

# Preface

The annual VLDB conference is one of the oldest database conferences, and its proceedings are recognised as one of the best-established forums of research discussion in the world-wide database community. Following VLDB '93 in Dublin, there was considerable support for the view that the focus of this discussion should move to pay more attention to papers that were tackling new frontiers, or opening up new areas: the so-called *hot topics*. Thus the program committees have endeavoured to select such papers, but of course not to compromise the reputation of VLDB proceedings for containing papers of journal quality.

Another development, begun in 1994, has been to have a parallel industry track. The papers for this have been selected in various ways by the three regional industry track chairs. In most cases, following SIGMOD where it is well established, we include published abstracts of these papers as a matter of record. However, in some cases the track chairs have worked closely with the authors to get them to discuss and bring out issues that have arisen in industrial use and which raise fundamental problems needing further research. We have included these as full papers in the hope that they will be as much cited and discussed as the other papers, by those looking for research topics.

Out of 297 papers submitted, we selected only 52, which is consistent with the established acceptance rate for VLDB. This year we had three program committees, meeting in California, Singapore and Germany. The final program was put together by the three PC chairs at a very amicable meeting in Heidelberg on 29th April. Thus, despite our global separation, the PC chairs would wish to record that they shared closely similar views on all questions, and enjoyed the privilege of working together to serve the world database community.

The standard and reputation of the conference is maintained by the reputation and dedication of its PC members. Every paper was submitted in full and read by three referees who are accustomed to journal refereeing. The feedback process gave time for minor corrections and improvements before publication. The result is the interesting and valuable set of papers contained in these proceedings, for which we must congratulate and thank their authors. We also thank the invited speakers for sharing with us their vision of the future. We are very grateful to the PC members and other referees, who are listed previously, for their time-consuming and meticulous work in judging the papers.

We are also grateful to the Industry track chairs, Peter Lockemann, Hamid Pirahesh, and Yoshifumi Masunaga, and their subcommittee, for their work in soliciting strong contributions from industry. We especially want to thank Peter Lockemann for playing a coordinating role and representing the industry track subcommittee at the Heidelberg meeting. The program also includes 7 excellent tutorials selected by the Tutorial Chair, Claude Delobel, and 3 interesting panels organized by the Panel Chair, Stefano Ceri.

Generous thanks are due to the team at Zurich, particularly Klaus Dittrich, Hans Schek, Andreas Geppert and Steve Blott, without whose efforts none of this would have happened.

Last, but not least, we thank all the attendees for contributing to the success of the conference. To you and to all those who did not have the opportunity of attending the conference, we are pleased to offer these proceedings as a snapshot of the state of database research and practice today. We hope you will find it an invaluable reference and a source of inspiration for new ideas.

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