The successful use of digital media will require new or transformed genres of digital communication. Not only particular technologies or modes of communication or presentation such as hypertext, email, or the Web, but also on complex communicative forms anchored in specific institutions and practices. Along with the digital analogues of print forms like the newspaper, the annual report, the how-to manual, or the scholarly journal, new and emergent genres that may not have existed before will emerge to serve the needs of the digital community.

This year, the four quite diverse papers for this minitrack, continue the three major themes of previous years: genres in organizations, the evolution of genres, and genre theory in digital documents.

The paper, “Genre-Based Metadata for Enterprise Document Management,” by Karjalainen et al., continues to examine the role of genre in organizations. In this paper, Karjalainen and her colleagues argue that information about the enterprise or organizational metadata, is needed in the development, utilization and integration of information resources. They then suggest that capturing organizational metadata for enterprise document management (EDM) should be based on identifying and analyzing genres of organizational communication. The paper describes a research study based on these assumption that concludes that a genre-based approach is complementary to and perhaps even essential to other high-level approaches to information systems planning.

“In The Path of the Pioneers: Longitudinal Study of Web News Genre,” by Eriksen and Ihlström, continues the theme of evolving genre within the context of electronic news. The authors revisit three Scandinavian Newspaper organizations and present an analysis of the evolution of the web news genre from 1996 to 1999. The genre has evolved in form, content and functionality. The web genre has introduced composites that present many articles in a condensed space to support the users in navigating and browsing. News divides into “hard” news and “soft” news and the primary content of web news is hard news that attracts users to visit news sites throughout the day in order to stay informed. The immediacy of the web affords

the provision of news in a continuous pattern similar to “live” reporting. The authors conclude that, “Web news by 99 possess characteristics that makes it distinctive from print media and web news sites from 96.”

“Making Sense of Computer-Mediated Communication: Conversations as Participatory Genres, CMC Systems as Genre Ecologies,” by Erickson continues the theme of examining the interaction of genres. The author examines CMC systems through situated genre theory and proposes that individual conversations may be seen as instances of genres. He argues that these genres may differ from each other, and that the CMC system he studied depends on an interplay of different conversational genres extending the notion of genre systems to a notion of genre ecology. Three forces: systemic pull, topical pull and conversational impetus are particularly important to understanding how genres function as part of an ecology.

Schmid-Isler’s paper, “The Language of Digital Genres. A Semiotic Investigation on Style and Iconology on the World Wide Web,” examines content, form and functionality of digital genre from the perspective of semiotics. In analyzing digital genres as a system of signs, Schmid-Isler’s proposes that genres of digital products may be described by the triple, <content, form, and functionality>, where <content> is defined by its attributes as carriers of meaning, <form> is defined by style investigation, and <functionality> gives the identification of the digital genre to the extent of which the user understands and uses the product.

The three themes represented by these papers are important and continuing research areas for Genre in Digital Documents.