

# Welcome

## Message from the VIS 2023 General Chairs

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We are thrilled this year to welcome the IEEE VIS conference for its first ever visit to Australia. It is, for that matter, the first time for this conference to come to the Southern Hemisphere, as well as its first time in an Asian time zone. We acknowledge Traditional Owners of Narrm, the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, on whose land VIS 2023 will be held. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We know Melbourne (Narrm) is a long way from Europe and the US, as we've been doing the reverse trip ourselves for many years. But we are grateful to all from those regions who are able to join us, and we are delighted to welcome many new participants from the Asia-Pacific region who are now able to attend in-person for the first time. This sojourn down-under marks a significant milestone for IEEE VIS towards becoming a truly global conference.

We aim to use the opportunity to showcase the exciting work in our region. We have chosen keynote and capstone speakers accordingly. On the theme of globality, our keynote speakers represent a truly global partnership - in more ways than one. The Emmy and BAFTA award-winning Dr. Drew Berry, from the University of Melbourne, has partnered with Prof. Anders Ynnerman, the director of the Norrköping Visualization Center to create spectacular visualisations of the chemistry of life. These will be shown for our attendees on a "globe" screen at the Melbourne Scienceworks, over four separate screenings adjacent to our conference dinner venue on Wednesday evening. Our Capstone speaker is Prof. Matt Duckham from RMIT University, which is like your MIT in the US, but Royal. Matt is a Professor of Geospatial Sciences, and his talk is literally "all over

the map": reminding us of the importance of maps as interdisciplinary visual artefacts and identifying emerging problem domains in GI science.

We began planning the Melbourne conference in 2019, with the event originally scheduled for 2022. But our best plans were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was with great regret that in late 2021 we elected to delay in the hope that some degree of normality would return to travel by 2023. We are hugely grateful to the organisers of what became IEEE VIS 2022 in Oklahoma, who, despite stepping in at short notice, hosted a wonderful hybrid event. Words cannot express our relief as the conference finally takes place in Melbourne (touch wood), and our gratitude to the entire VIS committee for all their extraordinary support in the long lead up to this event.

IEEE VIS 2023 marks a return to an "in-person first" format conference. We have huge appreciation for what we now realise were extraordinary efforts by past organisers to rise to the challenge presented by the COVID years, in moving to on-line and hybrid formats. Moving away from a hybrid format was not an easy decision. However, on investigation it became clear that the added cost, both financial and the work required by our volunteer committee to support it, coupled with the complexity of working across time-zones, would not be viable in 2023. For the few authors who are unable to travel, we have ensured that their work can still be presented via videos with Q&A through online forums. While technology does provide more options for remote participation, which the VIS community will need to continue to explore in future years, after extensive consultation with the community, we felt that, in 2023, there is still no real substitute for a face-to-face meeting.

We welcome any feedback from the community that can inform future VIS conferences at [info@ieeevis.org](mailto:info@ieeevis.org). As always, we offer our gratitude for the tireless efforts of all of the volunteers who made VIS 2023 possible. Their efforts have made it possible to bring you the innovative research contained in this Special Issue. We especially would like to thank the student volunteers who will carry VIS into the future, all over the world!