

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on “The Internet and New Technologies”

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This special issue of the *International Journal of Web Portals* (IJWP) is on “The Internet and New Technologies”. The special issue originates from the best papers of the IADIS International conference on Internet Technologies & Society (ITS 2010) held in Perth, Australia, 29 and 30 November and 1 December 2010 (<http://www.its-conf.org/2010/>). Authors of these selected best papers have been asked to revise and expand their original papers and these submissions have been peer-reviewed.

We would like to thank the following reviewers for their work reviewing the papers for this issue:

- Charles Dziuban, University of Central Florida, USA
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The final special themed issue combines five selected papers that bring together researchers covering the wide spectrum of the WWW and Internet. The authors' contributions embrace significant research: E-Commerce, reputation systems, mobile service provision, mass customization, intelligent agents, social computing, Cyber-law, and virtual worlds for learning. These papers aim to provide a current depiction of the research in the field, embracing new technologies and developments, while opening way to future research work.

The first paper: by Ekaterina Prasolova-Førland (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway) and Ole Ørjan Hov (Globalskolen – Norwegian School Online, Norway) titled “*Eidsvoll 1814: Creating Educational Historical Reconstructions in 3d*

Collaborative Virtual Environments” focuses on the fact that virtual worlds or 3D Collaborative Virtual Environments (CVEs) are being increasingly used in education for demonstration in numerous subjects. Virtual worlds, for their characteristics, allow tutors to explain and illustrate events that in a conventional classroom would be extremely difficult to depict, while also reaching a wider audience. This paper portrays the experience the authors developed around one of the most important events in the history of Norway, which was its adoption of the constitution at Eidsvoll in 1814. They used the virtual world of Second Life to remake the event. The building that hosted the event was reconstructed and included in the online course of history that was composed of students from across the world that were then capable to meet at a Virtual Eidsvoll. The students had the possibility of playing the part of elements of the Constituent Assembly and approve the constitution. This interaction is believed to potentiate informal communication and motivate collaboration between students. The virtual world is very flexible in terms of allowing the community to rearrange the space, to add new artefacts and gradually build a space that mirrors its own evolution. At the end of the experience the authors were able to determine that while this method allows for a better knowledge of historical facts, that it develops a motivating environment to the learning process of history and it is a privileged place for international classroom interaction it also presents some challenges. Some of the shortcomings of this method include: slow familiarisation with technology; not all students had the system requirements; and time differences between countries hindering the balance between synchronous and asynchronous tasks. Nonetheless the students that were participative throughout the entirety of the project gave very positive feedback on the benefits of using a 3D virtual world.

The second paper by Sanna Malinen and Jarno Ojala (Tampere University of Technology, Finland) titled “*Perceptions of Trust Between Online Auction Consumers*” centers

its research on a fundamental element of any online transactions, which is trust. The authors argue that trust is a prerequisite for any business transactions and that it is more easily built in person. In an online environment it is more complex to be achieved, so websites that host online transaction must have mechanisms in place to help create this trust. This paper describes the results of 24 interviews and 334 surveys conducted on users from a successful Finnish auction website, Huuto.net. The data collection and analysis has shown that the reputation system, which works with user feedback, that Huuto.net has in place is core to the assessment of other users and their trustworthiness. Nonetheless this system has some limitations and it is important to search for evidences of trust in other ways. The interviews showed that the users have different stances in terms of trust in online auctions; some trusted users unless there were visible signs of fraudulence while others wanted to know more in terms of the sellers’ reputation before actually making a bid. The majority had never had problems with transactions. The authors argue that online trust is mainly based on two important aspects: user online reputation and user history. Although the reputation system in this case received a positive feedback, the users did point out the inadequacy of the rating scale and that it was not totally dependable. The data collected by this paper added other elements that were seen by users as very important to perceive other users as trustworthy, it was found that the most experiences users already included other methods to assess the reliability of a user namely by reading thoroughly what is being advertised and asking questions to the seller.

The third paper by Damien J. Sticklen and Theodora Issa (Curtin University, Australia), titled “*An Initial Examination of Free and Proprietary Software-Selection in Organizations*” aims to explore some of the core conjectures relating to enterprises software selection within the Free and Proprietary Software context. The authors state that despite its shortcomings, Proprietary software is still predominant over Free Software in

several business environments. Even where the precepts and technology applications that support Free Software solutions seem to be more adequate for the requirements of the fast paced environment of organisations, that need efficient and swift information exchange, Free Software remains the choice of only a very limited number of businesses. This paper intends to understand the reasons motivating software selection. The motives that ensure Proprietary software dominance already underlined by the relevant literature are manifold. It is common that the responsibility of the decisions in terms of business Information Technology rely on the enterprises' executives, for the impact they can have on the company's strategy. When making the decision they will have in consideration network effects and how compatible it is with the accepted standards. Also, it was concluded by the authors that there is still an extensive misconception in terms of what constitutes Free Software, which enormously affects their judgment. Independently of the several challenges facing Free Software solutions, they are, overall, making important improvements qualitatively and operationally. Also the progressive introduction of cloud-computing may hold the potential to increase Free Software's significance.

The fourth paper by Dirk Werth, Andreas Emrich, and Alexandra Chapko (German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence, Germany) titled "*Prosumerization of Mobile Service Provision: A Conceptual Approach*" explores the emerging concept of prosumerisation and scrutinises its consequences for mobile service providers and their information technology. The notion of prosumerisation of content associated with the mobile internet is relatively recent. It refers to the new role that customers assume of content creators and not only consumers. It is then an accumulation of these two roles: client and produces of content. The authors believe that the prosumer represent an important part of the mobile service design process. Hence, prosumers emerge as creative elements in the development of the service. Prosumerisation aids the service providers to

be informed with regard to what is current and what is needed by the consumers, as customers become increasingly informed, the providers need to be able to compete fiercely. The users are essential information resources and also due to the available social media channels they are able to share what they think with other and reach greater audiences. When service providers are successful at engaging their prosumers in the production phase, they potentiate the industry and create a competitive advantage in the market. Communicating with prosumers on a multiplicity of channels is essential to maintain this engagement. The authors present an IT-architecture that intends to address all these implication of prosumerisation of mobile services. Although there is already some indication that its repercussions are outstanding, in the future, it is expected to become even more significant.

The fifth paper by Ben Choi (Computer Science, Louisiana Tech University, USA) titled "*Multiagent Social Computing*" addresses the potential of extending social networks to social computing. The author claims that when users adhere to social networks or forums, their own personal computer can also join these networks. This would enable an easier exchange of electronic resources among friends and groups. The author argues that the era of personal computers is evolving into an era of societies of computers, so he proposes a framework that assists this evolution. The framework proposed in this paper is the product of various core technologies, such as intelligent agents, multi-agent system, object space, and parallel and distributed computing, then combined into a novel computing platform. This platform would allow a user to have access to his/her computer and all its computing features, but also to a variety of computing features of stipulated community of computers. Hence, these people connected with access to all this computing power, would be able to create what people and computers in isolation couldn't. This is already a successfully implemented and tested platform: the Multiagent Social Computing. The experiments conducted on the

framework for Multiagent Social Computing revealed its many benefits namely in terms of performance, scalability and availability. Also, it proved to be more independent, demanding less human involvement. Mainly, this framework has the capacity to harness the collective abilities of people and computers.

These papers illustrate different aspects of research done on the WWW and Internet, denoting “The Internet and New Technologies” and contribute with the work they have developed to the enrichment of this field. The review of the relevant literature contributes to the theoretical grounding of these areas and

the innovative empirical research on different technologies creates opportunity for the development of ground-breaking findings.

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