Negotiation Support Systems (NSS) are designed to assist negotiators in reaching mutually satisfactory decisions by providing a means of communication and through analysis of available information. The purpose of this minitrack is to provide a forum for the interchange of ideas, research results, development activities, and applications among academicians and practitioners in the NSS field. Since 1991, this minitrack has gathered a respectable collection of papers in this young yet promising area of research. Collectively, the selected papers in this minitrack continue to offer innovative and thought-provoking research in computer-supported mediation.

The focus of this year's NSS minitrack is to explore the role of negotiation support in the Internet-based economy. In particular, most of the accepted papers focus on two emerging issues in the new economy. First, and from the decision support technology perspective, the papers in this minitrack focus their discussion on the roles and contribution of NSS in electronic marketplaces. From a computational perspective, the second set of the papers concentrates on bidding and logrolling in e-negotiation. They also derive some implementation and use lessons based on their experiments.

Kersten opens this minitrack with some thoughts on the achievements of NSS research and implementation to date, and offers some new perspectives with regard to using NSS technology via digital channels. Of particular interest, he advocates a tighter dialogue among academics, systems developers and the NSS user communities at large to promote and sustain the use of negotiation support.

The paper by Brezillion addresses the necessity to capture the contextual dynamics of team processes. He argues that the interplay between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge via computer-supported socialization – i.e., “learning by negotiating” could enhance the quality of teamwork.

Bui and Ondrus seek to define a framework for real-time e-negotiation. They envision future negotiation processes being conducted via a complex network of computer and telecommunications allowing decision makers to perform decision and negotiation tasks in an anywhere-anytime mode. Their methodology is anchored in workflow technology using the ICOM (input-control-output-mechanism) structure to define process specifications for mobile and autonomous agents. To demonstrate the feasibility of this framework, they provide some examples for online negotiation in telemedicine.

As discussed in previous issues of this minitrack, a popular application of NSS is electronic bidding. Airiau, Sen and Richard discuss strategic bidding for multiple units in simultaneous and sequential auctions. Hung takes one step forward to explore the role of NSS in supporting multilateral multiple-issue negotiation. Acknowledging that tradeoff in negotiation often requires logrolling, he examines the logrolling aspect in e-negotiation. Hung derives a set of heuristics based on utility theory. His implementation requirements align with the e-negotiation framework discussed earlier. Using a negotiation problem for contracting a rent/lease arrangement, Cheung, Hung and Chiu demonstrate the possibility of formulating a meta-model of unmatched logrolling views. They propose a pragmatic approach to e-negotiation based on the use of e-contract templates.

All together, the six papers selected for this year, highlight the increasing needs for negotiation support in the new economy. The quality of the papers also demonstrates the ability of the NSS research community to take up to these challenges.