Welcome to the inaugural issue of the International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking! The mission of this new journal is to provide a forum for publishing inter-disciplinary research in virtual communities, social networking and related fields.

We have witnessed a phenomenal growth of virtual communities and social networking sites in this decade. Websites such as MySpace, Facebook, Orkut and Friendster have enabled users to create virtual communities for social networking. Other sites such as LinkedIn have created communities of practice. Blogs and Wikis have also contributed immensely to the growth of virtual communities. This fast changing environment in social networking has provided new opportunities for research.

Research in virtual communities and social networking can take different forms. It can be technical focusing on hardware and software, design of sites including interface design and usability. Research can help determine new platforms for virtual communities, such as virtual worlds. Research can also look at social and behavioral issues in social networking sites including trust, and online culture. I believe this new journal can make a significant contribution to practice and research in virtual communities and social networking.

The inaugural issue of the International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking consists of a valuable set of articles. Each paper provides an overview of a different virtual community and examines issues and research related to that community. The first article, “Virtual Social Networks: Toward A Research Agenda,” Sanwan, Guan and Giguaw examine the development of virtual social networks. They review the literature on virtual communities to understand why members participate in social networks. In the second article, John Artz discusses virtual worlds, the next generation of virtual communities, and what some consider the next generation of the Internet. Artz in his article, “The Current State and Future Potential of Virtual Worlds,” provides an overview of the virtual worlds phenomenon. He then describes the technological and social implications of Second Life. In the third article, “Social Computing: Implications for E-government,” Joseph and Esteves present a theoretical model for use of social computing in e-government. They apply the theoretical model to analyze state government websites in the U.S. to determine the extent of social computing in the e-government domain.

The last two articles of this issue consider learning in virtual environments. In the paper, “E-learning with the Network: The Importance of ‘Always On’ Connectivity,” Passerini and Walsh examine changes in e-learning paradigms and the use of temporary virtual communities within organizations for effective e-learning. In the last article in this issue, Kam Hou Vat presents, “Developing REALSpace – Discourse on a Stu-
dent-Centered Creative Knowledge Environment for Virtual Communities of Learning.” This paper examines issues related to prototyping of a student-centered creative knowledge environment (CKE). This research looks at learning in an environment design based on existing models of virtual communities of practice.

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IJVCSN will strive to make a positive difference in the academic and practitioner communities in the area of social networking. I look forward to your help and support to achieve this objective.

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