Preface

Policy 2006

This proceedings is the collection of papers accepted for presentation at the 7th IEEE International Workshop on Policies for Distributed Systems and Networks (Policy 2006), held at the University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, in June 2006.

The policy workshop attracts a relatively small and select group of researchers who have an interest in exploring computer interfaces that can be adapted to different users and to different environments.

A policy-based system deals with an interface to a system that constrains or determines its behaviour, based on an input specification, i.e., the policy. By separating the specification from the general machine, one obtains reusability and adaptability. The user of the machine can make changes without requiring an expert to hardwire the system.

It is all about the separation of concerns, and this ought to sound familiar. Turing machines, input tapes? Even today, many of the same discussions occur in software engineering, albeit at a higher level: There, one would once speak of “computer programs” as an interface to hardware. Today one might speak of “design patterns”, “traits”, “interfaces”, or “proper encapsulation”. How is a computer program different from a policy?

Policy is perhaps more about interaction rather than about computation. One of the guiding principles of information science is the optimization of data presentation, through the hiding of detail. Policy is every bit as important as other forms of user interface design.

This year’s contributions try to answer the questions raised. From the 59 papers submitted and after a rigorous review process, 18 full papers and 15 short papers were accepted. These contributions illustrate a spectrum of interest and enthusiasm about policy. There is enthusiasm for the concept of a policy, and for the representation of policy through language. There are still many unanswered questions, as well as new application areas to be found. Even the definition of policy is not yet an agreed-on quantity.

So, we the chairs welcome this new gathering of minds to discuss these matters at Policy 2006. The subject is far from exhausted; there is much to be discussed. It is our policy to wish everyone success.

We would like to extend our thanks to the many people who have made this workshop a success. We would like to express our gratitude towards members of the Steering Committee and Program Committee for their guidance and rigorous reviewing. We would also like to thank those involved in local arrangements including Meg Borthwick, Cheryl McGrath, Brad Simmons, and numerous graduate students from the Department of Computer Science at the University of Western Ontario. We are thankful to the IEEE for their support of this conference over the years. We are also thankful to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Science and the Office of the Vice President of Research and International Relations at the University of Western Ontario, and to the Centre for Advanced Studies, IBM Toronto Laboratory, for their financial support.

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