INFOCOM'97 comes at a critical juncture in networking. While the Internet's growth now threatens to exhaust address space and create congestion and extreme slowdowns, if not deadlock, new technologies, architectures and protocols are becoming available "just in time." Among these are high speed ATM networks at gigabit rates, a new IP protocol with enlarged address space and streamlined header processing, multi-gigabit optical links and more-versatile routers and switches. As a result of these developments, convergences of networking and services are occurring. We are beginning to see "cells in frames," gigabit Ethernet, gigabit ATM/SONET, gigabit switching, routing and protocols. The need for innovative design and the opportunities that this will open will engage researchers world-wide for decades. Most exciting are the potential applications that are difficult even to imagine at this time. The applications will likely go beyond our current framework of multimedia interactive communications, information access, and entertainment.

In the corporate world, new giants are forming such as BT/MCI and others to come. The brave new world of ultra high speed global networking will include untethered wireless communication and universal personal access with security.

The challenge is such that we envy our younger colleagues who will make the most-significant contributions to this enterprise. INFOCOM'97 starts the process with a program that clearly has the seeds of this revolution in networking. The conference committees have worked hard to insure this objective with a careful paper screening process, outstanding and up-to-date tutorials, a special Gigabit Workshop, keynote addresses by Vinton Cerf, VP of MCI and one of the visionaries of the Internet, and Toshiharu Aoki, Executive VP of NTT. We thank all of them. We also thank the host city of Kobe for making INFOCOM'97 a completely rewarding experience. As Kobe has seen a rebirth since the recent earthquake, so with similar ingenuity and vision, the participants of INFOCOM'97 in Kobe will initiate a rebirth in networking. We welcome you to INFOCOM'97, the networking conference in the beautiful new Kobe, where east, west, north and south will converge in April of 1997.