Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

TCDE Activities

It has become a recent tradition that the vice chair of the technical committee be the chair of the ICDE Steering Committee. This is a worthwhile "tradition" that ensures continuing close collaboration between the technical committee and the steering committee. In continuance of this tradition, I have appointed Masaru Kitsuregawa as the technical committee vice chair. Masaru is the current steering committee chair and was present at ICDE in Hanover, chairing the steering committee meeting as it considered venues for future conferences. I would like to thank Calton Pu for having served as vice chair of the technical committee, and for his leading role in chairing the ICDE steering committee. His steering committee role required much more just recently as Calton coped with a conference planning crisis. His efforts ensured that ICDE would continue to prosper.

I also want to report on my first attendance at the IEEE Computer Society Technical Activities Committee (TAC) meeting last month in Los Alamitos, California. There was wide recognition that Technical Committees are very valuable to the Computer Society, both in providing much of the technical content of the Digital Library, and in bringing in conference revenue. Thus, TC's help maintain the technical stature of the Computer Society and contribute financially as the Computer Society struggles with the shift from hardcopy to electronic publication.

Despite this recognition and importance, the technical committees have little say in the governance of the Computer Society. A modest beginning in an effort to change that situation began in Los Alamitos. Under the leadership of Hilarie Orman, chair of the Technical Committee on Security and Privacy, a subcommittee was formed to propose changes that would enable TC chairs to elect the chair of the TAC. The TAC chair currently represents technical committees on the Computer Society Board of Governors, so this change should enable views from the technical committees to be better represented at this next higher organizational level.

The Current Issue

What could be better than a database system that answers your queries on the topic of your interest? The answer to this is contained in part of the question itself. The system would be more useful if it knew your interests and could take them into account when answering your question. That, in a sentence, is the goal of the "preference aware databases" research area, and how to do this, and what it means, is the subject of the current issue. Like much of the database area, this is a technical area that is grounded in strong commercial interest. And the newness of the area represents a wonderful opportunity for research with real impact.

Mohamed Mokbel, the editor for this issue, is active in the preference database area, having multiple publications in the area with colleagues at Minnesota. He knows both the area and the researchers working in it. The current issue is, of course, a snapshot of the area, which will undoubtedly evolve fairly rapidly. But it captures a broad cross section of the work going on. In addition, the issue demonstrates the diversity of the community engaged in this effort, with authors from both academia and industry, with a very wide geographic distribution. I want to thank Mohamed for the fine job he has done in assembing the issue. The issue is, I think, a successful answer our "preference query" as to what is new in database research, where we have a preference for exciting areas.

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