Paper and Proposal Reviews: Is the Process Flawed?

Chair: Hank Korth (Lehigh University)

Panelists: Phil Bernstein (Microsoft)

Mary Fernandez (AT&T Labs–Research)
Le Gruenwald (National Science Foundation)
Phokion Kolaitis (IBM Almaden Research Center)
Kathryn McKinley (University of Texas at

Motivation

- Recent changes in the way papers and proposals are reviewed to improve
  - Accuracy
  - Fairness
  - Speed / efficiency
- A strong, pervasive impression that, despite (or maybe in part because of) these changes, our review processes have serious problems

Format

- Brief intros (by me)
- Short presentations by each panelist
- Questions and discussion
  - We expect that many of you have valuable insights to share
- We hope our discussion sheds some light on these questions and helps to draw attention to the importance of these issues.

Introductions

Phil Bernstein

- Microsoft Research, Principal Researcher
  - Affiliate Professor at Univ. of Washington
- CRA Board of Directors, 2001 – present
- VLDB Journal, Editor-in-Chief, 2007 – present
  - Associate editor, 1997 – 2005
- ACM TODS, Associate editor, 1980-89.
- Editorial Boards – Information Systems, WWW Journal, Web Semantics
- PC Chair – VLDB, Snowbird, SIGMOD, PODS

Mary Fernandez

- Author, researcher, research "manager"
  - "Experimentalist": I build & measure artifacts
- 25+ program committees
  - Mostly DB, some PL & SE
- TODS Associate Editor 2003-06
- SIGMOD Secretary/Treasurer 2005-09
  - Conference publication policies & standards
  - Confer & coordinate with sister conferences & journals

Le Gruenwald

- David W. Franke Professor and Director of the School of Computer Science at the University of Oklahoma

- Program Director, Information Integration and Informatics Cluster, NSF

Phokion G. Kolaitis

- Senior Manager, CS Principles & Methodologies,
  IBM Almaden Research Center

- Current Editorial Board Service:
  - ACM TODS: Associate Editor
  - Annals of Pure & Applied Logic: Managing Editor
  - J. Logic & Computation, Theory of Computing Systems, IJFCS: Editorial Board Member

- Past PC Chair and General Chair:
  - ACM Principles of Database Systems (PODS)

Kathryn McKinley
The University of Texas at Austin

- An experimental computer scientist in the area of programming language implementation (SIGPLAN, SIGARCH)

- 40+ program committees

- Program Chair
  - PLDI 2007, PACT 2005, ASPLOS 2004

- TOPLAS Editor-in-chief

M. Tamer Özsu

- Director, Cheriton School of Computer Science, University of Waterloo, Canada
- SIGMOD Chair (2001-2005), VLDB Endowment Board Member (1996-2002), ACM Publications Board Member (2002-present)
- EIC, VLDB Journal (1997-2005); Associate Editor, ACM Computing Surveys (2004-present), Editorial Boards of 4 journals (past and present)
- PC Chair: VLDB, ICDE, CIKM, WISE and 6 others

Hank Korth

- Chair, Dept of Computer Science and Eng. at Lehigh University
- Associate Editor, ACM TODS
  - Participated in a long deliberation that led to TODS adopting a double-blind review policy
- Past editorial roles include VLDB Journal, Journal of Cooperative Information Systems, SIGMOD Record, PC chair roles (SIGMOD and PDIS), 43 program committees

Presentations by our Panelists

- Kathryn
- Le
- Phil
- Phokion
- Mary
- Tamer

Some Questions

- Is it really good to value conference papers more than journal papers?

  - Is it a reaction to slowness of journals

  - Or a tolerance of superficiality over thoroughness and precision?

- Are conferences now perhaps less places to go to learn or simply surrogates for tenure committees?

More questions

- Are our experimental results meaningful, believable, statistically valid, repeatable?

- Are online PCs good enough for quality reviews given the level at which we value conference publication?

Apparent trends

- More double blind reviewing, no reversals back to single-blind
- High paper volume means some 2nd tier conferences become 1st tier
- Several subdisciplines have conferences that are now **more** prestigious than journals
- Some (many?) schools have internalized the concept of conference pubs >= journal pubs
- Concern about delta versus innovative papers
- Author response