

# Preface

Mobile Agents are at the crossroads of two more ancient concepts: agent and mobility. The concept of agent appeared in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) in the late 1970s and is rather fuzzy, leading to many definitions. An agent is usually defined as a software servant that either relieves the user of routine, burdensome tasks such as appointment scheduling and e-mail disposition, or sorts the information that is relevant to the user's current interests and needs. This definition has made "agent " a buzzword within both the academic and industrial worlds.

Mobile agents refer to self-contained and identifiable computer programs that can move within the network and can act on behalf of the user or another entity. Even if they are defined as a special class of agents that have mobility as a secondary characteristic, it is more appropriate to consider mobile agents as the achievement of mobile abstractions (code, objects or processes). They are often considered as an alternative and/or a complement for other paradigms such as the well-established client-server. Instead of transferring large amounts of data between the client program and the server, a mobile agent moves to the host with the data and pertinent resources.

Mobile agents have been used in applications ranging from information retrieval to e-commerce, including telecommunications and network management. Although their proponents associate several benefits with their use, they remain a contentious issue because of, for instance, the lack of innovative applications backing their claims with concrete studies.

The aim of the workshop was to provide a unique opportunity for researchers, software and application developers, and computer network technologists to discuss new developments on the mobile agent technology and applications. The workshop focuses on mobile agent issues across the areas of network management, mobile applications, Nomadic computing, feature interactions, Internet applications, QoS management, policy-based management, interactive multimedia, tele-learning applications, and computer telephony integration.

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Samuel Pierre and Roch Glitho

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