
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Michael Chau is an Assistant Professor and the BBA(IS)/BEng(CS) Coordinator in the School of Business at the University of Hong Kong. He received his PhD in Management Information Systems from the University of Arizona, and a Bachelor in Computer Science and Information Systems from the University of Hong Kong. His current research interests include information retrieval, web mining, data mining, knowledge management, electronic commerce, security informatics, and intelligent agents. He has published more than 60 research papers in leading journals and conferences, including *IEEE Computer*, *JASIST*, *Decision Support Systems*, and *Communications of the ACM*.

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Advances in technologies are changing the way in which business is done in today's world. New e-business technologies and applications are being developed in virtually all areas of business and all industries. Electronic transactions are becoming equally important as physical transactions, and new technologies have changed the way organisations communicate and collaborate.

This special issue consists of five papers that report on high-quality research selected from the *Fifth Workshop on Electronic Business* (WEB, 2006) held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. WEB is a series of annual workshops that brings together researchers and practitioners to share their novel ideas, research findings, and real-world examples in the area of e-business.

Twelve high-quality papers were selected from WEB 2006 by the guest editors. The authors of these papers were invited to extend their papers and submit to this Special Issue. All submitted papers went through a double-blind review process and five papers were accepted for publication. These five papers report on the latest research in different areas of electronic business.

In the first paper 'Nonlinear pricing of e-market transaction services', Matthias Burghardt and Christof Weinhardt report their research on transaction fee schedules for electronic marketplaces. They review various existing fee schedules and provide a formal representation of nonlinear transaction fee schedule. They have conducted an experiment in which subjects were asked to trade virtual stocks under different transaction fee schedules, and the results show that people adapt their order behaviours under different transaction fee schedules.

The paper by Wingyan Chung, entitled 'Visualising e-business stakeholders on the web: a methodology and experimental results', proposes a methodology to identify an organisation's stakeholders in the e-business environment. In this methodology, information about an organisation's stakeholders, such as suppliers, customers, shareholders, and competitors, are automatically collected from the web using content link analysis. A prototype system has been implemented and described in the paper. Experimental results demonstrate the usefulness of the methodology.

Doug Lundquist and Siddhartha Bhattacharyya report their study on market efficiency and price dispersion in online marketplaces. Their paper 'Finding seller quality and quality sellers in online markets: an agent-based analysis', investigates how market efficiency *relates* to the availability of seller quality information. An agent-based simulation experiment was conducted and the experimental results reveal several interesting findings.

It has become increasingly important for organisations to collaborate with each other in the rapidly changing business environment. The last two papers in this issue are devoted to this area. In their paper 'Knowledge sharing in a collaborative business environment', Seema Degwekar and Stanley Su discuss how an XML-based business rule specification language and an event-triggered knowledge sharing system can facilitate knowledge sharing among collaborating business organisations. A sample scenario is also presented to demonstrate the feasibility and the value of the proposed architecture.

In the last paper of the special issue, Daniel Beimborn, Sebastian F. Martin and Jochen Franke study the topic of business collaboration from the perspective of business processes. Their paper 'Value Chain Crossing: insights and opportunities for future research' investigates how particular activities of an organisation's secondary processes are fulfilled by an external provider's service. Using the finance industry as an example, the authors have conducted case studies and survey to explore the potential for the outsourcing of secondary business processes by nonfinancial companies.

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