

FOREWORD

This issue brings a very varied group of articles that demonstrate the great range of influence that Information Technology has on our lives. We are living at a time in which the role of this technology is greatly expanding but, as this expansion continues, it will become so pervasive that it will just be part of the normal environment. Just as the carpenter no longer perceives the hammer as fully separate from himself, we are slowly accepting computers as extensions of ourselves and a natural part of the space around us.

The article by Shean-Shyong Chiu and Yih-Ping Luh, “Architecture Design of Shop Floor Information System—Using WWW and Three-tier Architecture”, is in fact specifically about the use of computers in determining industrial space. By using the resources of the World Wide Web in the information-flow of a shop floor, a space whose structure is both more fluid and flexible is established, making data move more easily throughout the shop and thereby allowing the shop to work more efficiently and flexibly. Here, space information becomes intricately intertwined.

“Designing a Flexible Production Flow Using IDEF1x—an IC Packaging WIP System” by Long-Chin Lin, Chih-Hung Tsai, Kai-Ying Chen, and Rong-Kwei Li is also concerned with using IT to make shop floors more efficient; here it is specifically in the context of integrated circuit packaging. Like the system explored in the first article, the one described here uses the flow information to establish a more effective flow of goods.

IT moves from the factory to the home in “Virtual Media & Entertainment House” by C. K. Yeo, B. S. Lee, V. Anand, Pathik Gupta, Arun Puri, and Amol Dhabolkar. Here the technology is used not for a specific purpose but to act as a multi-functional entertainment and communications device in the home. What is most important about the technology is not that it provides us with more contact with technology but that it uses that technology to bring people together within a common, though spatially dispersed environment. Once again the technology will become an essential and almost invisible part of the social environment.

In the final article, “An Empirical Study of the Effectiveness of E-Survey Methods in a Web-based Environment,” JingPu Song and P. W. Khong extend the discussion of IT as a mediator of social interaction by looking at a particular type of communication that has become central to our economic lives: the opinion survey. By reaching out to vast numbers of people all over the world, the internet has obvious applications to survey procedures. The article, while analyzing the merits of web-based surveys, also analyzes the problems that may be associated with this use of the internet as a method of determining the character of the social environment.

Not so many years ago, the night was dark and mysterious; today, we simply accept artificially lighted nights as if it were completely natural. As achievements such as the ones described in this issue increase, information technology will also become totally natural to us.

Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman
Editor-in-Chief