

# Real-time Collaboration (RTC) and Distributed Work

## A Special Issue of the International Journal of e-Collaboration (IJeC)

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### Topic outline:

Today's work practices are undergoing significant changes due to trends of virtualization and the emergence of new communication technologies. Distributed settings are increasingly common in organizations. While virtualization offers benefits (e.g. remote and flexible interaction), the resulting work environments present a number of challenges such as a lack of awareness of co-workers' activities and locations. At the same time, with the number of available communication channels and devices growing, the communicative complexity increases likewise. People are faced with an increase in communication volume, more work interruptions, and at the same time with a poor availability of co-workers. The latter typically impedes information access and the free flow of knowledge.

Real-Time Collaboration (RTC) technologies are supposed to present an answer to these challenges. The idea of RTC technologies is to lessen the aforementioned problems through enabling instant (real-time) collaboration between people using various media and devices and by enabling the creation of awareness. RTC technologies comprise Voice-over-IP telephony, video conferencing and Instant Messaging with its text chat feature and presence information. Integrated RTC systems are the result of media convergence, device integration, and unified communications. By providing active presence management and rule-based message filtering, RTC systems try to re-empower users to be in control of their communication. Moreover, RTC systems show significant potential for integration with other software systems in order to enable contextual real-time collaboration in work processes (e.g. integration with other groupware systems, office software, and enterprise systems).

We are pleased to invite scholars from any methodological background to contribute papers that advance our knowledge of the design, diffusion, appropriation, usage and impact of RTC systems, particularly in the context of distributed work. We welcome theoretical, conceptual, design-oriented and especially empirical contributions using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Research efforts might focus on different organization levels such as individuals, teams, corporations, networks, and informal communities and on different RTC technologies such as Instant Messaging tools, Voice-over-IP telephony, Video conferencing, Unified communications, Mobile RTC systems, or integrated RTC systems suites.

## Topics:

Papers in this special issue might be concerned with any or all of the above mentioned RTC technologies (**Instant Messaging, VoIP, Unified Communication systems**, etc.) and might address, but are not limited to one or more of the following areas:

### Usage, impact and effects of RTC technologies

- Presence and awareness in distributed work
- RTC and typical coordination problems in distributed work
- The time dimension in real-time collaboration
- Diffusion and adoption of RTC technologies in the market place
- Emerging new work practices based on the appropriation of RTC
- Inter-organizational support with RTC technologies
- Effects of RTC on social networks in and across organizations
- Effects of RTC on organizational culture
- Effects of RTC in bridging barriers created by virtualization
- Group level effects of RTC (e.g. reachability, visibility, identity building etc.)
- Individual level effects of RTC (e.g. control, interruptions and disturbance)
- Changing communication behaviors through RTC usage
- Shifts in media usage through introduction of RTC technologies
- Privacy and control issues of increased awareness of peoples' actions

### RTC design and systems development

- User interfaces design challenges in RTC systems
- Development, application, and evaluation of RTC prototypes
- Design of presence signaling mechanisms
- Challenges of integrating different media in RTC infrastructures
- Case studies reporting on the integration of RTC with business processes
- Case studies reporting on the integration of RTC with other software systems
- Experimental research to explore user perceptions of RTC features

## Important dates:

Below are tentative dates for all the main steps involved in the production and publication of the Special Issue:

- March 15, 2008: All submissions are due to the guest editors.
- June 1, 2008: Decisions and review comments are sent to authors.
- August 1, 2008: Revised and resubmitted manuscripts are sent back out for review.
- September 1, 2008: Final decision letters are sent to authors.
- October 1, 2008: Final revised manuscripts are due to Editor.
- December 1, 2008: Special Issue goes to Idea Group for publication.
- January 1, 2009: Proofs go to authors.
- March 1, 2009: Special Issue is published.

## Submission guidelines:

All submissions must be in English, and should represent the original work of the authors. Improved versions of papers previously published in conference proceedings are welcome, provided that no copyright limitations exist. Submissions must be made electronically via e-mail to Kai Riemer or Volker Wulf (address below). The manuscript should be included as an attachment in MS Word format.

Kai Riemer: [wikari@wi.uni-muenster.de](mailto:wikari@wi.uni-muenster.de)

Volker Wulf: [volker.wulf@uni-siegen.de](mailto:volker.wulf@uni-siegen.de)

Manuscripts should be between 4000 and 6000 words in length. Submissions should include the following:

- a) On the subject of the e-mail message: the text "IJeC submission:" followed by the title of the manuscript being submitted.
- b) On the body of the e-mail message, for each author: Name, university/organization affiliation, e-mail, mailing address, phone/fax numbers. Please indicate one contact person for the submission.
- c) On the paper: Submission title, an abstract of the submission, the main body of the submission, references and/or bibliography.

Important: Please do not include the name of the authors or any information that would allow for their identification on the paper. Reviews will be double blind.

All paper submissions and the submission review process will be managed through e-mail. The receipt of submissions will be quickly confirmed by e-mail. Submitted manuscripts must be written in the APA (American Psychological Association) editorial style. References should relate only to material cited within the manuscript and be listed in alphabetical order, including the author's name, complete title of the cited work, title of the source, volume, issue, year of publication, and pages cited. Please do not include any abbreviations.

Information on camera-ready copy preparation will be provided to submitting authors upon acceptance.

Please feel free to contact the special issue editors for any pre-submission advice regarding paper topic or format.

## **About the guest editors:**

**Kai Riemer** is an Assistant Professor in Information Systems at the University of Münster in the European Research Center for Information Systems (ERCIS), where he is heading the research group on e-Collaboration (collaborative systems and cooperation management). Prior to taking up the position in Muenster he has held lecturer positions with the University College Dublin in Ireland and the University of Melbourne in Australia, where he worked and lectured in Information Systems. His research interests lie in e-Collaboration, e-Commerce, and organizational behaviour. His work is concerned with the impact of new ICT (e.g. Instant Messaging) on organizations and the resulting management implications, particularly in new forms of collaborative arrangements such as virtual organizations.

**Volker Wulf** is a professor in Information Systems and the director of the Media Research Institute at the University of Siegen. At Fraunhofer FIT, he heads a research group in the field of User-centred Software-Engineering (USE). His research interests lie primarily in the area of Computer Supported Cooperative Work, Knowledge Management, Computer Supported Cooperative Learning, Entertainment Computing, Human Computer Interaction, Participatory Design, and Organizational Computing. He published more than 170 papers. He edited 10 books, e.g. „Expertise Sharing: Beyond Knowledge Management“ and „Social Capital and Information Technology“ both with MIT Press Cambridge MA and „End User Development“ with Springer. Volker recently spent his sabbatical as a Fulbright Scholar first at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and after that at Stanford University, Palo Alto.

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