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Editorial

Welcome to this specimen issue of a new journal on electronic publishing in which you will find statements of editorial policy and some preliminary details of the manuscript origination methods we intend to support. There is also a short paper from one of the journal's editors which will give some idea of the layout of papers in the journal proper, while allowing a little space for philosophizing about the nature of electronic publishing and its place in the scheme of things. In the modest span of the eight pages that we have allotted to this particular indulgence you must not expect too much in the way of weighty surveys or of detailed analysis, but we hope that you find sufficient of interest in this specimen issue to encourage you to send us papers of your own,

Our goal is to publish a high-quality journal which uses the latest advances in electronic publishing technology to produce each issue and whose content explores many facets of that selfsame technology. We note in passing the 'self-referential' nature of what we are doing: notions of quality have to apply equally to the content and the appearance of what we publish but some of our accepted papers may have their own visual form as their primary concern! Clearly, the standards of excellence we aspire to, as a consequence of the search for quality, must be drawn both from scholarly journals in other fields and from the traditional graphic arts.

At the outset we have four objectives: to establish a community of people interested in the principles of electronic publishing; to provide a focal point for literature on electronic publishing; to assist in assimilating computers and computing techniques into this area and to present cogent descriptions of new ideas and experiences with them.

The audience for this journal is expected to be a cross-section of the glorious *mélange* we already meet at conferences and trade shows in this field. Researchers will be interested in research results, theories and experiments; product developers will be interested in new systems, new architectures and other innovations; the publishing fraternity should be interested in experiences and insights from other ventures that have used electronic publishing technology. We hope to advance the field by fostering the interchange of ideas among this diverse group of people, for we believe strongly that academics will benefit from understanding the realities faced by production staff in the publishing industry, and that those developing software or hardware products will find research results and experiences useful and stimulating.

We intend that the journal should complement existing trade magazines and conference publications as well as other journals dedicated to specialized component technologies. A void exists in the literature because research in electronic publishing now appears, by stealth, in various journals dedicated to office systems, human–computer interaction, computer graphics, databases, software and so on. In many situations, a good paper sits uneasily at the very fringe of topics covered by these other publications and more properly belongs in a journal with a broader view of the application area of electronic publishing.

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Articles in this journal will present both new knowledge and experience with present knowledge. New principles, theories and architectures for building electronic publishing systems will provide new directions for the field, while experience and insights from experiments in these new technologies, and applications of them, will guide both the practitioner and the researcher towards more fruitful use of electronic publishing. These descriptions will not only outline how it was done, so that others may duplicate it, but will also indicate what was attempted that might not have succeeded, what was learned from trying and whether the benefits justified the effort involved.

All of this begs the question, 'What is electronic publishing?' We wish to open a broad umbrella under which we can cover the application of computer science and electronics to the presentation of information for human perception. While this might imply a desire to subsume existing specialist journals, our intent is more to focus on the integration of technologies for the purpose of electronic publishing rather than concentrating in depth on any specific technology. For example, we might be interested in a paper on multimedia electronic mail but not if it concerned itself solely with details of the communication substrate or the user interface.

The three words origination, dissemination and design, in the journal's subtitle, signify three broad categories of interest. We are concerned with the origination of a document and not just the information it contains, which immediately elevates document processing above simple data processing. Examples of technologies for origination include editors, authoring tools, document bases and hypermedia. The notion of dissemination is intended to cover traditional publishing of paper documents as well as interactive presentation on displays, storage in document bases, propagation of electronic documents over networks and publishing via alternative media. The third category, design, occurs within electronic publishing systems at several levels. At a detailed level, we are interested in the design of typefaces, character sets and primitive elements in graphic illustrations. At a macroscopic level, we expect discussion of typography, the arrangement of letter forms in a document, illustration and the presentation of information in graphical form. Examples of design technologies include font design tools, document layout tools, graphical presentation tools and experience with aesthetic judgement of typeface quality.

An intriguing observation about electronic publishing is the obvious appeal it has for computer scientists — a fact which causes consternation and suspicion in some of the more traditional areas of the industry. Several prominent computer scientists have chosen to work in this field perhaps because electronic publishing integrates, on a manageable scale, a variety of problems solved in computer science while posing the same challenges as to the elegance, scalability and economics of these solutions. Data structures, algorithms and 'total desktop packages', which work for simple documents, might not handle journals, textbooks or massive technical documents. There is also the issue of programming applied to publishing, the overwhelming desire to control a process such as document formatting and the discovery that these formatting systems are generally not sufficient to match the aesthetic quality of the traditional graphic arts. The amateur needs to discover the lessons in the graphic arts that are learned by training and apprenticeship.

Details matter. This simple observation is one of the common factors which bind computer science and electronic publishing so closely together. Most publishing systems require typographic and layout commands to be specified in painful detail and if this taxes the stamina of the amateur then refuge can be sought in formatting commands,

macro packages or fancy interactive interfaces. Equally, for the hardware or software aspects of building a computer system there are tools which can help to put everything together, but in computer science as in electronic publishing two infuriating properties appear again and again. Firstly, if all the details are not correct then the system just refuses to work and, secondly, a hand-crafting of just a few of those details by a real expert can make all the difference between an ugly duckling and an elegant masterpiece.

In a journal such as this, where computers are applied to publishing, we need to get all of the details written down, or codified into prepared macros, so that authors can effectively inject their electronic manuscripts into the journal production process at whatever level of sophistication they choose. Authors must appreciate that there are good reasons for the detailed work of the copyeditor and the professional typesetter and must accept the responsibilities entailed by the degree of involvement they choose to take on. Publishers, on the other hand, need to feed that same voracious appetite for detail, even if only to satisfy the occasional perfectionist who wishes to exercise a high degree of control over the final product.

Finally, we believe that it is time to put this technology to the test: can we attract and publish high-quality papers about electronic publishing in a high-quality journal which uses electronic publishing? This journal about electronic publishing reflects a unique situation: the scope of the journal encompasses the process for producing the journal. The message is the medium.

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