

## Preface

The field of optimization and decision sciences got its biggest boost in the forties and fifties due to the war effort and its aftermath, the cold war. In recent years, however, it has got a fresh impetus from a completely different, 'peaceful' source. This is the prevalence of very large scale, automated decision-making systems in different walks of life, ranging from industrial (*e.g.*, transportation) sector to governmental planning. Both 'large scale' and 'automated' are the key words here, for these are precisely the two features that have made analytical and computational methods not only relevant, but valuable. The contributions of Indians, both resident and nonresident, have been significant. (The name 'Karmarkar' would suffice to make the case.) As the field straddles several disciplines, (*e.g.*, engineering, operations research, mathematics, statistics, economics) the workers in this field tend to be scattered across several departments. Against this backdrop, the idea of these special issues emerged, essentially to serve as a forum where some of the active researchers in the country can present their current concerns and hopefully, seed a dialogue across departments and institutions with synergistic effects. The response we got from our colleagues across the country (and beyond) was extremely encouraging and the final product that emerged more than fulfilled our expectations.

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