Preface

In the not too distant future, the Web will be everywhere in the world. By the year 2003, the explosion of Web−enabled electronic business (e−Business) will be worth more than US $1 trillion and the Web users will be more than 600 million. This is offering organizations previously unheard of opportunities. To be successful or survive, industry leaders have made strategies towards e−Business, and others, sooner or later, more or less, will have to become certain kinds of e−Business.

Web technologies play a critical role in todays Web−enabled e−Business. A key to success in applying the Web−based technologies to real world problems lies in understanding the architectural issues and developing the appropriate methodologies and tools for building e−Business systems. The main purpose of this book, therefore, is to provide the e− Business professionals with a holistic perspective of this field that covers a wide range of topics.

At the very outset of this project, we realized that it is impossible for any one author to write a book of this type and cover all the important aspects of this rapidly emerging field, maintaining the same depth, width and consistency. With this in mind, the main philosophy that was followed in organizing this handbook was to invite experts around the world to contribute their knowledge. Therefore, we identified some of the key topics in this area and invited a wide range of professionals across the globe to contribute a chapter in the area of their expertise to this handbook. This had an overwhelming and enthusiastic response from authors in different parts of the world: Australia, Canada, Germany, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We also tried to avoid a hasty approach in the compilation of this book and gave adequate time for it to grow over months of preparation and consultation with the publishers, authors, and reviewers.

The success of this book is to a large extent, due to the collective effort of a great team consisting of the authors and other reviewers. The blind review process included the authors besides other reviewers. The inclusion of the authors in the blind review process improved the quality of the book and also served as an incentive to each author to strengthen his/her write−up. Although the editors initially received many proposals and manuscripts, the stringent quality control measures taken permitted us ultimately to include only 26 chapters, contributed by 51 professionals from 27 universities and five industry organizations in different parts of the world.

Readership

The primary readers of this handbook are professionals, executives and undergraduate/postgraduate students in IT and Computer Science−related areas. Professionals will be able to use this book as an informative technical introduction to areas of their interest in Web−based technologies and architectures. The references provided in each chapter provide additional background to the reader to pursue a more detailed study of any particular aspect.