SPECIAL ISSUE
The Best of IRMA 2005:
Selected Papers in IT Education

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Issue No. 2 (Vol. 2) of the *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education* is a Special Issue focusing entirely on the best of the best presentations of the IRMA 2005 International Conference held in May 2005 in San Diego, California. During the conference, I attended most (if not all) of the sessions pertaining to Information Technology Education. As the chair of this track, I previewed the submissions, and, of course, many piqued my interest. The presentations were outstanding, informative, and resulted in our track receiving IRMA’s Organizational Service Award for Best Track. To ensure that *IJICTE* readers benefit from as many of these excellent presentations as possible, this issue is dedicated to a sampling of the best papers presented.

The first article, “Assessing the Effectiveness of Programmed Instruction and Collaborative Peer Tutoring in Teaching Java,” examines two Java programming classes that employed an individualized tutoring system to teach a simple applet program. Questionnaires assessed students’ self-efficacy and understanding of general programming principles and compared successful learning with a similar lecture-based session. A second investigation compared collaborative peer tutoring sessions with lecture sessions. Read Emurian’s article and find out which formats fared best.

Efrem Mallach from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has been an IRMA contributor for many years. His presentation, “System Conversion: Teaching vs. Reality,” captured the attention of IRMA International Conference participants by summarizing 17 current textbooks on systems conversions from major publishers — 10 for introductory MIS and seven for systems analysis. Our second article shares his study of 74 organizations and their conversions, as reported in the trade press. Differences between typical textbook coverage and practice are documented, and recommendations for remedying the situation are made.

The third article compares technology education at critical levels of formal instruction. “The KARPE Model for Differentiating Teaching and Learning with Technology” was presented by Lawrence Tomei. Yes, this is my article — and thanks to the blind peer reviews, I felt comfortable including it in this highly competitive issue of our journal. I hope you all agree. The article, like the IRMA presentation, examines the ISTE’s (International Society for Technology in Education’s) three levels of technology development: technology foundations, skilled educator competencies, and professional leadership. It investigates the increasing sophistication of technology-based learning objectives in undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral technology
courses and addresses certain questions in the minds of teachers and technologists; specifically: (a) what will I learn differently about technology as a freshman than I will as a graduate student or even a doctoral candidate; (b) are there different skills and competencies appropriate for each of these levels; and, (c) if I take undergraduate technology courses as a teacher-as-learner, am I sufficiently prepared to use technology throughout my career?

“Using Indices of Student Satisfaction to Assess an MIS Program,” by Chrysler and Van Auken, demonstrates a methodology by which Management Information Systems (MIS) alumni evaluations of the content of courses and their satisfaction with an entire MIS program can be used to assess the relevancy of an MIS curriculum. This study sought to determine differences in the evaluations of content of required MIS courses. Using factor analysis, scores earned by specific courses reduced the content value to specific quantifiable factors and simplified the type of learning that actually took place. Using a global measure of satisfaction, course content factor scores were correlated to a student’s satisfaction with his or her entire MIS program. A regression analysis was performed on participants’ first year on the job vis-à-vis their current position and the implications for evaluating the effectiveness of an MIS curriculum presented and discussed. The comprehensiveness of this article (as well as the presentation during IRMA 2005) merits Drs. Chrysler and Van Auken the IJICTE Editor’s Award of Excellence for Issue #6. Congratulations!

Many universities have initiated a campus laptop program to increase their students’ computer experiences and skill sets. The success of such programs has been found to rely heavily on the extent to which the laptop environment is accepted and implemented by students and faculty. “Students’ Perceptions of the Laptop Program: What Factors Should be Considered Before Implementing the Program?” by Changchit, Cutshall, and Elwood from Texas A&M University, identifies other critical issues of a successful program. Their presentation at IRMA related their examination of university students’ perceptions of a required laptop program to determining what factors they believe were crucial. In their follow-up article, the authors identify factors that encourage students to support a laptop initiative and propose how such a program can be made more useful to students as well as more beneficial to universities.

“Introducing GIS for Business in Higher Education,” by Gadish, offers a practice-based abstract that provides an overview of GIS technology along with an example showcasing how it can be incorporated into a business school environment. A comprehensive approach for promoting such spatial thinking is presented followed by how the adoption of GIS technology for research and teaching produces business school graduates who later promote spatial thinking in their organizations.

Our final article stemming from the IRMA 2005 International Conference is “Digital Business Portfolios: Categories, Content, and Production,” by Flanigan and Amirian. “Why create a portfolio?” “Who should have one?” “What should be in it?” and “How are portfolios created?” made for a very popular presentation. Their article examines the types of portfolios most frequently used in the business world in preparing for a career, comparing and contrasting content in each, and recommending certain artifacts common to all portfolios.

These selected articles embody the quality of both the IRMA Conference and the International Journal of Information & Communication Technology Education. Please consider submitting your own featured manuscripts for subsequent issues of the IJICTE. As a blind, peer-reviewed publica-
tion, submissions receive at least three separate critiques. Nominations are also open for positions on our associate editor staff and editorial review board. If you have experience and interest in our established focus areas of distance learning, corporate training technology, communications education technology, business, computers, and information technology, or teaching and learning with technology, please consider a self-nomination to one of these two enabling groups. You may send your résumés, vitas, and a letter of nomination directly to the editor-in-chief at tomei@rmu.edu.

Dr. Lawrence A. Tomei is the associate vice president of Academic Affairs and associate professor of education at Robert Morris University. Born in Akron, Ohio, he earned a BSBA from the University of Akron (1972) and entered the US Air Force, serving until his retirement as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1994. Dr. Tomei completed his MPA and MEd at the University of Oklahoma (1975, 1978) and EdD from USC (1983). His articles and books on instructional technology include: Professional Portfolios for Teachers (1999); Teaching Digitally: Integrating Technology Into the Classroom (2001); Technology Facade (2002); Challenges of Teaching with Technology Across the Curriculum (2003); and Taxonomy for the Technology Domain (2005).