Fixing Conference Reviewing

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A Caveat

- CS fields have different cultures

- My field is database systems
  - Top tier is dominated by major conferences and a few major journals
  - Conferences count more than journals
  - Some workshops are becoming prestigious
Hardly anyone likes to be reviewed
Hardly anyone likes to review (a lot)
Authors often find reviews unfair or random
On the average, the best researchers get the best reviews (we think)
Some great researchers get bad reviews
Some uncreative researchers game the system to get excellent reviews
It's a lot like grading

- No one likes to be graded
- No one likes to grade
- Students often find grades unfair or random
- On the average, the best students get the best grades (we think)
- Some brilliant students get bad grades
- Some uncreative students game the system to get excellent grades
Reality

- Like it or not, we need to make choices
  - Hence, we need reviews
- There are too many papers
- There are too many *borderline* papers
- Only a fraction can be accepted (if they all need a presentation slot)
- Choosing that fraction is a random process
What's Wrong with Journals?

People don’t complain much about the reviewing process.

The main differences, compared to conferences:
1. No presentation slot
2. Two rounds of reviewing

These differences are historical and artificial.

Why not have both?

Submit to a journal, which is linked to a conference
All journal acceptances get a presentation slot
Conference PC chooses length of presentation (long, short, poster)
Consequences

- Helps tenure cases outside the G10
- Must re-educate U.S. tenure committees again
- Devalues established journals
  - Everyone wants a presentation slot
- No more Best Paper journal issues
  - Can’t republish a journal paper in a journal
- Journals need a new mission
  - Link the journal to a conference
  - More surveys
  - More retrospectives of major projects