Editorial

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Biographical notes: Runtong Zhang is presently a Professor and the Head of Department of Information Management at the School of Economics and Management, the Beijing Jiaotong University, China. He has previously been with the Swedish Institute of Computer Science, and the Nokia Research Center. His research experiences cover operations research, logistics and information technologies, and he has published over 160 academic papers in refereed journals and conferences. He is also the author or co-author of 23 books and the inventor of three international patents. He was a General Co-Chair of 2008 IEEE International Conference on Service Operations, Logistics and Informatics (IEEE/SOLI'2008).

Service has been existing as an important economy for hundreds of years. But modern service industries are created on top of the latest achievements of modern science and technology and modern management. Integrating modern technology and modern management significantly changes our lives and our society. Services, service operations, logistics and informatics are becoming ever more complex and interdependent. They are playing an increasingly important role in today's world economy. Information and communications technology provides cyber-infrastructure and platforms to achieve more efficient and productive services operations. New types of service offerings are also emerging to meet the needs of customers and consumers. Service is a melding of technology with an understanding of business processes and organisation – and it is crucial to the economy's next wave.

But there is a shortage of skills where they are needed most – at the intersection of business and IT. As companies build more efficient IT and logistic systems, streamline operations, and embrace the internet through wholesales changes in business processes, a huge opportunity exists. Nonetheless, little or no focused efforts are preparing people for this new environment or to even to thoroughly understand it.

The IEEE International Conference on Service Operations, Logistics and Informatics (IEEE/SOLI) is an annual conference series sponsored by the IEEE Intelligent Transportation Society (ITS), initiated in 2004 by Robin Qiu from Pennsylvania State University. IEEE/SOLI aims to bring researchers and practitioners together to discuss issues, identify challenges as well as to pose potential directions for the future, and share their R&D findings and experiences in the areas of service design, innovations, marketing, and operations, logistics issues in services offerings, logistics as a service and related decision-making, informatics-enabled service offerings, information technology services, and related design, engineering, operations and sustaining.

   IEEE/SOLI'2008, which was hosted by Beijing Jiaotong University and held in Beijing on 12–15 October 2008, is a great manifestation of IEEE's persistent concern and support to the field of service operations, logistics and informatics. The conference has received 1115 valid paper submissions from 34 countries and regions, and in the end accepted 588 papers to be included in the conference proceedings after a strict peer review process. Many leading international scholars in the service research community contributed to the successes of this great international gathering. These scholars include Rama Akkiraju, Mary Jo Bittner, Antonio Borghesi, Guoqing Chen, Wei Ding, Ming Dong, Enrique David Espinosa, Susan Foster, Ergun Gide, Mingke He, Zhen He, Ananda Jeeva, Cheryl Kieliszewski, Kap Hwan Kim, Erwin van der Laan, Dong Li, Xuewei Li, Kecheng Liu, Xiaoming Liu, Cheung Wai Man, Markos Papageorgiou, Robin Qiu, Bahram Ravani, Roland Rust, James Spohrer, Shigeki Sugiyama, James Tien, Albert Veenstra, Feiyue Wang, Chelsea C. White III, Shoubo Xu, Runtong Zhang, Zhenji Zhang, Meiyun Zuo, etc.

   This special issue aims at helping disseminate the latest findings and stimulate more works in service research. Papers in this special issue were developed from IEEE/SOLI'2008. Based on the presented research works at IEEE/SOLI'2008, 28 papers were recommended for submission to this special issue. The new submissions required substantial revisions and enrichment by including their newly findings in the research work. After another round peer review, 12 papers were accepted for this publication. The final inclusion covers a variety of service research topics such as service system management, knowledge management, service business modelling, service marketing, logistics and supply chain, workforce management, service operations and innovations, informatics and case studies. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the authors for the time and effort they have spent in contributing to this special issue. I also thank the anonymous reviewers whose peer reviews helped retain the high quality of the special issue.

   The special issue is divided into two parts: six papers each are included in V4/N4 and V5/N1, respectively.