

It is just one year since I became Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Research and Practice in Information Technology (JRPIT)*. I am pleased to be able to report that most of the things I aimed to achieve in my first year have indeed been achieved. First and foremost, all four issues of Volume 35 (2003) appeared in 2003. Secondly, the quality of the articles is high. In this context I note that the current acceptance rate is about 30%. And *JRPIT* reached out to the wider membership of the Australian Computer Society by publishing more papers of general interest. These included articles by Appelbe on Open Source Software, de Raadt, Watson and Toleman on Introductory Programming Languages at Australian Universities, Trauth, Neilsen and Von Hellens on the IT Gender Gap, and Bowman on an Australian dot.com Company that Survived the Tech Wreck.

Computing is a very fast moving discipline and timely publication is therefore vitally important. To increase the speed of handling of papers, articles for *JRPIT* are submitted electronically and communications between the editors and referees are also electronic. I have taken a very firm line as regards refereeing times with papers which we believe cannot be refereed in a reasonable period being returned to the authors advising them to submit them to another journal. It is editorial policy that authors receive a decision on whether their papers are accepted or rejected within one year of submission and it is our aim to have the average period for refereeing less than 6 months. We are at present satisfying the editorial policy and achieving this aim.

As I said a year ago, *JRPIT* will continue to publish in hard copy. However, we have decided to make it available also online at www.jrpit.acs.org.au. All volumes beginning with Volume 35 (2003) are to be accessible in this manner.

JRPIT will continue to publish collections of papers on a particular theme with Guest Editors. These shall appear as Special Collections, rather than Special Issues – the only difference is that instead of all the articles appearing in one issue, they may appear in two or even three issues. This means that Guest Editors are not limited to accepting only those papers which will fit in one issue. It also means that the tardiness of one person will not delay the publication of the entire collection. We have already agreed to publish two Special Collections over the next 18 months. If you are organizing a conference and think the papers might be suitable, when rewritten in journal style, for publication as a Special Collection do not hesitate to contact me.

Speedy and appropriate handling of papers requires *JRPIT* to have a sufficient number of highly-qualified and experienced men and women to act as Associate Editors. I am delighted with the current team but am keen to expand it. If you have an interest in being an Associate Editor of *JRPIT* please contact me. All such communications will, of course, remain confidential unless the individual is appointed an Associate Editor. I would be particularly interested to hear from those with expertise in Hardware and Computer Systems Organization; that is, ACM Classification Areas B & C. (See www.acm.org/class/1998/overview.html.) *JRPIT* is also seeking a Book Review Editor. Interested persons should contact me.

Last, but certainly not least, I turn to the contents of this issue. Over the last year one of the top three issues with email has been SPAM. Chih-Chien Wang's article "Sender and Receiver Addresses as Cues for Anti-Spam Filtering" is a contribution to the understanding of SPAM and how to deal with it.

The second article is by Mohammed Ahmed-Nacer and deals with process centred software engineering environments. "Process modelling is a way to describe how a process should be conducted according to a model." Improvements in production processes are necessary to improve product quality, and this gives importance to the process used to develop and modify software. The approach in this paper "focuses on the evolution aspects of 1) the software process model level and 2) the software process level" These two types of evolution are integrated on a chaining of phases:

generation – evolution – simulation – execution. The approach allows changes in the software process models when executed through simulation and defining new ones dynamically. The author reports on promising results.

The third is by L. Wookey and J. Geller and is entitled “Semantic Hierarchical Abstraction of Web Site Structures for Web Searches”. There is a natural way of representing a web site as a directed graph where the nodes correspond to web pages and the arcs to URLs. The initial node represents the homepage. A novelty in the authors’ approach is rather than use a static abstraction, they opt for an abstraction which is dynamically constructed based on the current query of a user.

The fourth paper by Steven Guan and Fangming Zhu is on the topic of intelligent agents in the context of e-commerce. Intelligent (software) agents “carry out some set of operations on behalf of a user or another program with some degree of independence or autonomy”. Intelligent agents can reduce drudgery and allow you to deal with vast amounts of information “and have demonstrated tremendous potential” in comparison-shopping, negotiation and auctions. “This paper addresses issues of evolving software agents in e-commerce applications.”

The final paper by Andrew Teoh Beng Jin, Salina Abdul Samad and Aini Hussain deals with the practical problem of authentication of people, specifically biometric verification systems which use features of the users themselves to verify the identity claimed. A “major problem with biometrics is that the physical appearance of a person tends to vary with time. In addition, correct verification may not be guaranteed due to sensor noise and limitations of the feature extractor and matcher”. These problems can be addressed by combining several biometrics. “A bimodal biometric verification system based on facial and vocal modalities is described in this paper.”



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