Editorial

The present issue of EP-odd is the first of two focused on topics relating to hypertext and hypermedia. Because the response to the call for papers was greater than expected, we have rescheduled the special issue on fonts — it will appear in Volume 4 — in order to provide us with sufficient space for the timely presentation of the hypertext-related papers.

Before turning the (editorial) floor over to the topic at hand, we wish to handle a few administrative matters.

Beginning with Volume 4, EP-odd will be including a column in each issue (called "EP-odds and Ends"). It will be edited but not formally refereed. Instead of having a fixed set of columnists and topics, the columns will range through the broad range of topics that make up electronic publishing. The column will be a place where positions can be taken, news passed along, topical issues considered, etc., without requiring the formal structure associated with the refereed research papers that make up the rest of the issue. Columns should have a cohesive point to make and should be persuasively written. They should be in the range of two to four EP-odd pages in length. We are accepting proposals for editorials now, and invite you to contact us if there is a topic that you wish to address in this forum.

Finally, we call your attention to the "Conference Diary" announcement of EP92, found at the back of this issue. The EP series of conferences and EP-odd are, in many ways, siblings. Indeed, Peter King's off-hand designation of the conference series seems to have stuck: "EP-even"!

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While preparing these issues of EP-odd on hypertext and hypermedia, we have found it natural to reflect on the many ongoing research efforts, in a attempt to identify any common characteristics. It is obvious to even the most casual observer that hypertext and hypermedia are, at present, extraordinarily active areas of study. Recent conferences devoted solely to hypertext have included the Association for Computing Machinery's "Hypertext '87" and "Hypertext '89". Planning for "Hypertext '91" is well under way. Future conferences arising from the separate "European Conference on Hypertext '90," will be merged into the ACM-sponsored series as well. If the track record established by the earlier conferences is maintained, well over a hundred separate papers will be submitted to each of these up-coming conferences. In addition, hypertext research is appearing at conferences devoted to electronic publishing (which we see as a more general topic, encompassing hypertext as one of its sub-areas), information retrieval, and information sciences, in addition to appearances in journals for these areas. Descriptions of hypertext applications are appearing in many other forums as well.

Closer inspection of the rapidly-growing literature on hypertext reveals a startlingly wide variety of interpretations of what hypertext actually *is*. This is perhaps a reflection of the lack of a clearly quantifiable product that is to be produced through hypertextual

means (as the paper document is for document preparation systems). The goals for hypertext systems range from simply supporting a single person's activities in "non-linear" reading and writing (hyperdocuments and databases), to organizing and controlling collections of interactive applications (direct manipulation interfaces), to managing and guiding almost all aspects of the computer interactions of distributed groups of people (coordination and collaboration technology).

If common themes can be identified among the papers to appear in this and the following issue of EP-odd, they certainly include that of attempting to provide an understanding of what hypertext is and isn't with the development of appropriate classification frameworks. Another evident direction is the determination of how hypertext relates to other areas of study, and the demonstration of what can be adapted from those other areas for use within hypertext systems. Finally, we see a continuing need for development of abstractions to support significant structural and content-based reasoning for analysis of documents, as augmentation to the early concerns arising from the need to support "navigation" of information networks.

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