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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Milena Head is an Associate Professor of Information Systems and the Associate Dean at the DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University, Canada. She was the Program Chair for the 7th World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business. Specialising in electronic business and human-computer interaction, she has published over 50 papers in academic journals, books and conferences. She has published in journals such as *Information and Management*, *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, *Interacting with Computers*, *Group Decision and Negotiation*, *Internet Research*, among others. She has been an invited speaker at numerous international events and she currently consults on electronic commerce strategy and web usability.

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For survival in today's competitive environment, businesses must rethink their old ways of doing business. The internet has redefined how businesses relate to each other and their customers, as well as redefining how customers relate to each other and to the public and private sectors. Organisations of all size are being forced to consider the creative use of electronic commerce not only for business redesign, but in many cases, for survival in the global and networked economy.

On July 13–15, 2006, the 7th World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business was held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. This Congress seeks to address the challenges and opportunities of the electronic economy through its sharing of research and management issues. The theme for this event was *eBusiness-IDE: Intelligence, Development, and Execution* focusing on strategies, practices, and methods to leverage organisational intelligence, facilitate new services, products, and business development, and demonstrate successful e-business execution in networked organisations.

The year 2006 was the 27th year for the annual World Congress Conference, and the 7th year to focus on management issues surrounding electronic business. However, it was also a year of firsts for the World Congress. For the first time in its history, the World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business was taken 'on the road'. Always hosted in Hamilton, Ontario, in 2006 the Canadian east coast has an opportunity to benefit from the discussions and collaborations fostered by the conference. It was also the first year that this conference was jointly hosted by two institutions: the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University and the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University. The synergy created between faculty members at both institutions was very positive and rewarding. Lastly, it was the first year that the World Congress was held in

July, as opposed to its regular January scheduling. Conference delegates not only enjoyed the rich discussions between academic researchers and professional practitioners at the Congress, but could also appreciate the beautiful of a Canadian summer.

This special issue of *Int. J. Electronic Business* includes some select papers from the 7th World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business. The papers included in this issue have been modified or extended from their original versions in accordance to reviewers' comments. Three papers focus on the B2C side of electronic business, ranging from better understanding the online consumer, to exploring the effectiveness of shopping bots to laying out a research agenda for online dispute resolution services. The fourth paper in this set provides a perspective on e-government portals. In summary:

Valerie Trifts and Elaine Toms seek to better understand online consumer search behaviour in their paper entitled 'Consumers' allocation of cognitive resources in web-based search: an exploratory study'. They propose that how consumers allocate their search effort between digital storefronts and general search tools may be largely influenced by the nature of the task as well as the characteristics of the individual.

Khaled Sadeddin with his co-authors, Alexander Serenko and James Hayes, in their paper 'Online shopping bots for electronic commerce: the comparison of functionality and performance' examine the effectiveness of shopping bots in an e-retailing context. Several deficiencies in current both technologies are identified and constructive recommendations for developers and researchers are presented.

Ofir Turel and Yufei Yuan focus on services aimed at resolved the growing number of e-marketplace disputes in their paper entitled 'Online Dispute Resolution services for electronic markets: a user centric research agenda'. They provide an overview of various Online Dispute Resolutions services and propose a detailed agenda for researchers in this domain.

Umar Ruhi and his colleagues, in their paper 'Building government portals that work: guiding principles from community informatics' explore the government portal side of electronic business. Portals offer governments many opportunities to deliver better information services and resources to its citizens. Through a case study of a thriving municipal portal, the authors develop practical guidelines that can help secure successful implementation of such digital spaces.

The World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business seeks to address the challenges and opportunities of the electronic economy through its sharing of research and management issues. We hope that this issue of *International Journal of Electronic Business* will provide a flavour of the insights that were shared at this event and will help to further 'e'-understanding for both academics and practitioners.

### **Acknowledgement**

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