

Foreword

Welcome to VLDB '97!

This volume contains the proceedings of the 23rd International Conference on Very large Data Bases (VLDB '97) in Athens, Greece, 26-29 August 1997. For 23 years, the VLDB Conference has served the database community as its major truly international conference. In the recent past, VLDB Conferences have been held in locations such as Bombay, India (1996), Zurich, Switzerland (1995), Santiago, Chile (1994), Dublin, Ireland (1993), Vancouver, Canada (1992), Barcelona, Spain (1991), and Brisbane, Australia (1990). This year, for the first time in its lifetime, VLDB visits the south-eastern tip of Europe - a long forthcoming event since, as is well known, researchers from this part of the world have been for many years very active in the database community.

From an arena where just solid research results are presented, VLDB has evolved over the years to a forum where researchers exchange ideas and experiences, without sacrificing quality ensured by rigorous refereeing. The premier international database conference has been emphasising in recent years its strong industrial and practical orientation, addressing real application problems and integrating special industrial and vision sessions into its program. The VLDB '97 Conference continues and strengthens this trend.

In response to the ever growing interest in the area of database systems, and despite the strong competition from many related conferences, the program committee received 355 submissions, indicating a growing acceptance of VLDB as the database conference. After a thorough evaluation, 63 papers have been selected for inclusion in the Proceedings and presentation at the Conference. The Program Committee, led by the PC Chair, Matthias Jarke, and the regional PC Chairs, Klaus Dittrich, Mike Carey and Fred Lochovsky, as well as the Industrial Sessions Chair, Peri Loucopoulos, is proud to present to you a program which balances in nice way, research and practice, including research and industry sessions, tutorials and panels. Six tutorials on key interest topics, such as Data Warehousing, Geographic Information Systems, Object-Relational Database Systems, Visual Data Mining, Workflow Management and Multimedia Databases will address some of the hottest issues in database systems nowadays. In addition, two challenging panels promise to examine critically the topics of OLAP, Statistical databases, Digital Libraries and Digital Museums. Ramez Elmasri, Arie Segev, Tamer Ozsu and Yannis Ioannidis co-ordinated the Tutorial and Panel sessions. Finally, we are proud and honoured to have as invited keynote speakers Ken Jacobs of Oracle, Phil Bernstein of Microsoft and Timos Sellis of NTUA, who is presenting the 10-year VLDB award.

A conference with such high quality standards takes years of planning and is a true team effort. I wish to express my gratitude to all those individuals and institutions who are making this Conference possible: to the authors of papers for their contributions; to the Program Committee members and the additional referees for carefully reviewing the submissions; to the speakers of tutorials and panels; to the keynote speakers for kindly accepting our invitation; to the proceedings editors; to the VLDB Endowment representative; to the Conference Area co-ordinators and to all the members of the Organising Committee with special thanks to Timos Sellis, who has been the "heart and soul" for the local organisation of VLDB '97. Finally, but very importantly, our gratitude goes to the sponsors for their involvement and valuable support. We thank them all for the work they have put in bringing together such an interesting program, which I am sure you will all enjoy!

Wishing to share all this with you, I look forward in welcoming you to sunny Greece in August.

Yannis Vassiliou
General Chair
July 1997