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From the Conference Chairs

This volume represents the proceedings of the first international conference on Communities and Technologies (C&T 2003). The C&T conferences are supposed to become a major international forum since the relationship between communities and technology is a topic of growing research interests. The nature of the field requires multidisciplinary research efforts involving researchers from different fields of applied computer science (Computer Supported Cooperative Work, Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, Artificial Intelligence, Information Retrieval, Human Computer Interaction, Information Systems) and social sciences (Cultural Anthropology, Communication Science, Economics, Management and Organization Science, Psychology, Political Science, Sociology).

Communities are social entities whose actors share common needs, interests, or practices: they constitute the basic units of social experience. For a number of reasons, researchers are increasingly interested in the topic of communities. First, within a global knowledge-based society, communities play a pivotal role. Problems such as new forms of political participation and civic engagement, the maintenance of cultural identities, or the integration of minorities need to be tackled on the community level. Second, communities also re-shape the processes of learning and sharing knowledge in and among organizations. While earlier approaches focused on storing and retrieving explicit knowledge represented in documents, communities are believed to be important structures to share implicit situated knowledge, as well. Given a new dimension by the use of electronic networks, inter-organizational cooperation is nowadays often discussed in terms of B2B-Marketplaces, Supply Chain Management, Virtual Organizations, or Strategic Alliances. Many failed attempts to implement these approaches can be attributed to inadequate attention to the issues of communities. Finally new types of communities, e.g. on-line communities, might change the relationships between producer and consumer. Information technologies may support or hinder these and other types of communities. So there are considerable research challenges ahead of us.

The C&T program of papers presented in this volume is the result of a very selective reviewing process. The conference received the unexpected high number of 120 submissions of full papers. After a thorough quality oriented reviewing process 24 papers were selected. Both the number of submissions and the quality and diversity of the program presented here are a testimony of the importance the C&T conference has already gained. We are sure that you will enjoy the papers in this volume.

The research papers in this volume are only one aspect of a diverse and dynamic event such as the C&T 2003 conference. Twelve very challenging workshops and an industrial consortium meeting are an other indication for the vivid research interest in this emerging field.

This conference could not have taken place without considerable enthusiasm, support and encouragement as well as sheer hard work. Many people have earned the thanks of those who attended and organized C&T 2003. In particular, we would like to gratefully thank:

- All those who submitted to the conference. The standard was very high and reflects well on the research work going on.
- All of those who contributed to the conference through workshops, and paper presentations. We are specially indebted to Larry Prusak for offering a very highly demanded tutorial.
- All of those who contributed to the organization of the conference. Setting up a major international conference is a complex endeavour and many people made significant

contributions to realizing a successful conference. A special thanks go to Tanja Antonijevic, Andrea Bernards, Marion Kielmann, Liesbeth Otten, Luzia Sassen, Arjen Schwarz and Monika Wagner. Daniel Breitscheidel spent lots of efforts maintaining the conference www-site. Thanks a lot for that!

- Those members of the Conference and Program Committees who gave so freely of their time and energy to ensure that the conference was both smoothly run and of high technical quality. The many individuals we owe our thanks to are listed elsewhere in this volume.
- F. Robbert van Berckelaer of Kluwer Academic Publishers who generously supported us in launching the conference and its proceedings.
- The many sponsors, supporters, and cooperating partners of C&T 2003 for their contributions to the conference.

These proceedings represent the starting point of an international discourse in the research field of communities and technologies. The future appears to hold considerable promise for us.

Marleen Huysman, Etienne Wenger, and Volker Wulf

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