In 2004, *IEEE Distributed Systems Online* (http://dsonline.computer.org) becomes the IEEE’s first online-only publication. The original material from our monthly issues will be in the CS Digital Library, including our peer-reviewed, archived material since our launch in 2000. *IEEE Internet Computing* has cosponsored *DSO* since 2002. We value this connection and look forward to future collaboration. We are particularly interested in novel ways in which *DSO* can extend the material presented in a paper magazine.

**History and Vision**

When *DSO* began in mid-2000, our vision was to explore how professional societies might respond to the inexorable move of readers from paper publications to Web-based electronic media. Creating a new electronic magazine of identical format to existing products would not fully meet this goal. Instead, we aimed to create an educational and information service that would help academics and professionals cope with the already apparent information overload and give them a high-quality Web site to rely on. The idea was to create a mixture of tutorial and educational material for getting started in an area or to support teaching it, product information for practitioners, conference and event information, and up-to-date project and publications information for researchers.

We soon built up our coverage to its current 14 topic areas, plus an interactive event service giving conference dates and submission deadlines. Several of these areas are in *IEEE Internet Computing*’s domain and most are likely to be of interest to its readers.

**Long-term Availability of Published Material**

Authors and readers need the quality control that the IEEE peer-review process provides for magazines, journals, and conferences. This is how academic subjects become established and evolve. Quality assurance — of content and presentation — also helps readers select material that is worth their time. There is just too much material on the Web! Long-term availability of published material is also crucial. Although you can find articles from free sources, such as authors’ homepages, these links have no guarantee of persistence. It’s said that 40 percent of URLs don’t work two years after their creation. Publishers, and especially professional societies, have the responsibility of maintaining the scientific archive over the long term.

**What’s in Store**

In the January 2004 issue, we feature an interview with Jim Gray, a distinguished engineer in Microsoft’s Scalable Servers Research Group and manager of Microsoft’s Bay Area Research Center, along with some specially invited articles. We also have a special issue on Data-Intensive Computing. This follows our current series on Mobile Data Management. These special issues are often associated with conferences in emerging areas of interest. Please let us know if you are associated with such a conference and are interested in being a guest editor. We will also continue our 14 topic areas, presentation of selected material from *IEEE Internet Computing* and *IEEE Pervasive Computing*, news items, and book reviews.

*IEEE Distributed Systems Online* has been a pioneer of electronic-only publishing for the IEEE Computer Society. We have shown that our model is serving the community, based on monthly Web visits to our articles, features, and topic areas. I believe we have come up with a winning formula, one that will survive the “interesting times” in which we live as academics, practitioners, and publishers. We welcome your suggestions.

Jean Bacon is a reader in distributed systems at the University of Cambridge and the editor in chief of *DSO*. She is a senior member of the IEEE.