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Preface

Presently, in our world, visual information dominates. The turn of the millenium marks the age of visual information systems. Enabled by picture sensors of all kinds turning digital, visual information will not only enhance the value of existing information, it will also open up a new horizon of previously untapped information sources. There is a huge demand for visual information access from the consumer. As well, the handling of visual information is boosted by the rapid increase of hardware and Internet capabilities. Advanced technology for visual information systems is more urgently needed than ever before: not only new computational methods to retrieve, index, compress and uncover pictorial information, but also new metaphors to organize user interfaces. Also, new ideas and algorithms are needed which allow access to very large databases of digital pictures and videos. Finally we should not forget new systems with visual interfaces integrating the above components into new types of image, video or multimedia databases and hyperdocuments.

All of these technologies will enable the construction of systems that are radically different from conventional information systems. Many novel issues will need to be addressed: query formulation for pictorial information, consistency management thereof, indexing and assessing the quality of these systems.

Historically, the expression Visual Information Systems can be understood either as a system for image information or as visual system for any kind information. The invited speakers were selected from both directions: SK Chang from the University of Pittsburgh and Chamei Chen from Brunel University. SK Chang will present the sentient map for education purposes, that is to say, a novel way to use and to understand visual information systems. Chaomei Chen will summarize the new possibilities of visualizing information issued from databases.

In this fourth conference, emphasis was given to structuring image and video information systems and retrieval, especially ones based on color and shape. For this purpose, indexing is the key issue. To conclude the conference, some papers on benchmarking will be presented.

September 2000

Robert Laurini

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