We are currently situated at a unique moment in time when the information boundaries between the Individual, the Commercial Enterprise, and the Nation State are all being moved or at least, renegotiated, facilitated by the Internet and all at the same time. As individuals, we contemplate what personal information about ourselves we should or should not put out on the Internet or within our favoured Social Networks. Facebook has been repeatedly testing that boundary, by making incrementally more information about its users, available to Facebook API application developers and third-party marketers, occasionally backing-off when they have overshot what their users will accept en-mass. Many observers see that ongoing saga as ‘a negotiation’ about where the personal privacy boundary might be moved to in the near future, towards some idealised – many say imaginary - line where it may benefit all parties without unwanted disadvantages. Google too has been testing that particular boundary, and has gotten itself into ‘community negotiations’ involving court cases in some countries. As with Facebook, Google has oftentimes entered into such ‘negotiations’ only after-the-event, such as with their Street View vehicle-mounted cameras that have been capturing images of everyone’s home facade, together in their neighbourhood, and more.

Commercial media and other organisations are beginning to find ways for the Internet to return a significant dividend for creative content, beginning with Apple’s App Store, which sells application programs for a few dollars on average, for the iPhone, the iPod and now the iPad. These so-called App Stores – even the term app is currently been tested in court between Apple and Microsoft - has quickly spread to smartphones and touchpads running all sorts of operating systems, e.g. Android OS, Nokia Symbian, Blackberry OS, Windows Phone 7, Samsung Bada, etc. Very recently it appeared as the Mac App Store on Apple desktops and laptops, and will surely be followed by Windows App Stores for Windows desktop, laptop and notebook computers. And let us not overlook the Web App Stores too, such as the ones within the latest Google Chrome and FireFox browsers, providing much of the same sort of interactivity that the smartphone variety have already delivered, via HTML5 as it consolidates as the new web standard, complete with a logo.

This too is a timely renegotiation of the commercial worth of creative and intellectual output. While nearly everything was free on the Internet, only a few very large commercial companies have been disproportionately capitalising on the output of hundreds of millions
of people. Google, Cisco, the transnational telcos and some others in the Internet service business, have been making very large amounts of money – often billion dollar annual profits – capitalising on the massive Internet scale of both usage and creation, while most creators, commentators, publishers and innovators who have provided the said content, had no path to receive a realistic commercial dividend on their hard work. Whereas many have been producing such content within the framework of their conventional daily employ, and are therefore indirectly receiving value from it — academic publishing is a good example of this — many times more content creators have been doing it on their own time, often with either the greater good in mind or as a long-term investment, rather than for those aforementioned billion dollar profits by the few. The almost ubiquitous App Store now upon us, is an attempt at pay-day for all those other creators.

Nation States too are in various stages of such ‘negotiations’ of sorts with their own citizens and the citizens of the global Internet, as to what information they hold close to the functionaries of government, and what information is more broadly available. The process unfolding is just as unruly as has been Facebook’s approach to personal privacy, but on a significantly larger scale with widespread impact affecting millions of lives, often severely. From Google relocating servers out of mainland China to some level of sanctuary in Hong Kong; to Wikileaks’ public disclosure of embassy cables and more, sending shockwaves through governments large and small of all persuasions, under their self-proclaimed title of ‘whistleblower journalism, Internet-style’; to the social media facilitated uprisings of popular dissent against entrenched long-term regimes in Egypt, Tunisia and several of the other Arab League states still unfolding – the Nation States are currently embroiled in ‘a robust negotiation’ at best, and anarchy and warfare at worst.

So, at three different levels of society around the planet right now — individual privacy; organisational and corporate commercial-in-confidence, and intellectual property (that’s the commercial equivalent of personal privacy); and the data accumulated on citizens and held within Nation States, and some part thereof channelled between security and diplomatic groupings of Nation States - a radical change and upheaval is going on, simultaneously. This just happens to be a timely and most appropriate backdrop for our new International Journal of People-Oriented Programming.

How so, you may ask? Are you not just putting a different terminology and technological slant on what has singularly been called End User Development for some many years now? No we are not, although we will certainly be inclusive of much of the new activity in that field of research and development. What we are talking about is people instrumenting who they are right into the fabric of the Internet, using the personal technology they are able to wield more skilfully month-by-month. And we are talking about enabling people to create things along the lines of what they do best – such as the things we are starting to see in the ubiquitous App Store. Yes, we are therefore very interested in user-friendly integrated development environments (IDEs), as the excellent paper - Learners at the Wheel: Novice Programming Environments Come of Age - by Judith Good in this first issue, attests. Judith details development environments that reach beyond the technical skills of, say, a competent spreadsheet end-user, to embrace everybody that can play a computer/video game, - which is most of the human race from school-age children, up. Her educational research driven studies, enlighten and delight the reader with recent advances in the visual programming world. Judith’s paper presents five such environments – Scratch, Alice, Looking Glass, Greenfoot and Flip – investigating the opportunities they offer both users and educators.

For a similar reason to our interest in user-friendly IDEs, we are also interested in blogging tools, and social networking tools, and related research on their uptake and usage. For example, the WordPress people – makers of the popular blogging tool of the same name...
— claim that WordPress currently serves up 9% of the pages on the whole web. They also say that they are in “the business of putting people in charge of their own domain” — an endeavour well within the realm of People-Oriented Programming as covered by this journal. Such tools are not just user-friendly content management systems (CMS), they are fast morphing into mashup tools, able to incorporate user-friendly web services in the form of RSS and ATOM news feeds, Twitter feeds and other REST-style web services of various persuasions—services provided by individuals, commercial and non-profit organisations, and governments.

If we are to instrument who we are, we need to be able to – both technically and politically – embrace data and information sources from the organisations and governments that socially bind us together. Apart from the aforementioned ‘robust negotiations’ going on at the macro and micro levels of society right now, there are more benign developments taking place too. There is a growing cloud of commercially available sources of data and services, that a suitably empowered and ably resourced individual will be able to mashup into their personalised, instrumented Self, or even incorporate such services into a new innovative informational or edutainment product, they might make available to others. In a parallel move to those commercial services, some governments (e.g. UK, US, Canada, Australia) have begun Open Data initiatives, that are making some government held databases available to the general public over the Internet. And furthermore, there is a growing number of citizenship initiatives from the community-side, that are offering themselves up as crowd-sourced deliverers of brand new innovative services and products, that use such open sources of government collected data. (For example, see the Code for America initiative at: http://codeforamerica.org/).

If the current deluge of high-performance, low-cost smartphones, touchpads and similar Internet-enabled personal devices, continues—which it is showing every sign of doing—and if we can get the high-level people-oriented visual tools, and the plentiful and affordable sources of Internet-based services, both commercial and government, then we are very close to the goal of People Oriented Programming. What is needed on top of these things, are the theories and simple methods and complete methodologies, that every-person is able to use if they so desire it, to construct themselves an instrumented Self—one that reinforces inwards and projects outwards into the societies that matter to us, who we each are and enable us to create what we each do best.

Research and development along those axes, are of central interest to this journal. In summary: user-friendly and innovative tools for every-person; web-based and other cloud services that individuals can readily use in their mashups, and code into their creations; and importantly, the theories and methods and methodologies that bring it all together.

The paper in this issue by Connor Graham and Mark Rouncefield has made a significant start to our publication of such methods. Their paper titled - Probes as People-Oriented Method – is a thought provoking read, based on extensive research using Technology Probes and Information Probes (in the Cultural Probes tradition), which took place in the sensitive environment of a Care setting. They make a strong case for their belief that “Probes reflect a post-disciplinary era and a shift beyond ‘the social’ to concerns with individual variation, materiality and the visual in technological design”. That is not surprising to us. In People-Oriented Programming, we are not just encompassing the end-user creation of artefacts that people use themselves, but people are also the collectors of the data about themselves, data that is used to establish their own needs and requirements in an instrumented Self – which very much includes how and what they want to present to others. The term self-ethnography conjures up what is needed, and the presence of a designer as an observing third-party, will often be non-existent (n.b. there is certainly room for some existing third-party role like a Life Coach to be involved in the forthcoming People-
leads us back to the opening paragraphs of this preface. So far, most of the liberties taken in those recent ‘robust negotiations’ of boundaries between Individual, Commerce and State, have been against individual privacy (e.g. Facebook and Google StreetView)—although, a mounting number of Nation States have recently copped a severe battering too. Something that is implicit in the People-Oriented paradigm that will be explored explicitly in the pages of this journal from time-to-time, is that there is a covenant between the Individual and their Government (from Local through to National), and between the Individual and the Commercial Organisation—a covenant that expects a fair amount of give-and-take, when important boundaries such as these are being moved. That, the opening up of data on all sides, comes with an appropriate responsibility bestowed upon each party. The Open Data movement is a positive and proactive example of where this is happening.

Governments sit upon mountains of data, much of it heavily underutilised in the service of their citizens. The upcoming ubiquitous App Store is another—it is creating a much fairer commercial space where many of the currently unrewarded creators on the web, can get some dividends for what you do best. We certainly believe People-Oriented Programming has its part to play in bringing these three spheres of life on the planet—Individual, Organisation and State—closer together in a global community, in a relatively harmonious and a more just fashion. We hope that with your help, this journal will visibly contribute to that goal. And we very much thank our first contributors for the three excellent articles in this issue, and for their faith in us, and for what we do believe is the first solid brick in that visible contribution. Our praise and gratitude goes out to our associate editors and editorial review board members, many of whom helped improve these first published papers with generous feedback containing learned insights.

Our last point is with respect to the acces-
sibility of the language of the journal. While it is an academic journal from the outset, our focus is on People-Oriented in the general population sense. One way that we can make the journal more accessible to a general audience, without losing its academic cutting-edge research reportage focus, – is to publish appropriate reviews from time-to-time on books and products as well, that cover or reflect some aspects of People-Oriented Programming.

Steve Goschnick has over 30 years experience as a researcher, teacher, usability engineer, analyst/programmer, software publisher, columnist and a manager. For the last 10 years he has been with the University of Melbourne, initially as the inaugural Research Manager of the IDEA (Interaction, Design, Evaluation and Analysis) Lab, as a Senior Research Fellow and more recently as a Senior Academic Associate. He received a Research Masters degree (with 1st class honors) in Computer Science from the internationally renowned Agent Lab at the University of Melbourne in 2000. He completed his PhD research in 2009 in the Department of Information Systems at the same university. He has received (often with colleagues) research grants in excess of $2 million to undertake research and development. As a software publisher in the 1990’s he was the founding President of the Australian Software Publishers Association Inc. for its first 3 years. In 1997 he designed and then managed the development of one of the earliest online educational systems (MelbourneIT Creator), cited as ‘prior art’ in several later patents granted in the domain since 2002. In the 1980s he worked at a national road research facility (the ARRB), starting as a junior graduate researcher and finishing there as an IT Manager in a mainframe-based computer center in 1988. He has authored over 100 journal, book chapter, conference, magazine and newspaper articles on various aspects of IT, Computer Science, AI, User Interaction, HCI and Software Development, and wrote an invited weekly column in Melbourne’s daily newspaper The Age, called ‘Cutting Code’ in the mid-1990s. A common theme across the variation in his career, has been the formulation, articulation and communication of complex and innovative ideas to a broad audience. He is a founding Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of People-Oriented Programming, published by IGI Global.

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Please feel free to ground us regularly, with such reviews sent our way.

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