

Bulletin Announcement

In the last issue of the Bulletin, I very proudly announced that all issue of the Bulletin are now available on the Bulletin web site. I now want to announce changes to the web site itself. For this effort, I want to thank Thomas Risse, who is the Secretary/Treasurer of the TC on Data Engineering. Thomas does much more than this, including much of the administrative work for the ICDE Steering Committee. With respect to the web site, Thomas has reorganized and designed an integrated web site, including information about the TC on Data Engineering, the ICDE Conference, and the Data Engineering Bulletin. This effort brings together the database activity of the Computer Society into one integrated web site.

The new web site is hosted by the IEEE Computer Society. All the web pages mentioned earlier are linked together. The URL for the TC on Data Engineering is <http://tab.computer.org/tcde/index.html>; for the Data Engineering Bulletin, it is http://tab.computer.org/tcde/bull_about.html. The new Bulletin main web page links to newly designed web pages listing the issues, though these web pages do not change their URLs, nor does the location for the issues themselves. The earlier main Bulletin web pages will be phased out, but currently redirect browsers to the new page. Additional changes will surely come over time, so stay tuned.

I encourage all of you to explore the new web site. Your feedback is surely welcome. And thanks again to Thomas Risse for making this happen.

The Current Issue

Many in the database field were surprised 20 years ago when the TPC benchmarks first emerged as standards for comparing database performance. The differences in performance of commercial database systems on TPC-A and TPC- B, the debit/credit benchmarks, were substantial, both in terms of cost and peak performance. The TPC benchmarks, both these early ones and the several later ones, have had a wonderful impact in improving database products and is yet another example of our debt to Jim Gray, who played a very large role in getting the benchmarking efforts started. The result of this is that all commercial database systems have improved enormously. And this is not simply that these systems rode the wave of hardware improvements. Much more has happened. Now, all commercial database vendors have sizable benchmarking and testing groups. And these groups have done much to improve both the quality and the performance of the database products.

The current issue explores not the performance of database systems so much as the strategies and techniques used in efforts to enhance the ability to test correctness and improve performance. This is an issue in which the majority of the articles come from people working for industrial vendors of database products and applications, but leavened with research articles as well. Publication of this combination of industrial practice and research on an important topic for our field is a real strength of the Data Engineering Bulletin and an important part of what I consider to be its charter.

Jayant Haritsa has brought together this interesting collection of articles from major database, application, and hardware vendors, with university researchers that explores how databases are tested and tuned. I think that as you read this issue, you will be impressed by the technology, effort, and insights that have gone into these efforts. The success of efforts like those described here is demonstrated regularly via the continuous improvement that we see in the products offered by the database industry. I want to thank Jayant for his very successful effort in producing this issue.