Acknowledgments

The editor wishes to thank all of the authors for their insights and excellent contributions to this book and would like to acknowledge the help of all involved in the collation and review process of the book, without whose support the project could not have been satisfactorily completed. Most of the authors of chapters included in this book also served as referees for chapters written by other authors. Thanks go to all those who provided constructive and comprehensive reviews.

A further special note of thanks goes to all the staff at Idea Group Inc., whose contributions throughout the whole process from inception of the initial idea to final publication have been invaluable. Special thanks also go to the publishing team at Idea Group Inc., in particular to Mehdi Khosrow-Pour, whose enthusiasm motivated me to initially accept his invitation for taking on this project, and to Kristin Roth, who continuously prodded via e-mail for keeping the project on schedule. This book would not have been possible without the ongoing professional support from Mehdi Khosrow-Pour and Jan Travers at Idea Group Inc.

The idea of editing this volume stems from the initial research work that the editor did in past several years. The assistances and facilities of University of Saskatchewan and Université de Sherbrooke, Canada, Oakland University and Wayne State University, USA, and City University of Hong Kong and Northeastern University, China, are deemed important, and are highly appreciated. The research work of the editor has been supported by the Program for New Century Excellent Talents in University (NCET-05-0288) and by the MOE Funds for Doctoral Programs (20050145024).

Finally the editor wishes to thank his family for their patience, understanding, encouragement, and support when the editor needed to devote many time in the edition of this book. This book will not be completed without their love.

Zongmin Ma, PhD
Shenyang, China
January 2006