

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to Professor N. Ohbo, for his invaluable guidance, help and support over these years. A special mention must be made of Dr. H. Chen, who has always been there when I need help over these years. I am indebted to Professor Y. Fujiwara, Professor I. Suzuki, Professor H. Kitagawa, and Associate Professor J. X. Yu. for many helpful comments on the research.

Thanks are extended to all the members of Database Laboratory for their help, friendship and many interesting discussions.

Special thanks go to Mr. Y. Ueda for his support over these years.

As always, my greatest appreciation goes to my wife and daughter for their encouragement and support.