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Proceedings of the
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and Communication**
and
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BRIEF CONTENTS

INVITED SPEAKERS.....	IV
SPECIAL SESSION CHAIRS	V
ORGANIZING AND STEERING COMMITTEES	VI
SENIOR PROGRAM COMMITTEE.....	VII
PROGRAM COMMITTEE	VIII
AUXILIARY REVIEWERS	XII
SELECTED PAPERS BOOK	XIV
SPONSOR	XIV
FOREWORD.....	XV
CONTENTS.....	XVII

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SELECTED PAPERS BOOK

A number of selected papers presented at ICEIS 2007 will be published by Springer, in a book entitled Enterprise Information Systems IX. This selection will be done by the conference Chair and program co-chairs, among the papers actually presented at the conference, based on a rigorous review by the ICEIS 2007 program committee members.

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FOREWORD

This volume contains the proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems (ICEIS 2007) organized by the Institute for Systems and Technologies of Information Control and Communication (INSTICC) and the University of Madeira, in collaboration with ACM/SIGMIS and AAI. Furthermore, the conference was sponsored by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).

ICEIS has become a major point of contact between research scientists, engineers and practitioners in the area of business applications of information systems. This year, five simultaneous tracks were held, covering different aspects related to enterprise computing, including: “Databases and Information Systems Integration”, “Artificial Intelligence and Decision Support Systems”, “Information Systems Analysis and Specification”, “Software Agents and Internet Computing” and “Human-Computer Interaction”. All tracks describe research work that is often oriented towards real world applications and highlight the benefits of Information Systems and Technology for industry and services, thus making a bridge between the Academia and the Enterprise worlds.

Following the success of 2006, ICEIS 2007 also had a number of satellite workshops, related to the field of the conference. This year we collaborated in the organization of the following ten international workshops: 7th International Workshop on Pattern Recognition in Information Systems; 1st International Joint Workshop on Wireless Ubiquitous Computing; 5th International Workshop on Modelling, Simulation, Verification and Validation of Enterprise Information Systems; 5th International Workshop on Security In Information Systems; 4th International Workshop on Natural Language Processing and Cognitive Science; 4th International Workshop on Computer Supported Activity Coordination; 3rd International Workshop on Model-Driven Enterprise Information Systems; 1st International Joint Workshop on Technologies for Collaborative Business Processes and Management of Enterprise Information Systems; 1st International Workshop on RFID Technology - Concepts, Applications, Challenges and 1st International Workshop on Human Resource Information Systems.

This year, ICEIS 2007 received 644 paper submissions from more than 40 countries in all continents. 72 papers were published and presented as full papers, i.e. completed work (8 pages/30' oral presentation), 198 papers reflecting work-in-progress or position papers were accepted for short presentation, and another 131 contributions were scheduled for poster presentation.

These numbers, leading to a “full-paper” acceptance ratio below 12%, and a total acceptance ratio below 65%, show the intention of preserving a high quality forum for the next editions of this conference. Additionally, as usual in the ICEIS conference series, a number of invited talks, presented by internationally recognized specialists in different areas, have positively contributed to reinforce the overall quality of the Conference and to provide a deeper understanding of the Enterprise Information Systems field.

A book of Selected Papers will be published, following the conference, by Springer in the newly created series “Lecture Notes in Business Information Processing” (LNBIP). This series brings the

successful LNCS approach to areas such as business information systems, e-business, B2B integration, Enterprise applications and industrial software development.

The program for this conference required the dedicated effort of many people. Firstly, we must thank the authors, whose research and development efforts are recorded here. Secondly, we thank the members of the program committee and the additional reviewers for their diligence and expert reviewing. Thirdly, we thank the invited speakers for their invaluable contribution and for taking the time to synthesise and prepare their talks. Fourthly, we thank the workshop chairs and the special session chairs whose collaboration with ICEIS was much appreciated. Finally, special thanks to all the members of the local organising committee, especially Jorge Cardoso, whose collaboration was fundamental for the success of this conference.

This year, the organization will distribute two awards to papers presented at the conference: the best paper award and the best student paper award, mainly based on the classifications provided by the Program Committee members.

We wish you all an exciting conference and an unforgettable stay in the lovely island of Madeira. We hope to meet you again next year for the 10th ICEIS, to be held in Barcelona - Spain, details of which are available at <http://www.iceis.org>.

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CONTENTS

INVITED SPEAKERS

KEYNOTE LECTURES

- THE 4 X 4 SEMANTIC MODEL - Exploiting Data, Functional, Non-functional and Execution Semantics
Across Business Process, Workflow, Partner Services and Middleware Services Tiers IS-5
Amit P. Sheth and Karthik Gomadam
- TRENDS IN BUSINESS PROCESS ANALYSIS - From Verification to Process Mining IS-13
Wil M. P. van der Aalst
- INFORMATION LOGISTICS IN NETWORKED ORGANISATIONS - Issues, Concepts and
Applications IS-23
Kurt Sandkubal
- SERVICE-ORIENTED ARCHITECTURE - One Size Fits Nobody IS-31
Christoph Busler
- INTRODUCING AN IT CAPABILITY MATURITY FRAMEWORK IS-35
Martin Curley
- DRIVING AHEAD: JOINT ENTERPRISE-EMBEDDED COMPUTING IN SMART CLOUDS,
SMART DUST AND INTELLIGENT AUTOMOBILES IS-49
K. Venkatesh Prasad
- ENTERPRISE INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR USE: FROM BUSINESS PROCESSES TO HUMAN
ACTIVITY IS-51
Larry Constantine

DATABASES AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

FULL PAPERS

- STATISTICS API: DBMS-INDEPENDENT ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT OF DBMS STATISTICS
IN HETEROGENEOUS ENVIRONMENTS 5
Tobias Kraft and Bernhard Mitschang
- USING AN INDEX OF PRECOMPUTED JOINS IN ORDER TO SPEED UP SPARQL PROCESSING 13
Sven Groppe, Jinghua Groppe and Volker Linnemann
- ONE-TO-MANY DATA TRANSFORMATION OPERATIONS - Optimization and Execution on an
RDBMS 21
Pauo Carreira, Helena Galhardas, João Pereira and Andrzej Wichert
- MONITORING WEB DATA SOURCES USING TEMPORAL PROPERTIES AS AN EXTERNAL
RESOURCES OF A DATA WAREHOUSE 28
Francisco Araque, Alberto Salguero and Cecilia Delgado
- TRANSFORMATION OF LEGACY BUSINESS SOFTWARE INTO CLIENT-SERVER
ARCHITECTURES 36
Thomas Rauber and Gudula Rünger

A NEW ALGORITHM FOR TWIG PATTERN MATCHING <i>Yangjun Chen</i>	44
XML SCHEMA STRUCTURAL EQUIVALENCE <i>Angela C. Duta, Ken Barker and Reda Albajj</i>	52
MODELING DIMENSIONS IN THE XDW MODEL - A LVM-Driven Approach <i>R. Rajugan, Elizabeth Chang and Tharam S. Dillon</i>	60
INFORMATION SYSTEMS INTEGRATION DURING MERGERS - Integration Modes Typology and Integration Paths <i>Gérald Brunetto</i>	71
A VIRTUALIZATION APPROACH FOR REUSING MIDDLEWARE ADAPTERS <i>Ralf Wagner and Bernhard Mitschang</i>	78
XML INDEX COMPRESSION BY DTD SUBTRACTION <i>Stefan Böttcher, Rita Steinmetz and Niklas Klein</i>	86
DYNAMIC COMMIT TREE MANAGEMENT FOR SERVICE ORIENTED ARCHITECTURES <i>Stefan Böttcher and Sebastian Obermeier</i>	95
DETERMINING THE COSTS OF ERP IMPLEMENTATION <i>Rob J. Kusters, Fred J. Heemstra and Arjan Jonker</i>	102
SHORT PAPERS	
STAH-TREE: Hybrid Index for Spatio Temporal Aggregation <i>Marcin Goramski and Michał Faruga</i>	113
PREFERENCE RULES IN DATABASE QUERYING <i>Sergio Greco, Cristian Molinaro and Francesco Parisi</i>	119
SIMPLIFIED QUERY CONSTRUCTION - Queries Made as Easy as Possible <i>Brad Arshinoff, Damon Ratcliffe, Martin Saetre, Reda Albajj and Tansel Özyer</i>	125
DISTRIBUTED APPROACH OF CONTINUOUS QUERIES WITH KNN JOIN PROCESSING IN SPATIAL DATA WAREHOUSE <i>Marcin Goramski and Wojciech Gębczyk</i>	131
ACTIVITY WAREHOUSE: DATA MANAGEMENT FOR BUSINESS ACTIVITY MONITORING <i>Oscar Mangisengi, Mario Pichler, Dagmar Auer, Dirk Drabeim and Hildegard Rumetsbofer</i>	137
UNASSUMING VIEW-SIZE ESTIMATION TECHNIQUES IN OLAP - An Experimental Comparison <i>Kamel Aouiche and Daniel Lemire</i>	145
OLAP AGGREGATION FUNCTION FOR TEXTUAL DATA WAREHOUSE <i>Franck Ravat, Olivier Teste and Ronan Tournier</i>	151
REVISITING THE OLAP INTERACTION TO COPE WITH SPATIAL DATA AND SPATIAL DATA ANALYSIS <i>Rosa Matias and João Moura-Pires</i>	157
USING FUZZY DATACUBES IN THE STUDY OF TRADING STRATEGIES <i>M. Delgado Calvo-Flores, J. F. Nuñez Negrillo, E. Gibaja Galindo and C. Molina Fernández</i>	164
PIN: A PARTITIONING & INDEXING OPTIMIZATION METHOD FOR OLAP <i>Ricardo Jorge Santos and Jorge Bernardino</i>	170

FROM DATABASE TO DATAWAREHOUSE: A Design Quality Evaluation <i>Maurizio Pighin and Lucio Ieronutti</i>	178
IMPLEMENTING SPATIAL DATAWAREHOUSE HIERARCHIES IN OBJECT-RELATIONAL DBMSs <i>Elżbieta Malinowski and Esteban Zimányi</i>	186
A DOCUMENT REPOSITORY ARCHITECTURE FOR HETEROGENEOUS BUSINESS INFORMATION MANAGEMENT <i>Mohamed Mbarkei, Chantal Soulé-Dupuy and Nathalie Vallès-Parlangeau</i>	192
EXTRACTION AND TRANSFORMATION OF DATA FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED TEXT FILES USING A DECLARATIVE APPROACH <i>R. Raminhos and J. Moura-Pires</i>	199
DIMENSION HIERARCHIES UPDATES IN DATA WAREHOUSES - A User-driven Approach <i>Cécile Favre, Fadila Bentayeb and Omar Boussaid</i>	206
SECURE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE BY POLICY ALGEBRA AND ERML <i>Steve Barker and Paul Douglas</i>	212
EXPOSING WORKFLOWS TO LOAD BURSTS <i>Dmytro Dyachuk and Ralph Deters</i>	218
USING SEMANTIC WEB AND SERVICE ORIENTED TECHNOLOGIES TO BUILD LOOSELY COUPLED SYSTEMS: SWOAT – A Service and Semantic Web Oriented Architecture Technology <i>Bruno Caires and Jorge Cardoso</i>	226
THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR BUSINESS PROCESS INNOVATION: Towards a Research Program on Global Supply Chain Intelligence <i>Charles Møller</i>	233
TRANSACTION SERVICE COMPOSITION - A Study of Compatibility Related Issues <i>Anna-Briith Arnisen and Randi Karlsen</i>	239
MEDIATION FRAMEWORK FOR ENTERPRISE INFORMATION SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURES: Application-driven Approach <i>Leonid Kalinichenko, Dmitry Briukhov, Dmitry Martynov, Nikolay Skvortsov and Sergey Stupnikov</i>	246
A FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTING KNOWLEDGE WORK PROCESSES <i>Weidong Pan, Igor Hawryszkiemycz and Dongbei Xue</i>	252
A METHOD FOR EARLY CORRESPONDENCE DISCOVERY USING INSTANCE DATA <i>Indrakshi Ray and C. J. Michael Geisterfer</i>	258
PROBLEMS WITH NON-OPEN DATA STANDARDS IN SWEDISH MUNICIPALS - When Integrating and Adopting Systems <i>Benneth Christiansson and Fredrik Svensson</i>	264
CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN DATA INTEGRATION SYSTEMS <i>Rabee Ghurburn, Philippe Beaune and Hugues Solignac</i>	268
RELEVANT VALUES: NEW METADATA TO PROVIDE INSIGHT ON ATTRIBUTE VALUES AT SCHEMA LEVEL <i>Sonia Bergamaschi, Mirko Orsini, Francesco Guerra and Claudio Sartori</i>	274
LEGACY SYSTEM EVOLUTION – A Comparative Study of Modernisation and Replacement Initiation Factors <i>Irja Kankaanpää, Päivi Tübonen, Jarmo J. Ahonen, Jussi Koskinen, Tero Tilus and Henna Sivula</i>	280

A XML-BASED QUALITY MODEL FOR WEB SERVICES CERTIFICATION <i>J. Jorge Dias Jr., J. Adson O. G. da Cunha, Alexandre Álvaro, Roberto S. M. de Barros and Sílvia Meira</i>	288
AN INSERTION STRATEGY FOR A TWO-DIMENSIONAL SPATIAL ACCESS METHOD <i>Wendy Osborn and Ken Barker</i>	295
PTSM: A PORTLET SELECTION MODEL <i>M^a Ángeles Moraga, Coral Calero, Mario Piattini and Oscar Díaz</i>	301
KNOWLEDGE-MASHUPS AS NEXT GENERATION WEBBASED SYSTEMS - Converging Systems via Self-explaining Services <i>Thomas Bopp, Bürger Kühnel, Thorsten Hampel, Christian Prpitsch and Frank Lützenkirchen</i>	307
ON CORRECTNESS CRITERIA FOR WORKFLOW <i>Belinda M. Carter and Maria E. Orlowska</i>	315
ENABLING CSCW SYSTEMS TO AUTOMATICALLY BIND EXTERNAL KNOWLEDGE BASES <i>Thomas Bopp, Jonas Schulte and Thorsten Hampel</i>	323
WFSelector - A Tool for Comparing and Selecting Workflow Engines <i>Karim Baïna</i>	330
INTEGRATING IDENTIFICATION CONSTRAINTS IN WEB ONTOLOGY <i>Thi Dieu Thu Nguyen and Nhan Le-Thanh</i>	338
EXTENSIBLE METADATA REPOSITORY FOR INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS <i>Ricardo Ferreira and João Moura-Pires</i>	344
AN EXTENSIBLE RULE TRANSFORMATION MODEL FOR XQUERY OPTIMIZATION - Rules Pattern for XQuery Tree Graph View <i>Nicolas Travers and Tuyêt Trâm Dang Ngoc</i>	351
DQXSD: AN XML SCHEMA FOR DATA QUALITY - An XSD for Supporting Data Quality in XML <i>Eugenio Verbo, Ismael Caballero and Mario Piattini</i>	359
ENTERPRISE INFORMATION SEARCH SYSTEMS FOR HETEROGENEOUS CONTENT REPOSITORIES <i>Trieu C. Chieu, Shyh-Kwei Chen and Shiva S. Fu</i>	365
EVIE - AN EVENT BROKERING LANGUAGE FOR THE COMPOSITION OF COLLABORATIVE BUSINESS PROCESSES <i>Tony O'Hagan, Shazîa Sadiq and Wasim Sadiq</i>	372
SEMANTIC ORCHESTRATION MERGING - Towards Composition of Overlapping Orchestrations <i>Clementine Nemo, Mireille Blay-Fornarino, Michel Riveill and Günter Kniesel</i>	378
MAINTENANCE COST OF A SOFTWARE DESIGN: A Value-Based Approach <i>Daniel Cabrero, Javier Garzías and Mario Piattini</i>	384
AN INFORMATION SYSTEMS AUDITOR'S PROFILE <i>Mariana Carroll and Alta van der Merwe</i>	390
SOFTWARE COST ESTIMATION USING ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORKS WITH INPUTS SELECTION <i>Efi Papatheocharous and Andreas Andreou</i>	398
DOING THINGS RIGHT OR DOING THE RIGHT THINGS? Proposing a Documentation Scheme for Small to Medium Enterprises <i>Josephine Antoniou, Panagiotis Germanakos and Andreas S. Andreou</i>	408

THE CHALLENGES FACING GLOBAL ERP SYSTEMS IMPLEMENTATIONS <i>Paul Hawking, Andrew Stein and Susan Foster</i>	415
OOPUS - A Production Planning Information System to Assure High Delivery Reliability under Short-term Demand Changes and Production Disturbances <i>Wilhelm Dangelmaier, Tobias Rust, Thomas Hermanowski, Daniel Brüggemann, Daniel Kaschula, Andre Döring and Thorsten Timm</i>	423
POSTERS	
MODEL-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT USING STANDARD TOOLS <i>Julián Garrido, M^a Angeles Martos and Fernando Berzal</i>	433
DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACCOUNTING SYSTEM - Applying the Incrementally Modular Abstraction Hierarchy to a Complex System <i>Kenji Ohmori and Toshiyasu L. Kunii</i>	437
AN ORDER ALLOCATION MODEL IN VIRTUAL ENTERPRISES BASED ON INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS <i>Fangqi Cheng, Feifan Ye and Jianguo Yang</i>	445
A WEB TOOL FOR WEB DOCUMENT AND DATA SOURCE SELECTION WITH SQLFI <i>Marlene Goncalves and Leonid Tineo</i>	449
A DATABASE INTEGRATION SYSTEM BASED ON GLOBAL VIEW GENERATION <i>Uchang Park and Ramon Lawrence</i>	453
A KOREAN SEARCH PATTERN IN THE LIKE OPERATION <i>Sung Chul Park, Eun Hyang Lo, Jong Chul Park and Young Chul Park</i>	457
ON THE SEMI-AUTOMATIC VALIDATION AND DECOMPOSITION OF TERNARY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OPTIONAL ELEMENTS <i>Ignacio-J. Santos, Paloma Martínez Fernández and Dolores Cuadra</i>	465
INDUCTION OF DATA QUALITY PROTOCOLS INTO BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT <i>Shazia Sadiq, Maria Orlowska and Wasim Sadiq</i>	473
MODELING OF AN ANALYTICAL DATABASE SYSTEM <i>Alex Sandro Romeu de Souza Poletto and Jorge Rady Almeida Junior</i>	477
USABILITY ISSUES IN SERVICE-ORIENTED ARCHITECTURE <i>Jaroslav Král and Michal Zemlicka</i>	482
MULTIDIMENSIONAL VECTOR ROUTING IN A P2P NETWORK <i>Laurent Yeb, Georges Gardarin and Florin Dragan</i>	486
THE HAV DATA INTEGRATION APPROACH: The Mapping in HAV <i>Fatima Boulçane</i>	490
TIMING BEHAVIOR ANOMALY DETECTION IN ENTERPRISE INFORMATION SYSTEMS <i>Matthias Robr, Simon Giesecke and Wilhelm Hasselbring</i>	494
UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS <i>Abdelwahab Hamou-Lhadj</i>	498
ONE-TO-MANY DATA TRANSFORMATIONS - As Relational Operations <i>Paulo Carreira</i>	503

AN EXECUTIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR SECURITIES BROKER'S RISK MANAGEMENT WITH DATA WAREHOUSING AND OLAP <i>Yung-Hsin Wang, Shing-Han Li and Kuo-Lung Sun</i>	508
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO IMPLEMENT A TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE SOLUTION IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY <i>D. P. du Plessis and T. McDonald</i>	512
TOWARDS INDUSTRIAL SERVICE BUSINESS: Challenges in Designing ICT Support for the Networks of Companies <i>Sauli Häppavuori, Markus Hänninen, Samuli Pekkola and Kari Luostarinen</i>	516
MANAGING COMPLEX INFORMATION IN REACTIVE APPLICATIONS USING AN ACTIVE TEMPORAL XML DATABASE APPROACH <i>Essam Mansour, Kudakwashe Dube and Bing Wu</i>	520
ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES ON COOPETTIVE FEDERATED INFORMATION SYSTEMS <i>Mirko Cesarini and Mario Mezzanzanica</i>	524
A DATABASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM KERNEL FOR IMAGE COLLECTIONS <i>Liana Stanescu, Dumitru Burdescu, Cosmin Stoica and Marius Brezovan</i>	530
INTEGRATING ENTERPRISE DATA FOR DECISION SUPPORT IN CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATIONS <i>Tanko Ishaya, James Chadband and Lucy Grierson</i>	534
A NEW LOOK INTO DATA WAREHOUSE MODELLING <i>Nikolay Nikolov</i>	540
A MULTI-VIEWS REPOSITORY FOR MULTI-STRUCTURED DOCUMENTS <i>Karim Djemal</i>	544
INCENTIVES AND OBSTACLES IN IMPLEMENTING INTER-ORGANISATIONAL INTEROPERABILITY <i>Rajja Halonen and Veikko Halonen</i>	549
A FRAMEWORK FOR MODEL-DRIVEN PATTERN MATCHING <i>Ignacio García-Rodríguez de Guzmán, Macario Polo and Mario Piattini</i>	553
A METRICS PROPOSAL TO EVALUATE SOFTWARE INTERNAL QUALITY WITH SCENARIOS <i>Anna Grimán, María Pérez, Maryoly Ortega and Luis Mendoza</i>	558
A METHOD PROPOSAL FOR ARCHITECTURAL RELIABILITY EVALUATION <i>Anna Grimán, María Pérez, Luis E. Mendoza and Edumilis Méndez</i>	564
TOURISM INFORMATION AGGREGATION USING AN ONTOLOGY BASED APPROACH <i>Miguel Gouveia and Jorge Cardoso</i>	569
AN OVERVIEW OF THE OBJECT-ORIENTED DATABASE PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE DBPQL <i>Markus Kirchberg</i>	573
A DATA WAREHOUSE ARCHITECTURE FOR INTEGRATING FIELD-BASED DATA <i>Alberto Salguero, Francisco Araque and Ramón Carrasco</i>	577
TEXT ANALYTICS AND DATA ACCESS AS SERVICES - A Case Study in Transforming a Legacy Client-server Text Analytics Workbench and Framework to SOA <i>E. Michael Maximilien, Ying Chen, Ana Lelescu, James Rhodes, Jeffrey Kreulen and Scott Spangler</i>	581

A CONTINUOUS DATA INTEGRATION METHODOLOGY FOR SUPPORTING REAL-TIME DATA WAREHOUSING <i>Ricardo Jorge Santos and Jorge Bernardino</i>	589
SPECIAL SESSION ON NEW INFORMATION SYSTEM AND APPROACHES FOR PRODUCT MAINTENANCE	
LOGISTICS TRACEABILITY FOR SUPPLY CHAIN IMPROVEMENT - Case Study of SMMART Project <i>Paulina Blaszkomska, Jana Pieriegud and Michal Wolanski</i>	599
A POLICY-BASED PRIVACY STORAGE APPROACH <i>Julien Nowalczyk and Frédérique Tastet-Cherel</i>	605
SUPPLY CHAIN IMPROVEMENT - Assessing Readiness for Change through Collaboration Evaluation <i>Olivier Zephir, Emilie Chapotot, Stéphanie Minel and Benoît Roussel</i>	609
ACTIVITY THEORY MODEL - Application in the Automotive Industry <i>Jon Aldazabal, Gaizka Ballesteros and Juan Antonio Martín</i>	615
AUTHOR INDEX	621

PTSM: A PORTLET SELECTION MODEL

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Keywords: Portlet selection model, portlet quality model, non-functional characteristics, portals, portlets.

Abstract: The use of Web portals continues to rise, showing their importance in the current information society. The success of a portal depends on customers using and returning to it. Nowadays, it is very easy for users to change from one portal to another, so improving/assessing portal quality is a must. Hence, appropriate quality model should be available to measure and drive portal development. Specifically, this work focuses on portlet-based portals. Portlets are web components, and they can be thought as COTS but in a Web setting. This paper presents a portlet selection model that guides the portal developer in choosing the best portlet, among a set of portlets with similar functions for specified tasks and user objectives, in accordance to five quality measures, namely, functionality, reliability, usability, efficiency and reusability, and other three characteristics not related to the quality but important to carry out the selection.

1 INTRODUCTION

A portal provides a solution for aggregating content and application from various systems for presentation to the end user. Users do not need to know how the content or functionality is provided (Linwood and Minter, 2004).

Due to this complexity, vendors of portal frameworks strive to bring component-based development to the Web: the portlets. Portlets are used by portals as pluggable user interface components (Java Community Process, 2003). In such a way, a portlet can be seen as a mixture of software components and web applications.

So far however, portlets could not be reused by different portals since they did not use the same API; and the lack of a common model prevents portlet interoperability. However, the delivery of the Web Services for Remote Portlets (WSRP) specification overcomes this problem, and opens the possibility of a COST-like market for portlets (OASIS, 2005).

This raises the need for quality models that guide the user to ascertain the appropriate portlet. Therefore, if we want a “good” portal (with a good level of quality), we must select the most appropriated portlets for constructing it. In spite of

the existence of different quality models for software web and components, a specific model for portlets has not been developed yet.

The objective of this paper is to present a portlet selection model (PtSM) which is composed by a set of characteristics that must be taken into account when selecting a portlet. In concrete, PtSM is composed of two different kinds of characteristics. On the one hand those characteristics based on the quality of a portlet (considered as a software product that combines characteristics of software components and characteristics of web applications), which are unified under a quality model, namely PtQM (Portlet Quality Model). On the other hand, PtSM will use other characteristics not related to the portlet quality as such but are fundamental in order to select the best portlet.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 specifies the portlets characteristics. Section 3 explains how to use the selection model of a portlet (PtSM). Section 4 shows some related works. Section 5 identifies the quality characteristics for portlets whereas section 6 identifies the other portlets characteristics used for the selection of portlets. Finally, last section summarizes this paper and outlines the main areas of future work.

2 PORTLET CHARACTERISTICS

First generation portals tended to present a monolithic software architecture that compromised portal development and management, but second-generation portals let users create one or more personal pages composed of personalizable portlets - interactive Web mini-applications, local or remote to the portal that render markup fragments (news, weather, sports, and so on) that the portal can aggregate into a page (Bellas, 2004).

Until recently, the main problem related to portlets was the lack of a common model which hindered portlet interoperability. Nevertheless, WSRP (OASIS, 2005) overcomes this deficiency by defining a common interface. The main goal of this standard is to enable an application designer or administrator to pick from a rich choice of compliant remote content and application providers, and integrate them with just a few mouse clicks and no programming effort (OASIS, 2005).

Therefore, portlets are independent and reusable Web components which offer a specific functionality and provide markup fragments ready to be rendered. An example of a portlet can be a mini-application whose objective is to provide the cheapest books of the market. The portlet is aggregated into the portal web page where the rendering space available depends on the so-called window state. In particular, WSRP standard identifies five window states: *normal* indicates the portlet probably shares the portal page with more portlets; *minimized* the portlet should not render any visible markup although can include non-visible data; *maximized* indicates the portlet is probably the only one that is being rendered or that this portlet has more space; *solo* indicates that the portal page only has this portlet; *custom* is useful for consumers because they can declare custom window states.

In addition, portlets render different content depending on its mode. WSRP defines five modes: *the view* mode renders markup reflecting the current state of the portlet; *the edit* mode provides content and logic that let a user customize the behavior of the portlet; *the help* mode provides help screens that explains the portlet and its expected usage; *the preview* mode provides a rendering of its standard view mode content, as a visual sample of how this portlet will appear on the end-user's page with the current configuration; *the custom* mode provides a field for consumers to declare additional custom modes (OASIS, 2005).

Next items summarize the main portlet features for the purpose of this paper.

Portlets provide functionality: they are individual components that provide content for a portal (Linwood and Minter, 2004).

Portlets are reusable: they are portal components that can be shared and exchanged by various portlet containers to provide enhanced functionality (Novotny et al., 2004).

Portlets must be usable components: they can be subject by composition by third parties, so they need clear interfaces and configurability (Diaz and Rodriguez, 2004).

The portlet efficiency must be acceptable: they have to provide an acceptable efficiency in order to be aggregated to the portal page.

Portlets must be reliable: they must be capable to manage the different faults that can arise during its operation.

3 PORTLET SELECTION MODEL - PTSM

We aim at providing a portlet selection model (PtSM) based on both a portlet quality model and a set of characteristics not related to the portlet quality as such. The use of the selection model is outlined in figure 1. Specifically, the PtSM must be used in order to carry out the assessment of a set of portlets which have similar functions for specified tasks and user objectives. As a result, the values of the different characteristics that make up the model must be estimated for each portlet. Then, taking into account the users' needs, the best portlet among the evaluated is chosen. As a final result, the best portlet for each case is obtained.

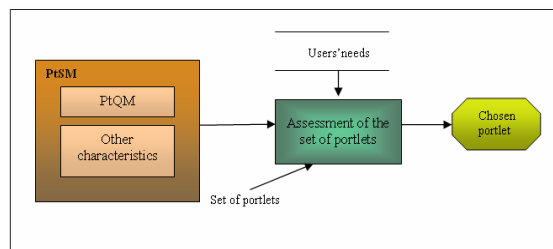


Figure 1: Use of the Portlet Selection Model (PtSM).

The beneficiaries of the portlet selection model, are portal administrators – the ones who must choose the most appropriate portlet for building the portal.

The characteristics of PtSM, can be split into quality characteristics (these characteristics constitute PtQM) and other characteristics.

4 RELATED WORK

Portlets sit in between Web applications and Software Components and then PtQM is built upon three main sources: the ISO/IEC 9126 standard, quality models for components and quality models for Web applications. Figure 2 describes the major influences.

The ISO/IEC 9126 standard has come into existence by the necessity of developing or selecting high quality software products. This standard seeks to define a quality model which specifies and evaluates software product quality from different perspectives: developers, acquirers, quality assurance staff and independent evaluator.

Specifically, the model for software product quality identifies six quality characteristics for internal and external quality (functionality, reliability, usability, efficiency, maintainability and portability) which are decomposed into other sub-characteristics.

There are other proposals which can be used as basis to develop our portlet quality model.

Some examples of quality models proposed for components are the following.

(Botella et al., 2003) propose a quality model for the selection of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems. (Bertoa and Vallecillo, 2002) present a quality model for commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) components. (Simão and Belchior, 2003) identify the quality characteristics and sub-characteristics most relevant for software components. (Franch and Carvalho, 2003) propose a methodology for building structured quality models based on ISO/IEC 9126.

An example of a quality model proposed for web applications is the web quality model, namely WQM and developed by (Calero et al., 2004). Also, (Offutt, 2002) identifies different quality attributes for web software applications.

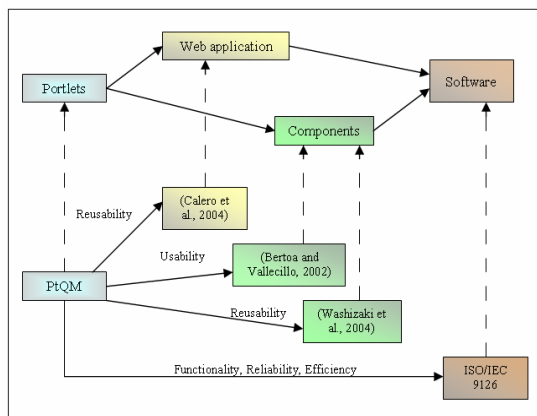


Figure 2: Portlet Quality Model: major influences.

5 QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS FOR PORTLETS

In concrete, the quality characteristics have been split up into three groups: the first one is made up of the quality characteristics that have been adapted from ISO/IEC 9126 standard, the second is composed of the quality characteristics that have been adapted from quality models for components, and finally, the last group is made up of characteristics that have been considered from quality models for web applications. It may be worth emphasizing that each quality characteristic, which has been considered for portlets, is directly related to some of the portlet characteristics identified in section two.

We must realize that there are some characteristics from ISO/IEC 9126 standard that do not make sense for portlets due to the own nature of them. Concretely:

- Maintainability quality characteristic has not been considered because the tasks related to the maintenance of software must not be done by the portal developer.
- Portability quality characteristic has not been considered as a characteristic on its own but a sub-characteristic of reusability. The rationales are twofold. First portlet reusability implies to understand what the portlet is about. And second, the portlet must be liable of being transferred from one environment to another (i.e. must be portable).

Furthermore, the reusability quality characteristic has been included because it is fundamental that portlets can be reused from one environment to another without problems.

In table 1 the definition of each characteristic of PtQM is presented.

Table 1: Quality characteristics definitions for portlet context.

Characteristic	Definition
Functionality	Capability of the portlet to provide functions which meet stated and implied needs when the software is used under specified conditions
Reliability	Capability of the portlet to maintain a specified level of performance when used under specified conditions
Usability	Ability of the portlet to be used by the portal developer when constructing a portal with it.
Efficiency	Capability of the portlet to provide appropriate performance, relative to the amount of resources used, under stated conditions.
Reusability	Capability of the portlet to be reused in different portals by several developers

5.1 Quality Subcharacteristics

This sub-section is concerned with obtaining the sub-characteristics that affect each one of the quality

characteristics previously identified. Table 2 outlines these sub-characteristics, and their sources (i.e. the work from which the sub-characteristic has been adapted). More information about the reusability characteristics can be found in (Moraga et al., 2005).

Table 2: Quality characteristics definitions for portlet context.

Characteristic	Sub-characteristic	Definition for portlet context	Original source	
Functionality	Accuracy	Capability of the portlet to provide the right or agreed results or effects with the degree of precision accorded.	ISO/IEC 9126	
	Interoperability	Interoperability with the portal	Capability of the portlet to interact with one or more portals	ISO/IEC 9126
		Interoperability with other portlets	Capability of the portlet to interact with other portlets	
	Security	Ability of the portlet to prevent unauthorized access, whether accidental or deliberate, to information and data.	(Calero et al., 2004)	
	Self-Containment	Capability of the portlet to accomplish by itself alone the function that it is expected to perform	(Simão and Belchior, 2003)	
	Functional-Cohesion	Capability of the portlet to make use of all its elements in performing its services.	(Simão and Belchior, 2003)	
	Compliance	Capability of the portlet to adhere to standards, conventions or regulations in laws and prescriptions relating to functionality.	ISO/IEC 9126	
Reliability	Maturity	Capability of the portlet to avoid failure as a result of faults.	ISO/IEC 9126	
	Fault tolerance	Capability of the portlet to maintain a specified level of performance in cases of software faults or of infringement of its specified interface.	ISO/IEC 9126	
	Recoverability	Capability of the portlet to recover itself from unexpected failures.	(Bertoa, Vallecillo, 2002)	
	Degradability	Effort needed to re-establish the essential functionality of the portlet after a breakdown.	(Calero et al., 2004)	
	Evaluability	Capability of the portlet to enable the portal developers to evaluate its form and/or its content	(Simão and Belchior, 2003)	
	Availability	Capability of the portlet to be operational every day of the year	(Offut, 2002)	
	Compliance	Capability of the portlet to adhere to standards, conventions or regulations in laws and prescriptions relating to reliability.	ISO/IEC 9126	
Usability	Understandability	Capability of the portlet to enable the portal administrator to understand what the portlet is about	ISO/IEC 9126	
	Learnability	Capability of the portlet to enable the user to learn how the portlet achieves its aim	ISO/IEC 9126	
	Customizability	It refers to the attributes of portlet that enable the portlet to be customized by the user, to reduce the effort required to use it and also to increase satisfaction with the portlet	(Calero et al., 2004)	
	Compliance	Capability of the portlet to adhere to standards, conventions or regulations in laws and similar prescriptions relating to usability.	ISO/IEC 9126	
Efficiency	Time behaviour	Capability of the portlet to provide appropriate response and processing times when performing its function, under stated conditions.	ISO/IEC 9126	
	Resource utilisation	Capability of the portlet to use appropriate amounts and types of resources when the portlet performs its function under stated conditions.	ISO/IEC 9126	
	Compliance	Capability of the portlet to adhere to standards, conventions or regulations in laws and similar prescriptions relating to efficiency.	ISO/IEC 9126	
Reusability	Understandability	Capability of the portlet to enable the user to understand what the portlet is about	(Calero et al., 2004)	
	Portability	Capability of the portlet to be transferred from one environment to another.	(Washizaki et al. 2004)	

6 OTHER CHARACTERISTICS FOR PORTLET SELECTION

In addition to the quality characteristics previously identified we think that exist other set of characteristics which affect when selecting a portlet. For example, we must consider the characteristics that affect a portlet as a product that must be bought and aggregated to our software and the reputation or profile of the provider.

Specifically, in order to determine the set of characteristics and sub-characteristics, not directly related to quality, several standards exist. These standards can be split up into two groups: standards targeted at components and standards targeted at software product. In figure 3, the influence of these standards is shown.

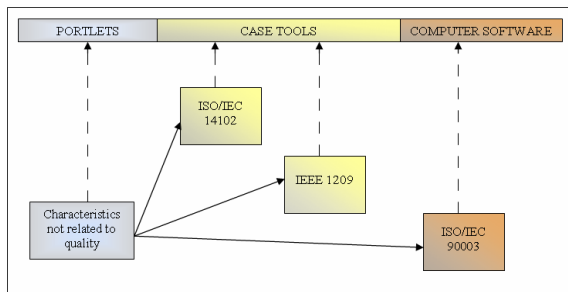


Figure 3: Standards analyzed to obtain characteristics and sub-characteristics not directly related to quality.

ISO/IEC 14102 and IEEE 1209 are a guideline for evaluation and selection of CASE tools while ISO/IEC 90003 is a guideline for the application of ISO 9001 to computer software.

These standards enumerate different characteristics which must be considered when a tool is chosen. These characteristics have been adapted to the portlet context and gathered in three main characteristics which are composed of other sub-characteristics (see Table 3).

Table 3: Other characteristics for portlet selection.

Characteristic	Sub-characteristic
Acquisition	Cost
	Licensing policies
	Surveys to user groups
Indicators of support	Portlet vendor profile
	Portlet profile
	Information related to the installation
	Portlet vendor support
Compliance	Feedback of the client to deal with their complaints
	Portlet vendor certification

The **acquisition** characteristic accounts for purchase and usage, and includes the following sub-characteristics.

Cost: the cost can be derived from the portlet purchasing or renting.

Licensing policies: it refers to the available license options, the right to copy (media and documentation), and any restrictions and/or fees for secondary usage (because of the fact that portlets can use other elements to carry out its functionality).

Surveys to user groups: the opinion that portlet’s users have about it can be a good or bad influence on the decision to choose the portlet or not.

The **indicator of support** characteristic is related to the support that the portlet vendor provides, as well as, the profile of both the portlet vendor and the portlet itself. This characteristic is composed of the following subcharacteristics.

Portlet vendor profile: it is a general indication of the portlet vendor’s overall capability. This profile might include the portlet vendor’s size, number of years in business, a financial statement, a listing of any complementary products, identification of relevant business relationships (for example, other tool suppliers), and the company’s planned direction for future development.

Portlet profile: general information about the portlet including portlet age, number of paid installations, existence, size and level of activity of a user’s group, formal problem reporting system, portlet development program, body of applications, freedom from error, and availability (i.e. commercial, government public domain, in-house, or under development).

Information related to the installation: documentation related to the portlet installation. This information is useful if the portlet is locally run.

Feedback of the client to deal with their complaints: the portlet vendor provides some mechanism to help users to process their complaints.

Portlet vendor support: availability, responsiveness, and quality of services provided by the vendor to portlet users. Such support services might include telephone support, local technical support and on-site support.

Finally, the **compliance** characteristic alludes to the certifications that the portlet vendor owns. This characteristic includes the sub-characteristic *Portlet vendor certification*: certification from a professionally recognized software engineering evaluation organization (for example, the Software Engineering Institute, the ISO) that shows that the software engineering practices of the portlet vendor meet some minimum level, or are at some defined level. Certification may be informal, for example by reviewing vendor-supplied quality/defect data.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

We have presented a portlet selection model, namely PtSM, to be used to choose the “most appropriate” portlet among a set of portlets with similar functions for specified tasks and user objectives. This model uses a quality model (PtQM) which integrates and adapts to the portlet case, models proposed for Web applications, Software components and Software products. The outcome is shown in figure 4.

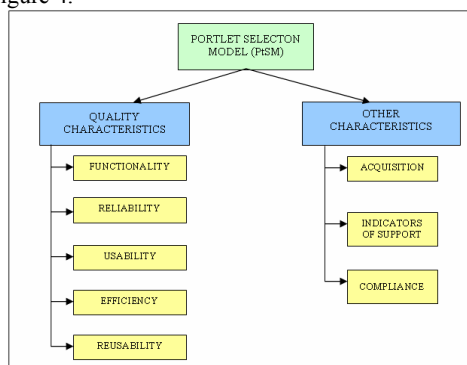


Figure 4: Portlet Selection Model.

The next step will be to identify measures for each one of the characteristics and sub-characteristics. To date, we have identified the measures which affect reusability characteristic (Moraga et al., 2005). A similar reasoning should be used to obtain the measures that affect the rest of characteristics.

Future work also includes the validation of the model characteristics through surveys. Thereby, the PtSM for portlets will be finished.

The final goal is to have a well-defined model that facilitates portlet selection as well as identify possible improvements in the characteristics based on the values of the measures of a given portlet in order to assure that it will be selected when compared with others.

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