Foreword

On behalf of the Program Committee of the 13th International Symposium on Visual Languages, I would like to welcome you to Capri, Italy. VL'97 is the premier international conference on visual and multimedia computer languages. The aim of the conference is to discuss both formal methods and concrete applications in the area of visual and multimedia languages, as well as innovative methods for visual interaction and interaction with visual objects. This year the theme is “Visual Languages in the Third Millennium,” with special focus on innovative researches towards the future roles of visual languages in human-computer and human-human communications.

It is my pleasure to announce that the response to the Call-for-Papers was a great success. We received a total of 99 submissions from 19 countries on 5 continents, which proves the further growth of the international community of visual languages and the increasing interest in this research area. This is also the result of the many efforts made during the past editions to encourage the discussion among attendees from heterogeneous research groups. Hard work has been done by the Program Committee in order to select the best contributions. A total of 48 high-quality contributions have been accepted. Moreover 16 submissions which present work in progress on original and interesting ideas have been accepted as poster presentations in order to incite attendees to a constructive discussion. As a result, a great variety of relevant topics is covered by the technical program including Visual Language Design; Human Computer Interaction Issues in Visual Languages; Visual Language Implementation Techniques; Visual Query Languages; Software Visualization and Algorithm Animation; Theory of Visual Languages; End-User Programming Languages; Hypermedia and Multimedia; and Visual Environments. Three special sessions have been organized on topics which are of great current interest and concern: “Visual Languages for Human-to-Human Communication” (chaired by S. Tanimoto), “Visual Information Retrieval Interfaces” (chaired by R. Korfhage), and “Visual Languages for Software Engineering” (co-chaired by V. Ambriola and M. Tucci).

The VL'97 program itself continues the tradition of mixing carefully-reviewed research contribution and experience reports and other interesting activities with plenary presentations. M. Burnett and R. Walpole will give a tutorial on Introduction to Visual Programming Languages whose aim is to provide an insight into the main design issues of visual programming languages. A more specific topic will be addressed by R. Korfhage who will instruct a tutorial on Visual Information Retrieval Interfaces. I am especially honored that two distinguished researchers have accepted invitations to transmit their experiences giving talks of considerable interest on “Representation and Learnability in Visual Languages for Web-based Interpersonal Communication” (S. Tanimoto) and “On the Aesthetics of Diagrams” (D. Harel). As another special event, E. Jungert has organized a panel on “Negotiations in Spatial Reasoning Applications” with the contribution of three other eminent researchers, S. -K. Chang, R. Laurini and K. Ohlsson, who will discuss the impact and the future evolution of web-oriented meeting systems. Our community is also hosting a Visual Programming Challenge, which has been organized by A. Ambler, with the contributions of T. Green, D. Kimura, A. Repenning, and T. Smedley. The competition problem domain is quasi-real-time control of a robotic vehicle made from LEGO parts. The organizers will award research in this area. A summary report of the Challenge is given in the present volume.
This year we have also taken the initiative to host a research workshop on closely related topics. Among several interesting proposals, we have chosen the Workshop on Theory of Visual Languages (TVL'97), which will be organized by K. Marriott and B. Meyer. The workshop is at its second edition, and was first held in conjunction with the 3rd International Workshop on Advanced Visual Interfaces (AVI'96).

Finally, I wish to thank the many people who have greatly contributed to the Symposium organization, the members of the Program Committee and the other referees for the hard work done to ensure the high-level quality of the VL'97 technical program. Special efforts have been required of the chairs of the special sessions, the panel, the challenge, and the tutorials. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to A. Ambler, M. Burnett, W. Citrin, and T. Ichikawa for their precious advice and invaluable support throughout the organization process. Many thanks to A.M. Kelly, M. Johnson, T. Ross and the whole Computer Society general staff, who have assisted us with great professionalism.

Genny Tortora
Program Chair