

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Around the time we published our last issue in March, the nation went into a lockdown. Life in the last 3 months has been unprecedented in many ways. As governments around the world scrambled to fight coronavirus, people in the scientific community, especially those on the frontline – doctors, healthcare professionals, medical staff and researchers – made heroic efforts and sacrifices to curb the pandemic and save lives. The data management and data science communities also sprang to action immediately. Globally, it is the first time that data driven approaches are being used at such a large scale toward solving a common problem. Under this backdrop, in this special issue of the Data Engineering Bulletin edited by Joseph Gonzalez, we feature 9 papers on the topic of *digital contact tracing*, a technique that may prove crucial in the fight against Covid-19.

This issue also features two opinion pieces. Divyakant Agrawal and Amr El Abbadi’s wake-up call on managing data in an untrusted environment takes us to the fascinating world of cryptocurrencies and blockchains. It shows what the database community, which was responsible for creating and perfecting transaction management and distributed systems, can learn from the blockchain approach when it comes to handling untrusted behaviours from the underlying infrastructure. The second opinion piece, written by Jeffrey D. Ullman, addresses a question on the mind of every data management person: What is our role in the machine learning and AI revolution? Have we missed the boat again and become irrelevant? Ullman’s perspective, illustrated by his remake of the well known Conway Venn Diagram that illustrates the relationship between computer science, mathematics & statistics, and domain knowledge is incisive, thought-provoking, and entertaining at the same time.

Haixun Wang
WeWork Corporation