Foreword

Welcome to VL ‘98, the premiere international conference on visual computer languages. The aim of this symposium is to bring together researchers and industrial professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds to present and discuss their ongoing work on visual communication with computers. We are interested in visual computer languages in the broad sense of the term, ranging from high-level graphical tools for programming professionals, to graphical database query languages, to languages for children to create simulation environments. In past years attendees have come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including human-computer interaction, programming languages theory and practice, psychology of programmers, computer-aided design, multimedia, database systems, geographical information systems, software engineering, and computer science education. We also draw participants from both industry and academia, including students as well as professionals.

This year we were particularly interested in increasing attendance from the human psychology community, including human computer interaction, empirical studies (qualitative as well as quantitative), psychology of programmers, and related fields. To this end we invited people from these areas to participate in the Program Committee, and we also have Susan Weidenbeck, a leader in the field of empirical studies of programmers, giving one of our invited talks.

As mentioned, we are interested in participants from industry as well as academia, and have organized an industry showcase and demonstration session as part of the activities of the symposium, and have also invited Dave Thomas, from Object Technologies International to discuss his efforts with respect to commercial visual programming languages over the past 8 years.

We have returned to a single-track format for presentation of papers, with the hopes of encouraging greater interaction between participants. There will be a total of 32 papers presented, along with 17 posters. These were chosen from 80 abstract submissions, resulting in 70 paper and 2 poster submissions. We will be continuing the tradition of awards for best paper and best presentation.

The program and papers gathered in these proceedings represent the work of many people. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the reviewers, the authors, the VL ‘98 Program Committee, and Kristine Kelly of the IEEE Computer Society Press.

We hope you enjoy the program we have prepared for you, and your stay in Halifax!

Trevor Smedley and David McIntyre
Program Co-Chairs