WWW and the Internet - Did We Miss the Boat?

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The title of this panel alludes to the comment by David DeWitt at VLDB-95 that the database community missed its opportunity to contribute to the Internet revolution. The plan is to discuss if there was the boat to begin with, and if so, can we still jump on it. Consequently, broad questions we will try to address include:

- If WWW did not exist and we were just designing it now, what would we do differently?
- In today’s WWW, what are research areas where the database community could contribute?

Clearly, there is a plethora of database issues that are relevant to the Web. Examples include data visualization, scalability of data servers, caching and replication, data heterogeneity and integration, query languages, etc. An important question, however, is whether the Web environment brings anything fundamentally new to these areas.

Beside the database community, Web-related issues concern other computer science communities as well, including systems, networking, information retrieval, and artificial intelligence. Some of these communities, notably, systems and networking, have been much more enthusiastic in embracing Web research. Do database researchers “vote with their feet” on the issue of working specifically in the Web arena?

Few technical innovationsconcurred the world so quickly and decisively as the Web. Web provides an unprecedented opportunity of fast technology transfer. Some (random) examples of successful transfers of ideas into real world include Java, multi-server load balancing, search engines, protocol enhancements like persistent connections and pipelining. It would be instructive to examine Web-specific ideas adopted in real world that originated within the database community.

Panelists

The list of panelists includes Mic Bowman from Transarc, Hector Garcia-Molina from Stanford, Alon Levy from the University of Washington, Susan Malaika from IBM Santa Teresa Lab, and Alberto Mendelson from the University of Toronto.