Boy, I’m sure glad that preparatory work is over now...

To the best of my knowledge JITSR is the first ever academic journal entirely dedicated to topics that typically go by ‘IT standards research.’ To me the simple fact that you are reading its first issue shows that there is an interest out there in this kind of research. And this is a good thing per se.

I frequently get the impression that IT standards research is one of the most underestimated research domains. Just think about your average stand-alone PC—there are standards for virtually everything, from keyboard and screen to disk drives to cables and interfaces to character sets to internal buses and protocols. Things get even more complex—and important—when you look at networked IT systems. In fact, little information would be exchanged between systems, and the much discussed Information Society would hardly exist at all, without underlying internationally agreed standards. I would therefore argue that it should be in virtually everyone’s interest to learn as much as possible about how standards emerge, what exactly shapes them, which impact they have, and about other questions and issues that surround IT standards and standardisation. Indeed, more and more people seem to realise the importance of research into those issues. For instance, the German Standards Institute, DIN, has recently decided to establish a research network on standards. And although it remains to be seen what will eventually come out of it, this is definitely a step in the right direction.

Standards research is highly multidisciplinary. The backgrounds of those people I know who work in this domain alone are extremely varied and include business studies, management, computer science, information systems, engineering, various social sciences, law, medicine, and engineering. And there are many more disciplines which may contribute. This makes working in this domain so interesting, but it may also cause problems.

For example: traditional, ‘single-disciplinary’ work has well-established communities with their own conferences, journals, and magazines, and if you belong to this community, you will, after a while, normally know where to look for information. Yet, things are very different indeed for IT standards research. When I got interested in this topic a couple of years back, I had to learn the hard way that there was no such thing as a ‘community,’ or dedicated publication outlets, where I could find relevant papers. I had to look all over the place to find some publications, and those were comparably few. In fact, it took me quite a while to actually realise that disciplines other than computer science (where I come from) are involved in this kind of research as well.

There are still rather few other publication outlets for IT standards research—some (smallish) workshops and a fairly recent conference series (SIIT). You may also come across a special journal issue or a conference session every now and then, but those are still few and far between. The situation seems to be improving, though, as
you will see from our list of ‘Recently Published Research Papers on Standards.’ Let’s hope that JITSR will further contribute to this upturn.

Above, I have already hinted at some ideas behind JITSR. By serving as a dedicated publication outlet, I hope it will contribute a little to foster multi-/inter-disciplinary IT standards research. Perhaps even more important, it will hopefully also help to eventually establish a ‘standards researchers’ community.’ I can envisage a not too big, highly inter-disciplinary group of people who actually share this ‘community feeling’ (which can be observed even today, albeit on a fairly small scale). And that’s pretty much what this journal is all about.

Two terms from the journal’s name may need a little bit of elaboration—‘Information Technology’ and ‘Standards.’

I recall a discussion on an e-mail list whether IS (Information Systems) or IT (Information Technology) is the broader term. Opinions were split, but while I had never explicitly thought about it, for me it has always been clear that IT is all-embracing. And this is how the ‘IT’ bit should be understood—as broad as possible. It is meant to include all sorts of communication systems (i.e., both data networks and telecommunication systems), and data processing artefacts (i.e., computers and peripheral devices of all shapes and sizes, also including, for instance, home automation systems).

‘Standards’ is another tricky term. It may assume extremely different meanings, ranging from something like “formal documents published by a recognised SDO (standards developing organisation)” to, e.g., “what a company has decided to use internally,” and everything in between. Obviously, this is a major potential source of confusion. I don’t really think it is possible to enforce uniform use of this—or indeed any—term. However, I would like to encourage everyone writing about ‘standards’ to at least define very clearly what this term is supposed to mean in his/her work. Better yet, to make a distinction between, e.g., regulations (no standards at all, really), de-jure standards (i.e., norms, issued by a recognised SDO), and de-facto standards (i.e., either open specifications published by an industry consortium or proprietary systems, both typically taking their ‘standard’ denomination from sheer market power). I wouldn’t want to start a discussion on terminology here (although it might be useful), but I think you get my drift. JITSR will attempt to strike a balance between academic rigour and practical relevance (if in doubt, I guess the latter may have a slight edge, but that remains to be seen). Not least as a consequence of that approach, less than 20% of the submitted papers could be accepted. A few others were rejected, but the authors were encouraged to re-submit, after having taken into account the reviewers’ comments (each paper was reviewed by at least three members of the editorial team). The three survivors of this process are published in this issue. They quite nicely demonstrate the diversity of the ‘standards’ theme.

The first paper, “Block Alliances in Formal Standard Setting Environments,” by Alfred G. Warner, identifies the different types of alliances in the formal standards setting process (i.e., within SDOs) and discusses the motivations behind their formations. This is contrasted with block alliances in market-driven standards setting (i.e., within consortia).

In the second paper, M. H. Sherif poses the question “When Is Standardization Slow?” He argues that the dearly held (by many) belief that standardisation out-
side the formal processes is superior (in terms of, e.g., speed and openness) is little else than a myth. Based on a classification of innovations, he then discusses the importance of speedy standardisation for different situations.

Finally, a paper by Mark Pruett at al., entitled “How High-Technology Start-Up Firms May Overcome Direct and Indirect Network Externalities,” develops a strategic model for the commercialisation of a new technology by start-ups. It shows how they need to cope with network externalities in a market which tends to prefer standardised technologies.

In addition to these contributed papers, a number of high-profile authors were invited to write what I would call ‘position papers.’ Here, the authors look at IT standards and standardisation from different perspectives. I must admit that there is a strong European focus this time, but I promise to balance that in the next issue.

These papers look at the general ‘standards problematique’ from the point of view of:

- **A Policy Maker**
  “(IT) Standardisation from a European Point of View,” by Zacharias Bilalis and Didier Herbert, Member and Head, respectively, of the EU’s Directorate General Enterprise, Unit Standardisation Policy

- **A European SDO**
  “Standards and Telecommunications Development: Where Are We Going?” by Yves Chauvel, Head of Department, ETSI Secretariat

- **A Large Multi-National User**
  “The Importance of International Standards for Globally Operating Businesses,” by Dr. Veit Ghiladi, Senior Manager Standardization, DaimlerChrysler AG

- **A Consumer Organisation**
  “An Ambitious Goal—eEurope for All,” by Dr. Gottlobe Fabisch, Secretary-General, ANEC—European Association for the Co-Ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardization

To round off the paper part, one of our associate editors, AT&T’s Mostafa Hashem Sherif, presents his views on “The Role of JITSR in Enhancing the Management of Information and Telecommunication Standards.”

Last not least, you will find some potentially regular columns to complement the papers.

- **Book Reviews**
  There are not too many books out there on standards-related topics. This time, we’ve found two for review, one of which is a fairly recent publication, the other one almost 15 years old, but still relevant.

- **Thesis Reviews**
  Most theses never get published. As a result, many a good piece of work was produced to collect dust on some library shelf, sitting there largely unnoticed. We try to unearth at least some of them, and introduce them to a broader audience.

- **Recently Published Research Papers on Standards**
  This will provide a brief listing of papers I am aware of which might be of interest to standards researchers.

- **Events and CfPs**
  There are a few designated standards conferences, some others do special standards sessions, and a couple of journals publish standards papers. This section will list CfPs and dates.

Now it’s up to you, the reader, to judge if we met our goal. Please let us know.

Kai Jakobs, Technical Univ of Aachen, Germany