Editorial Pointers

This is our third journey into the realm of digital libraries in the form of special sections devoted to defining, designing, and delivering network-based information systems for distributing a world of knowledge to a global community of information-seekers. When we began this coverage in 1995, the technical challenges centered on creating a digital replica of the physical library—turning literature into e-literature. Current digital library technology, however, has far surpassed the boundaries of its physical counterparts. Today’s library has no cause to confine its knowledge. Neither walls or roofs limit the amount of space or information available inside.

Two driving forces in all these DL editorial endeavors have been Ed Fox and Gary Marchionini. Fox has served as co-guest editor and author for all three projects; Marchionini was one of the first authors enlisted for the initial section and has since served as co-guest editor in tandem with Fox for the last two projects. As is their collective custom, Fox and Marchionini have recruited some of the leading players in the field to discuss their influential projects and experiences. Our thanks to all for their exhaustive efforts.

Our feature articles and columns this month focus on addressing challenges of a different sort. Astley, Sturman, and Agha share their ideas for simplifying the process for building and maintaining complex distributed software through the use of customizable middleware. And Baster, Konana, and Scott offer a case study of Bankers Trust Australia and the factors adding to the success of its component-based architecture. Joanne McGrath Cohoon analyzes findings from a recent study illustrating how characteristics and practices within a computer science department affect the retention or loss of female students.

Neil Munro observes the forced, frigid relationship between the government gatekeepers and the tech elite and finds little hope for wedded bliss. Hal Berghel contends that cookies, though worthwhile to the e-commerce world, are still difficult to digest. In “Viewpoint,” Krzysztof Apt calls for an ambitious move toward free scientific publishing. And Alan Howard discusses the delicate task of selecting the appropriate staff for a software development project in this month’s “On Site,” claiming it is wise to consider personality traits and work habits in order to orchestrate a dynamic team.

Diane Crawford
Editor