



Message from the Senior Vice President, Global Business Services

The focus on scientific and technological innovation in physical, chemical, and biological systems has paid off in obvious and ubiquitous ways, yielding sophisticated manufacturing processes and products that have increased quality of life and standards of living around the globe. Today, the vital questions concerning innovation are shifting to examine whether the same will be true for complex global service systems in business and government. There are many good reasons to believe that it will be much more difficult to provide systematic innovation in these service systems.

Systems for creating business value across a continuum of service creation and delivery environments are simply not well understood. There has been little concerted scientific and engineering effort focused on these sorts of systems, which means it is time to shift our focus, especially in view of the role of services in the global economy.

Several years ago, we recognized the need to direct more scientific and engineering effort toward systematic and sustainable service innovation. In early 2004, Paul Horn and I organized a summit for academics and researchers from a variety of disciplines including business, engineering, and social sciences to discuss the possibility of developing a “science of services.”

Four years later, this special issue of the *IBM Systems Journal* provides an overview of current thinking in this area, which has come to be called service science, management, and engineering (SSME). Though IBM helped to catalyze interdisciplinary research and thought under the SSME rubric, this special issue incorporates papers from a broad range of researchers and institutions, all focused on different aspects of service systems and service innovation. Their contributions document how much progress has been made, and point to a promising road ahead for sustained service productivity and innovation gains.

We hope that presenting these various points of view will stimulate more science and engineering efforts—and your best thinking—with the goal of improving the productivity, quality, and innovation of global service systems.

Ginni Rometty

