Editor's Message to Special Issue on Collaboration Technologies and Network Services that Concentrate Wisdom toward Future Society

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Various information communications devices, including PCs and smartphones, have become popular with various different age groups and classes of user, and network services have become deeply rooted in social lives. Currently, a number of network services are intricately linked to support our social lives. This situation increases expectations that social data that is gathered together in large quantities will be efficiently put to practical use and enrich social lives. At the same time, there is increasing uncertainty over security due to the increase and escalation of cyber-attacks that are aimed at chinks in complex network services. In addition to these transformation phenomena in the ICT environment, there are various different social issues such as the construction of attractive, forward-looking network services in the light of demographic aging of the social structure, globalization of the industrial establishment, energy problems, contingency planning and reconstruction support, and the coming 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

To enable contributions to social issues by ICT, it is necessary to collect the wisdom of a large number of people concerned with ICT and overcome various different threats and changes in environment. Amidst these, we can expect the application of advanced collaboration techniques and the implementation of attractive network services. That is why we planned a Special Issue that is intended to contribute to the solving of social problems we currently face and expectations of the future that ought to come, through groupware and network services.

We solicited a wide range of papers relating to knowledge and information sharing; social computing; ubiquitous computing; secure network services; network services for healthcare and welfare; network services for preventing and minimizing disasters; distributed collaboration; education and learning support; the theory, techniques, application, and evaluation of communications research; and groupware and network services; as topics to be handled by the Special Issue. A total of 42 papers were submitted, about as we had expected, and we ultimately selected 17 papers. The selection rate was 40%, which is somewhat lower than our target of 50%. Divided by category, we selected one of two papers that were submitted for "Software Engineering", one of six papers submitted for "Applications of Networks/Internet",

both papers submitted for "Language Processing and Information Contents", 11 of 29 papers submitted for "Interaction", and two of three papers submitted for "Information and Humanity". Among the 26 papers that were labeled as conditional selections by a first round of peer reviews, seven were referred to a second round, which ensured improvements in quality while considering more papers for publication.

The selected papers are all splendid papers that reflect the times, and we expect them to contribute to the expansion of research and development into groupware and network services in the future. There were many papers that we were unfortunately unable to consider this time, but we hope they will be resubmitted in the future and we took care to return detailed comments based on discussions within the editorial committee.

Finally, for the editing of this Special Issue, I would like to express my warmest thanks to all of the authors we had asked to submit such fascinating papers, to everyone on the editorial board headed by Hideyuki Takada, who went to great lengths to get on with the job at each stage, all the referees who provided enthusiastic and also courteous peer reviews within a tight schedule, and the conference personnel who provided a wide range of support including schedule management.

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