The pursuit of knowledge regarding the evolving field of electronic commerce continues, despite the many failures of early online firms (and the business models they embodied). Many etailers continue to thrive and new ones are still being born. We continue to learn about the factors that lead to success in this new frontier. This issue focuses on the end user of e-commerce processes and practices—the etail consumer—and the websites they visit. Research topics include those related to consumer choice, website strategies, hybrid models (so-called “brick and click” models), and replenishment for consumer-oriented websites.

In this first special issue on etail research, we have four articles that contribute to our understanding of the practice of and research into the digital retailing process. These authors evaluate various aspects of the relationship between consumers, the etailers they visit online, and the vendors that supply those etailers.

In our lead paper, David Gefen explores a fundamental question in the pursuit of basic knowledge related to etail strategies. Do online shoppers engage in a rational analysis of decision variables such as perceived usefulness, or do they shop where they shop out of habit? His study of 179 experienced online shoppers revealed some interesting results. His findings suggest that a primary component of our etail decision is driven by habit, rather than only by the traditional Technology Acceptance Model variables. This would partially support the concept of first-mover advantage to the extent that the early sellers maintain competence within a particular market segment.

Then Wang and Tang undertake a much-needed refinement of the widely used SERVQUAL and IS-SERVQUAL instruments in light of the e-commerce market context. Their resulting validated EC-SERVQUAL instrument provides us with a valuable research tool for comparing many variables under investigation. By evaluating data from 260 respondents purchasing across 13 digital product categories, the authors have validated and refined the instrument, which can be used as a good measure of perceived service
quality within the etail sector.

In another paper, Golden, Hughes, and Gallagher, in a study of 122 online retailers of Irish-made gifts and crafts, suggest that successful websites result from various organizational factors, such as early adoption of web technology, internal IT experience, e-business strategy implementation, and the existence of a project champion. Interestingly, this was true across all product categories in their sample, and product type was not a determinant of etail success.

And finally, in a study of 515 products sold on the Internet, Leonard and Cronan explore the effectiveness of Internet replenishment by analyzing the distributor-retail outlet and the retail outlet-customer links in the supply chain. Demand forecasting may be difficult for etailers, but over time, organizers may be able to achieve an improved inventory level within the electronic commerce environment. While this is a limited study, it offers some interesting insights into an important managerial consideration for Internet startups as they expand their sales online and adapt to changing cycle times.

We also have an interesting book review for this issue on a very timely issue in our field—that of the security of our information systems. In a review of Ed Yourdon’s *Byte Wars*, Mark Schmidt provides an overview of the major IT security issues in the post-9/11 era.

As the practice and study of e-commerce matures, we seek a deeper and more complete understanding of the nature and relationships of the critical components—buyers, sellers, and technologies—that bring them together. Success factors in etailing continue to be explored and pursued. In the next issue of the *Journal of End User Computing*, we will present further research manuscripts exploring these important issues.