A Tiger Jump: From Special Issues to Special Interest Groups?

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Intelligent Readers,

Welcome to 2010, and Happy 25th Anniversary to *IEEE Intelligent Systems*!

According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2010 is the year of the Tiger, which symbolizes such character traits as leadership, bravery, competitiveness, and unpredictability. This makes 2010 a great year for our magazine to become a quarter century young in a time of challenges and uncertainties. So what should we do to celebrate this special birthday?

Perhaps a tiger jump. In the annual teleconference of our editorial board on 14 December last year, I told our board members and advisors that I would like to consider the possibility of converting special issues to special interest groups, and that we need a plan to incorporate new-media technology into the magazine's future operations, as I discussed in my last letter to you, "Intelligent Systems Now."

Specifically, my considerations have been based on the following.

Challenges and Opportunities

Increasing our impact and keeping our magazine one of the most important publications in our area is still the number one challenge. We must meet this challenge by improving our magazine's quality and making it more relevant to our field in a timely and effective fashion.

Although our magazine is still considered one of the top publications in the areas of AI and intelligent systems, between 2003 and 2008 both our Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) impact factor and our ranking among IEEE publications declined significantly. We need to find a way to move back to the top in the broad field of information sciences and technology.

New media could be our opportunity. I believe that, if we act quickly, new-media technology (especially tools in social networking and keyword advertisement) can give us a new edge and an opportunity to promote our magazine.

Special Issues and Special Interest Groups

I believe that an effective way to meet the challenges and to exploit the opportunities is to transform our special issues via the involvement of special

interest groups—community members who care about these topics—with the help of new-media technology such as blogs or forums. If we foster an *IS* blog community through our special issues, this will effectively create a dynamic social network for *IS*.

So far we have done quite well with special issues—actually "too well" in the sense that they have dominated our publication. However, the magazine's theme content will be stronger if the topics actually come out of our community discussions. Besides strengthening our theme articles, we must find a way to better balance them with the regular articles and departments. A strong, dynamic social network for *IS* will undoubtedly boost our impact within the intelligent systems and computer fields, and attract more and better articles reporting new results of related research, development, and applications.

A Jump with New Media?

New-media tools could also provide the means of linking special issues to special interest groups. A possible approach to integrating them could consist of the following steps:

- The proposer of a special issue would be asked to set up a special interest group (SIG) blog on the Computer Society's Web site.
- The SIG's activities would be evaluated by the comments received, our associate editors, advisors, and the editor in chief, for a period ranging from one to three months. Then these volunteers would decide whether or not to accept the special issue for publication by *IS*. If the special issue is accepted, *IS*

would ask the SIG to be involved in the entire review process of articles for the special issue, and the SIG would remain in existence for a year or longer.

- This process would also enable us to share user-provided informal and longer technical reports, manuscripts, and related discussions. The combination of our magazine and blogs would thus allow us to disseminate new knowledge and better practices more effectively in our fields.

Furthermore, I would like to use keyword advertisement to promote our special issues, blogs, and ultimately, our magazine.

Considering the limited resources I have as editor in chief, I understand these kinds of changes could be a very bold move. But, remember, this is the year of the Tiger! As we Chinese are told, Tigers are born to lead, and they love to be challenged. They will accept any challenge to protect a loved one or defend their honor. Let's follow these traits in the year of the Tiger, and make *IS* a real tiger in our field.

Happy New Tiger Year! □