

Preface

The Fourth International Workshop on Principles of Digital Document Processing took place in Saint Malo, France on March 29 and 30, 1998. PODDP'98 was the fourth in a series of international workshops that provide forums to discuss the modeling of document processing systems using theories and techniques from, for example, computer science, mathematics, and psychology. PODDP'98 took place in conjunction with EP'98 at the Palais des Congrès in Saint Malo.

The charter of PODDP is deliberately ambitious and its scope broad. Indeed, we have added the adjective “Digital” to the series title to reflect the workshop’s emphasis on multimedia documents. The current state of digital document systems can be characterized as a plethora of tools without a clear articulation of unifying principles and underlying concepts. The practical and commercial impact of these tools — editors and formatters for many media (text, graphics, video, audio, animation), composition systems, digital libraries, the World Wide Web, word processing systems, structured editors, document management systems — is too pervasive and obvious to require further elaboration and emphasis.

With the rapid development in hardware technology (processors, memory, and high bandwidth networks), however, the notion of a document and of document processing itself is undergoing a profound change. The growing use of multimedia has expanded our notions about content, scale, and dynamicity of documents. To address these changes, we hope to bring to bear theories and techniques developed by researchers in other areas of science, mathematics, engineering and the humanities (such as databases, formal specification languages and methodologies, optimization, workflow analysis, and user interface design).

The PODDP workshops are intended to promote a happy marriage between documents and document processing, and theories and techniques. PODDP provides an ideal opportunity for discussion and information exchange between researchers who are grappling with problems in *any* area of document processing.

We invited researchers to submit papers with a good balance between theory and practice in document processing. Papers that addressed both on a somewhat equal basis were preferred. Each paper was subjected to rigorous peer review.

Finally, we hope that the work presented in this volume will stimulate other researchers to join us in investigating the principles of digital document processing. To support the dissemination of this research, plans are being made for the next workshop in this series, PODDP 2000, to be held in conjunction with DDEP 2000, the Eighth International Conference on Digital Documents and Electronic Publishing.

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