Editor's Notes

The lion's share of this issue is dedicated to a special section on Electronic Commerce, which has been edited by Prof. Asuman Dogac of the Middle East Technical University. E-Commerce is a key emerging area in which the database community can and should make important contributions. The papers presented here comprise a wide-ranging overview of the many issues that need to be addressed. Asuman did a great job, choosing ten papers from the large number of submissions she received in response to the Call For Papers (as well as from some arm twisting at E-Commerce workshops and conferences around the world). Asuman managed the review and revision process, resulting in the excellent section we have here. I thank her for the time and hard work she put into it, and I encourage others of you to come up with suggestions for future special sections.

This issue also contains a report on future directions in database research from a meeting held at Asilomar this past August, which was organized by Jim Gray and Michael Stonebraker. The timing for this particular meeting was motivated by the fact that it had been ten years since the widely-discussed Laguna Beach meeting (which was reported in the March 1989 issue of SIGMOD Record). While the Asilomar report is intentionally less controversial than its predecessor, it does include some very strong opinions about where the field should be going. In particular, there was wide agreement that database researchers, reviewers, and funding agencies need to focus on more speculative research (i.e., problems with a ten year or longer horizon) and to expand their areas of interest beyond the scope of today's existing database systems. In fact, it is important to note that the "Grand Challenge" posed at the end of the report does not contain the word "database".

The issue is rounded out with another excellent Standards column by Andrew Eisenberg and Jim Melton, the always interesting "Influential Papers" feature put together by Rick Snodgrass, and a timely paper on the state of Middleware systems by David Ritter, which was obtained for the Industry Perspectives column by Len Seligman. Finally, I am sorry to announce that we will no longer be able to rely upon the valuable assistance of Yvette Smith, who has done a great job organizing the production of SIGMOD Record over the past couple of years. Yvette is moving on to a new job starting in November. I'd like to thank Yvette for her help and wish her the best of luck in her new career.

Michael Franklin
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