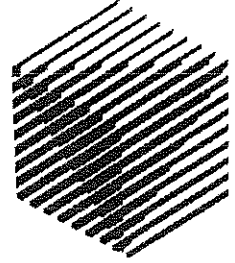


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Ninth DELOS Workshop

Digital Libraries for Distance Learning

Brno, Czech Republic, 15-17 April 1999

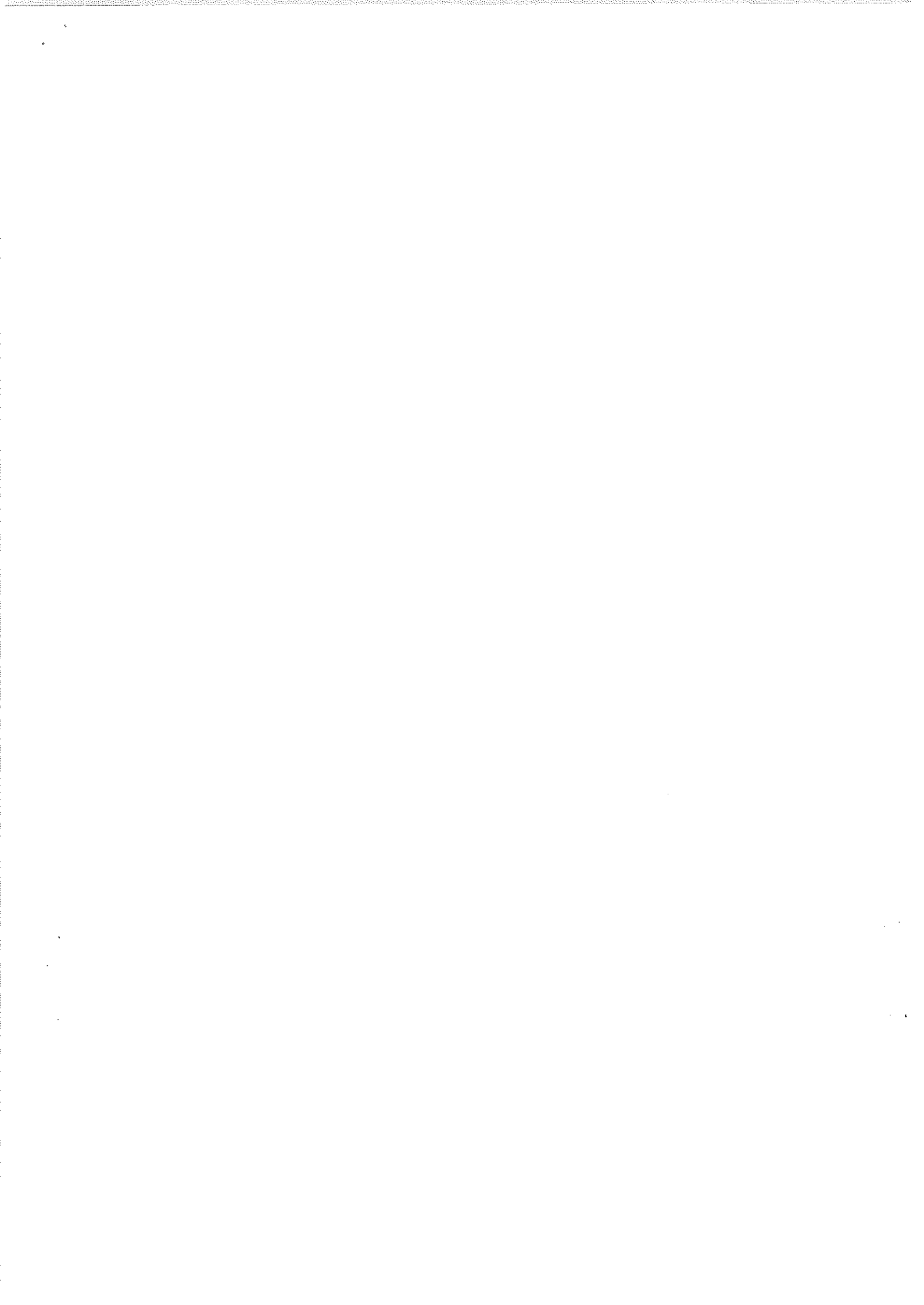
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NINTH DELOS WORKSHOP
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15-17 April 1999



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Introduction

Pasquale Savino and Pavel Zezula

The 9th DELOS Workshop on Digital Libraries for Distance Learning (<http://www.cis.vutbr.cz/delos/>) was held in Brno, Czech Republic, 15-17 April 1999. The objective of the DELOS Working Group (<http://www.iei.pi.cnr.it/DELOS/>), part of the ERCIM Digital Library Initiative funded by the ESPRIT Long Term Research Programme, is to promote research into the further development of digital library technologies.

This year Brno Technical University held its 100 year anniversary. It also recently become an associated partner of DELOS. The workshop was organized in celebration of these two events.

The workshop addressed two very important and rather recent research problems, namely, Digital Libraries and Distance Learning. Access to education has become increasingly important for individuals who need to gain a competitive edge in the labor market through acquisition of specialized or new knowledge. This demand for new information, coupled with the ever increasing quantity of information available in digital form, has lead to a change in traditional teaching methods. Face to face teaching is gradually being replaced by distance education. In order to make this form of education both effective and efficient, advanced information and communication technologies must be exploited. To this aim, digital libraries of distributed complex multimedia data can serve as suitable repositories of continuously changing up-to-date information, which are indispensable for distance education.

The DELOS organizers cooperated with the Czech Association of Distance Learning Universities and the European Association of Distance Learning Universities in preparing the program for this workshop. The Call for Papers was circulated not only to all DELOS Project partners, but also to the electronic network, reaching hundreds of individuals.

The final program, organized into seven sections, contained contributions from nine countries. The invited talk, by John A.N. Lee, concentrated on distance learning experiences at the Department of Computer Science at Virginia Tech, USA. The remaining presentations can be divided in two categories. Papers in the first category concentrated on conceptual issues of distance learning, emphasizing the position of digital libraries in the global process of knowledge acquisition. Papers in the second category presented information about actual prototypes for distance learning or addressed some of the advance technology tools necessary to meet this aim.

One section, highly appreciated by the workshop attendees, was devoted to prototype demonstrations. Six different prototypes were presented.

The workshop inspired numerous discussions. The most important issues can be summarized as follows:

1. Closer cooperation between the Digital Library and the Distance Learning communities is needed in order to better understand learning needs and technology capabilities.

2. A stronger theoretical foundation of actual systems is needed, including data modeling, search strategies, network communication, and user interfaces. Moreover, the performance of the hardware is not always sufficient.
3. Most of the participants expressed interest in cooperating under suitable research frameworks.

Finally, we are grateful to Tarina Ayazi from the IEI-CNR, Pisa, Italy for all her organizational help in making the workshop a success.

The DELOS Working Group is a part of the ESPRIT Long Term Research Programme (LTR No. 21057) and is managed by ERCIM.

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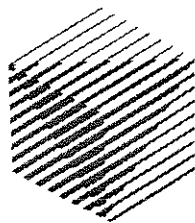
University of Michigan, USA
Elsevier Sciences, The Netherlands

For additional information, please contact

Costantino Thanos
Istituto di Elaborazione della Informazione, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche
Via Santa Maria 46
I-56126 Pisa
Tel: +39 50 593492, Fax: +39 50 554342, E-mail: thanos@iei.pi.cnr.it

DELOS web site: <http://www.iei.pi.cnr.it/DELOS/>

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Tel: +44 1235 82 1900
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<http://www.cclrc.ac.uk/>



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NL-1098 SJ
Amsterdam

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delle Ricerche

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Via S. Maria, 46
I-56126 Pisa

Tel: +39 050 593 433
Fax: +39 050 554 342
<http://www.teicnr.it/>



Coen Research
Consortium
for Informatics
and Mathematics

FIJOU
Eindhoven 656
NL-6500 MB Eindhoven

Tel: +31 40 2 68 84 689
Fax: +31 40 2 68 84 603
<http://www.cwi.nl/>
<http://www.cwi.nl/>



Danish Consortium
for Informatics
and Technology

DANIT c/o CIT
Arhøjgade 34
DK - 2300 Alhøjhus N

Tel: +45 8942 3440
Fax: +45 8942 3443
<http://www.cwi.dk/ERCIM/>



Foundation
for Research
and Technology -
Hellas

Institute of Computer
Science
P.O. Box 1385
GR-27110 Heraklion,
Crete

Tel: +30 81 39 16 00
Fax: +30 81 39 16 01
<http://www.cwi.gr/>



GMD -
Forschungsgesellschaft
Informationsysteme
Carlsruhe

Schloß Karlsruhe
D-53754 Siedel
Augsburg

Tel: +49 234 1 14 0
Fax: +49 234 1 14 2200
<http://www.gmd.de/>



Institut National
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B.P. 105
F-78153 Le Chesnay

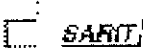
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Swedish Institute
of Computer Science

Box 1263
S-164 88 Kista

Tel: +46 8 633 1500
Fax: +46 8 633 7230
<http://www.sics.se/>



Swiss Association
for Research
in Informatics
Technology

Dept. Informatics
ETH-Zentrum
CH-8092 Zurich

Tel: +41 1 632 72 41
Fax: +41 1 632 11 72
<http://www.sta.ethz.ch/>
<http://www.sta.ethz.ch/>



Seifvelde
for Industrial
and Marine
Technology

SINTEF Telecom &
Informatics
N-7034 Trondheim

Tel: +47 73 59 30 00
Fax: +47 73 59 43 02
<http://www.sintef.no/>
<http://www.sintef.no/>



Slovak Research
Consortium
for Informatics
and Mathematics

Dept. of Computer
Science, Comenius
University
Mlynska Dolina 74
SK-842 15 Bratislava

Tel: +421 7 72 66 35
Fax: +421 7 72 70 41



Magyar Tudományos
Akadémia -
Számítástechnikai
Automatizálási
Kutató Intézet

P.O. Box 63
H-1518 Budapest

Tel: +36 1 466 56 44
Fax: +36 1 466 75 03
<http://www.mta.hu/>



Technical Research
Centre of Finland

VTT Information
Technology
P.O. Box 1200
FIN-02044 VTT

Tel: +358 9 456 6041
Fax: +358 9 456 6027
<http://www.vtt.fi/>

ERCIM

Domaine de Voluceau, Rocquencourt, B.P. 105, F-78153 Le Chesnay Cedex, FRANCE

Tel: +33 1 39 63 53 03 Fax: +33 1 39 63 58 88

<http://www.ercim.org/>