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Preface

In the fall of 1990 the Board of the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA) adopted an idea from Morris Collen and Marion Ball to publish an annual Yearbook of Medical Informatics. The objective was to compile the most relevant high-quality scientific papers published in the preceding year in the field of medical informatics, and to include factual information on IMIA's constituent Member Societies and its activities. The aim of the initiative was to advance the field by stimulating the dissemination of information among the members of IMIA's national societies, and to diffuse this further to the wide scientific and medical community.

Almost 50 national Societies from all over the world, consisting of people active in the field, are gathered under the umbrella of IMIA. Since the early 1970's, IMIA has organized working conferences around specific subjects in the field of medical informatics. Every three years a general world conference is organized, the renowned MEDINFO Congresses. The present Yearbook met the first printing deadline, i.e., MEDINFO 92 Geneva. The Yearbook will be distributed on a non-profit basis to approximately 10,000 members of IMIA's Member Societies. This gives the Yearbook the widest circulation ever of all periodicals, books or journals in the field of medical informatics and medical computing.

This was only possible thanks to some sponsorship and advertisement included in the book, as well as to the generous help of Schattauer Publishing Company from Stuttgart (Germany). On behalf of the Board of IMIA, I want to thank these companies for their support.

I particularly want to thank the Editors, Jan van Bommel and Alexa McCray, as well as their co-workers, the Managing and Advisory Editors, for the work they did. The compilation and selection of articles that are highlights of medical informatics is indeed not an easy task. It is a major challenge, which the editors have tackled in a very systematic and objective manner. They should especially be congratulated. In his typical style, Jan has not only steered the compilation of all material and worked on it very hard, but he was also the driving force for raising the required funding for the present publication. On behalf of the Board and the General Assembly of IMIA, I want to thank him and all the others who contributed to this project wholeheartedly.

I hope that the present Yearbook will stimulate our field and encourage investigators to produce work of high scientific quality and medical relevance.