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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Nobuo Shimizu received his PhD in System Information Engineering from Hokkaido University, Japan. He is an Assistant Professor at The Institute of Statistical Mathematics (ISM), Tokyo. His research interests include multivariate data analysis, cluster analysis, functional data analysis and symbolic data analysis.

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The focus is interdisciplinary in nature, and includes research on all aspects of intelligent decision technologies, from fundamental development to applied system.

The purpose of this special issue is to collect excellent articles on new challenges in intelligent data analysis and related topics. The following four papers were carefully collected for this special issue.

- ‘Extraction of the contents in the web texts by content-density distribution’ by Saori Kitahara, Koya Tamura and Kenji Hatano.
- ‘Hierarchical clustering algorithm with combined criteria for large and complex similarity data’ by Kensuke Tanioka and Hiroshi Yadohisa.
- ‘Dissimilarity criteria in hierarchical clustering for interval-valued functional data’ by Nobuo Shimizu.
- ‘Transform of visual analogue scale data and their clustering’ by Kotoe Katayama, Rui Yamaguchi, Seiya Imoto, Keiko Matsuura, Kenji Watanabe and Satoru Miyano.

The former two papers in this issue are original works, and the latter two papers are extended versions of selected papers presented at the Third International Conference on Intelligent Decision Technologies (IDT 2011), held on 20–22 July 2011 in Piraeus, Greece, following those of 2010 in Baltimore, USA, 2009 in Himeji, Japan.

Each paper presents an ambitious but realistic challenge, based on the authors’ own expertise. We do hope that the journal audience will enjoy reading this special issue. As a concluding note, we would like to thank the authors for providing excellent papers and timely extended revisions. Thanks are due to all the reviewers, who help us to shape this special issue. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the support of Professor Lakhmi C. Jain and Professor Mika Sato-Ilic, the Honorary Editor and Editor-in-Chief of this journal, respectively, for giving us the opportunity to compile this special issue.