Editorial

The Overseas Contribution to the *International Conference on Information Technology Interfaces (ITI)*, including some 2009 Conference Examples

1. Opening Statements

Dear Readers:

This is the regular edition of CIT devoted to the annual *International Conference on Information Technology Interfaces – ITI*. But for 2009, this conference issue is anything but regular. This conference issue focuses on the contribution made to the conference by those overseas attendees who are not subsidised keynote speakers, but who attend at the same conference costs as any other Croatian attendee, plus the additional burden of overseas travel. And whilst the beach is tempting, the Conference still receives a healthy input from these dedicated individuals.

The overseas regular attendees have always played a major role in the success of ITI, not least in providing the justification for the conference being truly international. Whilst this Special Issue is based largely on papers by 2009 attendees, it is recognised that 2009 is not exceptional in this regard, and that an issue such as this could have been written with the same theme in most previous conference years. But this Special Issue allows the 2009 contributions to be recognised as an example of this annual overseas input. Croatian conference authors may feel they have lost an opportunity for their papers to be published in CIT, but if of sufficient quality, there is no reason why they cannot be submitted for consideration for a regular CIT issue.

The added benefit of this Special Issue approach is that it reinforces the well established view that CIT is an international journal, with a good 18 volume pedigree. It would not be possible to put together this Special Issue if this were not true, since the authors would otherwise safeguard their careers by publishing in some international journal other than CIT.

Having selected some 10 papers in the first place, I decided to offer the authors an opportunity to write something about the motivation they had for writing their paper at the time of writing. To show them what I meant, I took my Special Lecture *What an Information System is, and Why Is It Important to Know This* from the 2009 Conference and wrote a motivation paper. These two papers are the first two papers following the Editorial in this Special Issue, and set the scene for the Issue. Along with the invitation to have their papers included, I sent the selected authors the above two papers as an example and then said the following:

"I would like to offer you two alternatives (assuming you wish to go ahead at all!). The first is to submit an up-to-date or corrected version of your original paper with your biography amended to match mine. The second is to add a paper which educates the reader about some aspect of your original paper (as in my example paper)."

I also mentioned the kind of paper that some authors I felt were able to write if they preferred to write something other than a motivation paper. Two other papers' authors wrote a motivation piece to go with their paper, further two papers' authors were induced to write a completely new paper in addition to their first papers, and the other six papers' authors extensively rewrote their original conference proceedings papers. But, unexpectedly, the authors of two papers dealing with the influence of culture in a research domain produced a joint paper as an outcome of their coming

together at-a distance. Most authors wrote a Special Issue focused biography as well, as we shall see. I shall look at the papers in this Special Issue using the above descriptions of groups of papers as much as possible.

2. Motivation Papers

At ITI in 2009 I presented a paper entitled *What an Information System Is, And Why Is It Important to Know This*. You would think from the paper title that it would be obvious why the paper had been written, but when you read the motivation paper, this is much richer than the paper itself would suggest or indeed says. I shall return to this point at the end of this section.

Lynne Baillie has written a fascinating description of her motivation for writing her joint paper *Designing Quick & Dirty Applications for Mobiles: Making the Case for the Utility of HCI Principles*. Her motivation paper is a powerful plea to the research and practitioner communities to talk and listen to each other, from which, she explains, untold benefits could arise.

George Nezlek has been a regular attendee at ITI and for the past five years has run an Annual Presentation Skills Workshop. When invited to write a paper on his workshops, he declined stating that he would prefer to write a paper. The paper is co-authored with Gerald DeHondt II and is called *Risk Effect on Offshore Systems Development Project Cost*. An earlier version of the paper was given at the largest annual I.S. conference called AMCIS. The authors have rewritten the paper in the light of the AMCIS referee's comments and also looking through the questions and discussions at the conference. I leave it to those of you who have attended George's Presentation Skills Workshops to say whether he practises what he preaches! And then, the authors wrote a motivation paper. The motivation appears to be that the original paper was meant to draw researchers' attention to the little known or discussed possibility that risk-driven project costs in offshoring may result in total project costs that exceed what a domestic solution would cost. As a result of further work and the AMCIS interactions, the basic part of this message has been deemed to be increasingly likely. So the revised paper in this Special Issue puts more emphasis on this point, and the motivation paper even more so

Three motivation papers were the partial response to my call for such papers from the chosen conference papers for the Special Issue. Not many, but enough to draw a strong lesson from, which is as follows. All three original papers had very clear objectives to do with changing readers' thinking about the subject being discussed. The motivation papers make this particularly clear, and these objectives are laudable. So why not put this motivation in the original paper, which would in each of the three cases above, improve the story line of the paper. Which naturally leads me on to one of my favourite and improving offerings of advice to the research community, how to get your paper published, which follows in the next section.

3. How to write a paper that will be accepted (most likely)

So here is the latest version of Paul's "How do you write a quality paper?"

As I have mentioned before in the *European Journal of Information Systems* (Paul, 2009), you could do worse than making sure your paper would provide 'obvious' answers to the four questions below. In fact, very few published papers meet all four questions obviously. But they would be better papers if they did.

Assuming the paper is an appropriate paper for the journal being submitted to, then:

1. What story are you trying to tell the reader?

   One story, note, not many. There may be two or three major points to the story, but much more than that confuses readers. A story written for the reader can be understood in 10 years time by the author if they need to revisit the paper. A story written for the writer (the majority published) will leave the authors as perplexed in 10 years time as readers are now.

2. What will the reader know after reading your story that they did not know before reading it?

> The whole point of the paper one presumes.

3. Why should anyone believe you?

> This is the downfall of many papers, but if not believable, then that is the end of the paper.

4. Why should anyone care about the story being told?

> What value will the reader attach to the point of the story? If none, you will find that reviewers tend to disguise this problem under the rubric 'significance of the contribution'.

5. What is the essence of your paper in one sentence?

> I know I said four questions, but the fifth question has nothing to do with whether your paper is published or not. Answering this question readily enables readers to attach the idea to you, the author, and hence is likely to push your citation index up and enhance your reputation

6. What motivated your research and the paper you have written?

> Again, I know I said four questions, but the sixth question may have nothing to do with whether your paper is published or not. Putting this information in your paper is likely to make the paper more interesting, and therefore it might be more widely read than otherwise.

4. Coming Together to Get More than the Sum of Parts

Conferences lead to much joint research work between delegates as they find out what other attendees are researching into. The next two ITI conference papers selected for this Special Issue illustrate this point vividly. They are the paper by Inhwa Kim and Jasna Kuljis entitled *Manifestations of Culture in Website Design*; and the revised paper by Pat Halloran *Using Case Studies as a Lens to Observe Teaching Evaluations* (originally *entitled An Evaluation of Teaching: Observations across Three Cultures* in the ITI 2009 Conference Proceedings). Note that the paper by Kim and Kuljis is actually from the 2007 ITI Conference, which shows the benefits of collaboration based on an annual meeting over time. The chance of the joint paper by Jasna Kuljis and Patrick Halloran, *Is it Important to Study Cultural Differences?*, emerging from their two papers being at the same conference is, to say the least, unlikely. More likely is that, in discussion, their research would overlap in papers that were published in different places at different times. But since I had asked both authors to look at a 'motivation paper', what emerged was a coming together of two ITI papers, albeit in different years.

5. New Papers for Old

Some authors, I thought, might not be tempted to write a motivation paper, but might respond to a challenge to the contents of their conference paper. Two sets of authors of such conference papers that I decided to challenge rose to the challenge and submitted a new(ish) paper to answer my query.

One such paper that I challenged, reproduced in this Special Issue is the paper by Hanson, Butavicius, Johnson and Sunde entitled *Improving Infrared Images for Standoff Object Detections* Whilst this is a good paper (Katherine Hanson was joint winner of the best PhD student presentation at the conference), I was struck when reading the section on Measurement of image improvement that the method used was to simply present images for assessment to the reader. Then, it was proposed that image improvement be measured by human observer assessment.

The challenge I wrote in my letter accepting the conference paper *Improving Infrared Images for Standoff Object Detection*.

"... you might consider the problems of performance measurement in a world increasingly inclined to distrust employees, possibly using your paper as an example."

The authors set about doing the necessary research leading to a new paper, also in this Special Issue,

> *Super-resolution of Infrared Images: Does it Improve Operator Object Detection Performance?*

The new paper starts off with very similar text to the old paper, but the majority of the paper is 'brand' new (with a 50% increase in the paper length). The authors present a very powerful case for humans to have a view, and show that the outcome improves. So, two papers for the price of one!!

Hanton et al show through their two papers that a question raised about part of a paper can seriously change the content and direction of a paper. Nasseri and Counsell, whose conference paper is published in this Special Issue, entitled

> *System Evolution at the Attribute Level: An Empirical Study of Three Java OSS and Their Refactorings*

chose not to do a motivation paper as such, but to take the opportunity to extend the remit of the research and publish that. So, if you look at the new paper,

> *Java Method Calls in the Hierarchy – Uncovering Yet another Inheritance Foible*

and compare it with the conference paper, you will see the continuing evolution of this piece of research in action.

6. The Other ITI Conference Papers and Biographies

The last four papers in this Special Issue all come from the 2009 ITI Conference, though they have all been revised. Two out of four papers have a PhD student as a co-author, and out of the 10 original papers from the ITI conference, five have a PhD student co-author.

Of the 24 authors cited in this Special Issue, 8 are female.

Of the 11 or so authors with a biography which includes the appropriate information, four have started attending during the last 5 years, three for between 5 and 10 years; two for 11 to 20 years, and two even longer than that.

7. Conclusions

I hope that you, the readers, enjoy this Special Issue. What I have found when putting together these papers in the way that I have, is that I discovered some unexpected new things, such as the desirability of putting the motivation behind writing a paper into the paper; some independent demonstrations that changes to a research project have on the nature of dissemination etc.

As for the ITI Conference, it is clear that many people become quite attached to it, as I have. Is success for ITI necessarily a bigger conference? Possibly not – the people who come regularly come to meet their conference 'family' of friends. PhD students seem often to receive their initiation at ITI where it is so friendly. Visitors from overseas never forget their experience. And this Special Issue shows that the quality levels are competitive with larger international conferences. I look forward to meeting my ITI family again at many future conferences. Thank you.

Ray J. Paul

References

[1] R. J. PAUL, What is published in our journals cannot change unless we do. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 18, 189–191 (2009).