

Message from the General Chairs

The 24th edition of the International Conference on Extending Database Technology (EDBT) was held between the 23rd and 26th of March 2021, despite the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. Continuing its longstanding tradition as a premier data management research forum taking place in a European location, EDBT 2021, jointly organized with the International Conference on Database Theory (ICDT), was held virtually in Nicosia, the capital of the beautiful island of Cyprus.

At the onset, our aim has been to offer as close to an in-person, face-to-face experience as possible, maximizing the dissemination of knowledge and sharing of research results among the EDBT/ICDT participants at no health risk to them, and together discover the Cypriot culture and hospitality. EDBT/ICDT 2021 was initially planned to become the first hybrid EDBT/ICDT conference, combining physical presentations with an extended online audience, although this plan later evolved into an online format due to the ongoing situation with COVID-19. To this end, we have been committed to offering the best possible online experience to attendees by capitalizing and expanding on the success of earlier conferences.

Particularly, we decided on a number of novelties compared to previous conferences. Firstly, given that an optimal online experience cannot be achieved with pre-recorded presentations, but only with live presentations and direct interactions between the speakers and the audience, we decided in coordination with the Program Chairs on the online synchronous delivery of all events, including all research presentations, tutorials and live demonstrations. The next challenge was to select the appropriate conference management platform. Our personal experience as participants in several online conferences during the past year, and our evaluation of a number of popular web socializing platforms, led us to the decision that a custom conference attendance experience can only be delivered by an in-house platform that relies on a reliable teleconferencing channel, an intuitive interface, and a low learning curve.

To this end, the Data Management Systems Laboratory at the University of Cyprus, under the leadership of Demetris Zeinalipour developed and hosted a novel web-based platform named VGATE (Virtual Gate) to online conferences. VGATE allowed the Organizing Committee to collaborate over a Web-based Sheet interface (like Google Sheets) to plan and manage the organization. VGATE provided numerous helpful building-blocks in the online organization, namely, zoom license management and user status integration, integration of proceedings and multimedia content, industry booths, live sessions, social rooms, and for the first time an online helpdesk supported by EasyConferences Ltd. Special thanks to Paschalis Mpeis (University of Cyprus, Cyprus), Soteris Constantinou (University of Cyprus, Cyprus) and Constantinos Costa (University of Pittsburgh, USA) for their support and code contributions to the project under an extremely tight schedule. Special thanks also to Zoom Video Communications, Inc., for facilitating and sponsoring EDBT/ICDT 2021.

Novel this year is the participation of EDBT/ICDT to the newly founded Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiative of the Data Management community. EDBT/ICDT (alongside SIGMOD, VLDB, SoCC, and ICDE) celebrates the diversity in our community and welcomes everyone regardless of age, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, country of origin, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, education, work experience, etc. To introduce this initiative, Panos K. Chrysanthis, the EDBT/ICDT D&I Chair, together with Sihem Amer-Yahia (CNRS, University Grenoble Alpes, France), a D&I Core Member, organized a panel as part of the Reception on DAY1 of the conference.

With D&I and broad participation in mind, the conference program was structured in a way that is convenient to at least half of the world at any given time. Specifically, the program was split into morning sessions (CET), which were convenient for EU-ASIA participants, on DAY1 and DAY3, and the afternoon sessions (CET), which were convenient for EU-America participants on DAY2 and DAY4. The Workshops were scheduled on DAY1 in the morning or afternoon based on the geographical location of their presenters. Social events were split along the same lines, presenting the host country, Cyprus, through music and videos on culture, geography, food, leisure, and other enjoyable aspects of Cyprus. Virtual corridor and hallway discussions were supported by a number of unmoderated and dynamic social rooms on VGATE at all times.

This year we also introduced some additional novelties, namely: (i) We introduced a special ceremony during Reception on DAY2, titled “*Pandemic Greetings from the Pioneers and the Next Data Management Challenge*”, with greetings by Philip A. Bernstein (Microsoft Research, WA, USA), Laura M. Haas (University of Massachusetts – Amherst, MA, USA), Yannis Ioannidis (University of Athens, Greece) and Jeffrey D. Ullman (Stanford, CA, USA); (ii) we introduced the concept of a sponsored industry talk during Dinner on DAY3, with title “*Behind the Scenes of Snowflake’s new Search Optimization Service*”, by Ismail Oukid (Snowflake, Germany) and Stefan Richter (Snowflake, Germany); (iii) we introduced a dedicated “*Demos in Action: Meet the Authors!*” session during Dinner on DAY3, which allowed Demo presenters to individually showcase their demos to participants in their private presentation space through VGATE. Finally, we also continued to support the Climate Change discussion with a session on DAY4, led by Antoine Amarilli (Télécom Paris, France), with guest Benjamin Pierce (University of Pennsylvania, USA).

In all above endeavors, we had the support and encouragement of our incredible Organization Committee and the EDBT Executive Board, in particular, the President of EDBT Executive Board Angela Bonifati (Lyon 1 University, France), as well as the Chair of the ICDT Council Wim Martens (University of Bayreuth, Germany).

We are grateful to the entire Technical Program Committees, which, under the excellent leadership of the EDBT Program Chair Yannis Velegrakis (University of Trento, Italy and Utrecht University, Netherlands) and the ICDT Program Chair

Ke Yi (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong), brought forward an exciting technical program with a rich production of technical content (proceedings, videos, pitches, ads, etc.). Our gratitude also extends personally to the EDBT Demonstration Chair Sihem Amer-Yahia (CNRS, University Grenoble Alpes, France), the EDBT Workshop Chair Evaggelia Pitoura (University of Ioannina, Greece), the Climate Chair Antoine Amarilli (Télécom Paris, France), the EDBT Applied Database Systems for Data Science Vice-Chair Paul Groth (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands), the EDBT Industrial/Application Chair Eric Simon (SAP, France), the Tutorial Chairs Stefan Manegold (CWI, Netherlands) and Wang-Chiew Tan (Megagon Labs, USA), for the excellent collaboration, and exchange of ideas and insightful discussions. We would also like to highlight EDBT Demonstration Chair Sihem Amer-Yahia's success in putting together EDBT's first all-women Demonstration Track Committee. We would also like to thank the organizers of the six, co-located workshops DOLAP, BigVis, BMDA, DARLI-AP, SIMPLIFY and PIE+Q for enriching the scope of the technical program.

Several people contributed to the successful organization of the EDBT/ICDT 2021 conference. Special thanks to the following valued collaborators for their passion in organizing a memorable event: the Sponsorship Chair Divyakant Agrawal (University of California-Santa Barbara, USA), the Publicity Chair Herodotos Herodotou (Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus), the Finance Chair George Pallis (University of Cyprus, Cyprus), the EDBT Proceedings Chair Francesco Guerra (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy), the ICDT Proceedings Chair Zhewei Wei (Renmin University, China), the Workshops Proceedings Chair Constantinos Costa (University of Pittsburgh, USA) and the Website support by Nicolas Kantzilaris (Easy Conferences, Cyprus).

Our sincere gratitude to our platinum sponsor, Snowflake, and our bronze sponsors, Oracle and Zoom, as well as the contact persons behind the support, namely Martin Hentschel (Snowflake), Ann Brisson (Oracle) and Alberto Colautti (Zoom).

Organizing EDBT 2021 at the University of Cyprus was Prof. George Samaras†' passion. After his unexpected passing two years ago, his friends and colleagues at the University of Cyprus volunteered to make his passion a reality. We are grateful to the EDBT Executive Board for giving us this opportunity and trusting us to organize EDBT 2021 alongside ICDT 2021 in Cyprus, as proposed by George in 2018. We dedicate the EDBT/ICDT 2021 in honor of the memory of Prof. George Samaras† (1959–2018).

We hope you enjoyed EDBT/ICDT 2021's exciting technical program and your virtual visit to Cyprus!

Demetris Zeinalipour, University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Panos K. Chrysanthis, University of Cyprus, Cyprus and University of Pittsburgh, USA

EDBT/ICDT 2021 General Co-Chairs