

FOREWORD

In every issue we publish, I am struck both by how varied and how valuable the articles published in the journal are. This is a token of just how important the field we cover and how wide the effect is on our commercial, educational, civic, and personal lives. I never get over the excitement of new work even when that work has only a tangential relationship to my own particular interests. This is, I think, a strong indicator that we in the field truly are a community with shared interests and even shared values. We may only see each other at the occasional conference but we still share in the cooperative enterprise that is the IT field. I am very happy that the IJCIM plays such an important role in the communications networks of this community.

The first article in this issue, by M.K. Zarinah and S.S. Siti is, in fact, precisely about the establishment of small cooperative communities, in this case those involved in collaborative learning. It used to be said that computers would isolate each of us into an electronic web but in the end much the opposite has happened, as the growth of social networks demonstrates. To have such communities work well, the software must function properly and in this article the authors, using the mini-community of a focus group, consider the issue of elicitation among the group learners.

In R. Muruga Perumal's article, the role of computers in the large social sphere of commerce is investigated. Electronic commerce has transformed many aspects of our lives but arguably the full scope of this revolutionary electronic development has yet to be reached. As the dot.com failures of a few years ago demonstrated, it is not enough just to establish an e-business; one must actually meet the needs and requirements of a community. This article considers these issues with reference to the particular characteristics of East Asia.

Geography also plays a role in Md. Delwar Hossain and Md. Mehedi Masud's article. Community is very much tied with land and GIS technology provides an extremely powerful method for mapping out the geographic features of land in a manner that provides great insight. To gain that insight, however, non-technical users need to effectively negotiate the system and this article provides guidance for that.

Efficient use of Time is as important as the use of space and nowhere is this more true than in the manufacturing process. With the need to meet customer demand in an industry with many products, each one of which is the result of many complex processes. Clearly the only effective way to handle this is through computers and L.Siva Rama Krishna, G.Ranga Janardhan and C.S.P Rao provide a web-oriented solution for integrating these important time-based tasks.

Quick efficient communication of data, including visual data, plays an important role in modern lives, from sending a picture of a new baby from a cell phone to transmitting pictures that convey highly technical information. This means that compression of large amounts of pictorial information will be increasingly important in an increasingly visual world. S.N. Sivanandam, A. Pasumpon Pandian and P. Rani look at this issue with reference to the compression standards of what is perhaps the most used pictorial format.

The technical networks of the internet have done much to transform and enrich the various social, economic, and political networks that make up our lives. We at the IJCIM are very glad to use the old networking medium of paper to contribute to this transformation.

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