Foreword

Greetings!

It is a great pleasure to invite the participants to the VLDB 1996 conference in Bombay, India. As a historical note, Sham Navathe first made a proposal for holding the VLDB conference in India at the 1987 Brighton, U.K. VLDB meeting. That proposal was turned down because it did not come from within India. The idea of making a proposal from India took a concrete shape when the database professionals met in a meeting organised by P. Sadanandan during the COMAD'91 conference in Bombay. Subsequently, from India, Anand Deshpande, P. Sadanandan and T.M. Vijayaraman did the ground work with Anand Deshpande making a preliminary proposal at Vancouver in 1992 for the 1996 VLDB in Bombay. More database professionals from India joined in the effort, rallied together under the leadership of Anand Deshpande and made a successful proposal at Dublin, Ireland in 1993 for the 1996 VLDB to be held at Bombay. Finally, here we are, with a dream come true when the premier international database conference is coming back to the Asian sub-continent after the previous venues of Tokyo in 1977, Singapore in 1984 and Kyoto in 1986. It is indeed a proud moment for the database community of persons of the Indian origin, a majority of whom are spread all over the world.

The conference was made possible because of the willingness of the Computer Society of India to support it in every possible way. The COMAD (Conference on Management of Data) series of conferences that have been held every December under the auspices of CSI for the past seven years have helped in setting the stage for the VLDB conference. Many organisations have directly and indirectly supported us; among them are Persistent Systems and Onward Technologies as well as IBM, Almaden Research Center and Technical University of Darmstadt; these organisations have contributed services and personnel during the phase of planning and preparation for the conference.

A conference with such high quality standards takes years of planning and is a true team effort. For this year's conference, the program committees were chosen about two years ago to include individuals all around the world - an impressive list of nearly 100 program committee members appears elsewhere. These individuals shape the program by choosing the best submissions out of over 300 full papers submitted for consideration. The Program Committee Chairs, namely, C. Mohan, N.L. Sarda, and Alex Buchmann, have done an excellent job of running three separate program committees in three continents and then combining the results into forming a streamlined program for this conference. We are also lucky to have four excellent invited speakers at this conference thanks to a collective effort by the program, industrial, and the general chairs. P. Sadanandan and Sharma Chakravarthy helped the program committee a great deal with the tutorial solicitation and selection. Finally, a set of panels were formed with the efforts of Amit Sheth and V.R. Govindarajan.

To make the program interesting for the local Indian community, we have tried to place a special emphasis on the industrial side of database products and applications this year. A separate program track was formed from the outset. With the able assistance of Jim Gray, Anand Deshpande, and Peter Lockemann as Industry/Application chairs, we have put together an excellent set of presentations that describe ongoing projects in database development and case-study experiences in applications.

Given the magnitude of the conference and its true international character, the logistics are overwhelming. The burden has mostly been carried by our friends at Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay and at the National Center for Software Technology in Bombay. A large number of volunteers from both organisations have lent a helping hand. Harish Mehta of Onward Technologies played a superb leadership role in running the local organisation and brought about excellent co-operation with industrial organisations in India. Baba Dhopeshwarkar had the double duty of counting both the dollars and the rupees. T. M. Vijayaraman has done a tremendous job of co-ordination to make sure that this proceedings was made available at the conference.

The overall effort of organising this conference, since we won the bid in 1993 has been a long and arduous road; but it is filled with many pleasant and rewarding experiences and exciting events. Last, but not the least, we are very pleased to see that organising this conference has brought together a sense of togetherness among the database professionals in India. We hope that this conference will be remembered as a landmark event in the booming software industry in India. The generous support from NASSCOM, the apex software industry body in India and the several industry sponsors to the conference, bears testimony to the recognition of the significance of database research and practice to this community and consequently the value of this conference to this region. We finally thank all those whom we could not name individually, but who have helped in many ways to make this a significant event.

Deepak Phatak and Shamkant B. Navathe
General Chairs
July 1996