1970's. We tend not to use the term TP monitor much anymore, though it is featured prominently in the famous Gray and Reuter text (published in 1993). Then after a flurry of activity attempting to make workflows both more general and transactional, much of the database community lost interest in the subject.

But the business community never lost interest in workflows, though how they were described has changed over time. Frequently one sees the term "business process management" used now. But the basic idea, while it has evolved, remains. And work has continued to go on, though only loosely connected now to the database community. My hope is that the current issue can re-ignite database community interest in this area.

The database community has skills and interests that are strongly related to this area. Jianwen Su, the issue editor, himself has a database background and has long had an interest in this area, knows the topic well, and knows the research going on in the area. He has used his knowledge to prepare the current issue, which presents a nice overview of the diversity of ways that business process management, especially of the data intensive variety, is being attacked currently. I like the area as it is related to fault-tolerant applications, a long-time interest of mine. I want to thank Jianwen, who has done a fine job in assembling the issue, with a truly international set of authors, including both university and industrial groups. I am sure that readers will learn much from what is presented here.