

## Foreword

The Web revolution currently under way is making the Internet more and more central to our everyday lives. The amount of information available on the Web is increasing at an enormous rate, and almost everyday new services become available. The Internet is now widely used not only for B2B (business-to-business) and B2C (business-to-consumer) communications, but also to carry on our everyday activities, such as making a phone call, booking seats at a theatre, searching for information, and so on.

The richness of the Web is fascinating: It is an infinite repository of up-to-date information and services able to fulfill everybody's needs. However, all of us have experienced that accessing Web information and services can be very frustrating as it is very easy to get lost in an apparently chaotic environment. Additionally, interacting with the Web is very often a time-consuming activity resulting in an increasingly frustrating user experience. So, how can access to such a heterogeneous and highly dynamic environment be managed best? The explosive growth of the Web calls for new models, techniques, and technologies for Web data management upon which efficient and effective services can be built.

The current volume is a major contribution in the field of Web data management. It presents many of the most relevant current developments and research results in a coherent and self-contained manner. What I really like about this book is its ability to balance theoretical and practical aspects. Each chapter contains case studies or real-world examples that enable the reader to understand and evaluate the illustrated techniques immediately. The book provides exhaustive coverage of the most important fundamental issues related to Web data management, such as Web data models and integration techniques, and Web data clustering.

It also provides interesting insights on the most relevant applications, such as Web services and e-mail systems. Finally, the most crucial issues related to efficiency are covered, too, such as caching and prefetching. The variety of topics found in this book makes it a valuable reference for all professionals, researchers, and students that are interested in Web data-management issues.

*Elena Ferrari*

*University of Insubria at Como, Italy*