EDI World Institute Research Agora

During the 6th International EDI Conference held in Bled, Slovenia in 1993, the idea of a research agora, an information database on EDI, was brought up. The programme was funded by the EDI World Institute and implemented at Curtin University.

The idea of a research agora - a source of information on EDI - was suggested during the 6th EDI Conference in Bled. A group composed of both academic resear-

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chers and commercial users and providers of EDI services met to discuss means by which the skills of the academics could be brought to bear on the problems being faced in industry. Agora should inform about researchers interested in studying EDI, about problems identified in industry and about EDI projects currently under way (as well as those seeking partners). The EDI World Institute agreed to fund a programme to be undertaken (initially) at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia. Curtin was chosen because the combination of IS researchers in a Computer Science Department meant that we had both the technical facilities and the commercial experience of EDI to make this very practical project a reality. With our imminent move to Melbourne, however, the Agora will soon be located at Swinburne University of Technology - users will be able to connect to Curtin and be rerouted to the new site for several months after the change-over.

Aims

The entire Agora programme will run over a 2-3 year period. The aims of the project are to provide:

- □ a database of annotated references to the (academic and practitioner) literature on (and relevant to) research in EDI;

- □ a 'roadmap' to the EDI literature which will place EDI in the fullest possible context of Information Systems (IS) research literature;

- □ a database of EDI research (academic and commercial) projects - both in progress and completed together with an EDI research 'wish list' and details of interested parties;

- □ a database of EDI researchers and their research interests, cross-referenced to the research database;

- □ a moderated electronic discussion group/bulletin board for EDI researchers;

- □ a source list for hard-to-come-by arti-

cles (mostly being held in hard copy form by the EDI World Institute itself).

Access to Agora

In keeping with EDI's electronic nature, the EDI Research Agora will provide its information in electronic form, via the Internet - the worldwide network of academic computers which is daily shrinking the size of our world. Access to the Agora will be through the public ftp site at Curtin University, so that any ftp-capable Internet user can readily search through the database for useful information. For those users (such as British users of the Janet network, or those commercial Internet users who do not have ftp access), we have also set up an email server which will provide the same service - albeit in a less impressive manner (see table 1). Indices will also be provided through Curtin's gopher and mosaic servers for users who are able to take advantage of the more sophisticated Internet facilities.

Bibliography

As yet, we are in the early stages of pulling together the material to be made available to the EDI community. We have hired a research assistant who has put together a sizeable bibliography of EDI-related literature. We believed that this was the most pressing need, particularly for new or prospective EDI researchers. This material will ultimately be available in a number of formats:

- □ *BiBTeX* for the more technically minded;

- □ *Refer* which can be pulled into End-Note and Pro-Cite, the most popular of the DOS and Macintosh bibliographic packages;

- □ *Postscript* for those who merely wish to print out the material, or who are able to deal with native postscript;

- □ *ASCII* for all others.

At present, the bibliography is available in postscript and BiBTeX formats only. We hope to receive feedback from users to guide us in further decisions regarding appropriate formats. We have also made available a number of EDI-related academic papers in postscript form and we would welcome contributions of other such papers from any authors who would like to make their work available through this forum. We

believe that this project will enable:

- □ greater awareness amongst academics of the problems in industry,

- □ researchers to collaborate to produce more effective solutions to these problems,

- □ new and prospective researchers quickly and efficiently to come up to speed on the state of the art in EDI, and

- □ the development of a forum for discussion amongst those interested in resolving outstanding issues in EDI.

Agora and EDI-List

We are, of course, aware of the existence of the EDI-List (EDI-L) newsgroup, which is widely used by EDI practitioners to discuss immediate concerns. Unfortunately this newsgroup is not widely used by the academic community, due to what we term 'noise' - that is, many contributions which are not relevant to research-

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1. *Anonymous ftp:*

   Connect marsh.cs.curtin.edu.au (IP number: 134.7.1.1) and transfer to the /pub/edi directory. A file called "readme.edi" exists to explain the material currently available on the site.

2. *E-Mail:*

   If you are not ftp capable, send email to ediarch@cs.curtin.edu.au and we will assist you.

3. *Post or fax:*

   Contact Mrs Sarabjit Singh, EDI Archiver, School of Computing, Curtin University of Technology, G.P.O. Box U1987 Perth, Western Australia, 6001. Fax: +61 9 351 2819.

Table 1: Possibilities to access Agora

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ers in EDI. In the most extreme case, a discussion of Halloween costumes consumed a substantial amount of bandwidth for several days. We aim to get around this problem in our Agora by the simple expedient of 'moderation'. This means that articles posted to the newsgroup will actually be sent to the 'moderator' (or editor) who decides the form in which they will be presented, if at all. The EDI Research Agora will therefore be a research-focused forum - EDI-L will, of course, continue in its present form. ∎

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