

Editorial

It is my pleasure to write this editorial for the first issue of IS&U from our new publisher IOS Press. Art Elias and myself will pursue the same policy referred to by Art in an earlier editorial as “an eclectic mixture . . . with a wide variety of subjects and national origins”. Readers will note that this issue of IS&U contains a mixture of this kind which, to quote Art again, is “why I find my job and this information world so fascinating”.

Certainly we have considered that the word “Information” in “Information Services & Use” gives us a wide remit, but hitherto the emphasis has been on “Textual Information”. However, aspects of the information contained in images or pictures have already received some attention. Volume 11 (5,6) 1991 was a special issue about this topic.

You may expect to see that images considered as an information resource will receive rather more attention in the future. Information Technology power and prices now enable images to be conveniently handled; consequently Multimedia, Virtual Reality, and Picture Databases are upon us. Increasing Telecommunications power is just starting to make itself felt. 5 Mbyte data files of medical images are being transmitted over Internet. One of the first SuperJanet projects will be the discussion of features in microscope slides following the exchange of image data in colour between pathologists.

I am looking forward to attending the European Visual Arts Conference at the National Gallery, London, this week. In this field, the wide range of interest in pictures in electronic format is evident. The papers to be presented include the following:

“Electronic imaging in conservation: collaborating on small systems” (Kathleen McDonnell, Getty Conservation Institute).

“The retrieval, display, and publishing opportunities for a visual database” (Malcolm Lewis, Media Projects International).

“The application of HDTV to Japanese museums” (Tadoru Kato, Tokyo Hi-Vision).

“Colour manipulation and separation techniques in the MARC project” (Lindsay McDonald, Crosfield).

“Pattern coding retrieval for archaeological objects” (G. Stanke, Gfal, Berlin).

Among the tutorial sessions there will be two covering “Electronic Publishing and Copyright”, and another “Multimedia telecommunications – what is practical today”.

Clearly, indexing is of paramount importance as is discussed in this issue. As Mark Rorvig (NASA, Houston) says “The beautiful systems that retrieve images of documents as pages . . . without an index and browsing tools they are as dumb as fishes and pigs”.

In view of all this activity coupled with the topic of retrieving pictures by matching them against a query-sketch, discussed at length at the SPIE meeting in San Jose earlier this year, we hope to be able to present some interesting papers from this area in forthcoming issues of IS&U.

Tony Cawkell