

On 23 December, 2002 I learned that I had been selected to be Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Research and Practice in Information Technology (JRPIT)*. It is indeed an honour to become the twelfth Editor of a journal which has a long and distinguished history, the first issue of which appeared in 1967 under the name *Australian Computer Journal*.

I wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, Professor John Roddick, who during the three years of his editorship displayed a very clear vision for *JRPIT* and took it up the ladder of quality computing journals. I hope that I will be able to take it up another couple of rungs over the next three years.

It is my intention that *JRPIT* will remain an international quality, peer reviewed journal covering research and practice in Information Technology (including Computer Science, Software Engineering, Information Systems, Computer Systems and Information Engineering and Telecommunications).

JRPIT will continue to contain articles that are of interest to information technology professionals and/or to university and industry researchers. In particular, papers that report on activities that have successfully connected fundamental and applied research with practical application are encouraged.

It is my desire for *JRPIT* to publish more articles of interest to the general membership of the Australian Computer Society. This will probably result in our accepting slightly fewer articles addressed to university researchers. As a direct result of this, the average quality of the research papers accepted for publication in *JRPIT* will be higher. In this way I hope to make both groups happier with *JRPIT*.

There is one feature of *JRPIT* that I intend to change, and that is the unacceptable time it has been taking to referee submitted papers. Such delays are unfair not only to our authors but also to our readers. The resulting delays in publication caused Volume 34#2 (2002) to appear almost a year late and the cancellation altogether of Volume 34#3 and Volume 34#4.

I have put in place a number of strategies which I believe will reduce the average refereeing time without affecting the quality of the refereeing process. One of the key strategies has involved the appointment of a large expert editorial team. It is indeed pleasing that such talented and highly qualified men and women have accepted my invitation to join the team. They bring a wealth of experience to *JRPIT*.

Another strategy is to move to electronic submission and handling of papers. Since this was introduced early this year, it has worked very smoothly. Let me hasten to add, however, that *JRPIT* will continue to be published in hard copy.

To add a personal touch to *JRPIT* articles, we shall in future endeavour to publish a photograph of each author with her/his short biography.

Finally, let me turn to the menu for this issue of *JRPIT*. Our first course is by Carlo Cappuccio and Sigi Goode, and is a very timely article describing Australian business after the dotcom bubble. The second course is provided by Eileen Trauth, Susan Nielsen and Lisa von Hellens who expose the IT gender gap in Australia. The third course by Peter J. Mangan and Shazia Sadiq presents an approach to modelling flexible processes, such as in-patient treatments in a healthcare context. The final course is by Trent Lewis and David Powers and deals with audio-visual speech recognition, which aims to overcome the weakness of standard speech recognition approaches which are not satisfactory in a noisy environment. I trust that you will enjoy this hearty meal.

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