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ACM SIGPLAN Activities

Editor: *Mark W. Bailey, Department of Computer Science, Hamilton College, sigplan@hamilton.edu*

Conferences with improved management and style

Philip Wadler

Maintaining a vigorous program of conferences and workshops is a central task of SIGPLAN. SIGPLAN has two types of relationships with conferences and workshops, sponsorship and in-cooperation. And SIGPLAN promotes a Republication Policy to clarify issues of overlap between related publications. Descriptions of all of these can be found on the SIGPLAN web site.

http://www.acm.org/sigs/sigplan/conferences.htm

Over the last two years, I led two efforts by the SIGPLAN Executive to improve conferences. One makes conferences and workshops easier to organize and manage, the other makes it easier for you to prepare conference papers.

Conference management After considering a number of alternatives, SIGPLAN has arranged for bulk provision of conference management services from Softconf, which uses START V2 and is run by Rich Gerber. START V2 supports submissions by authors and evaluation, discussion, and decisions by the program committee. The service includes web hosting at softconf.com, which relieves conference organizers of the responsibility for running the web server. START V2 can also support collection of final papers and preparation of web pages, although for most SIGPLAN conferences final submissions are managed by Sheridan Printing, which also prints the proceedings.

The bulk rate negotiated with Softconf reduces cost to SIGPLAN, while at the same time improving the level of services we can offer. Conference and workshop chairs may take advantage of these services, and the cost will be paid by SIGPLAN. Conference and workshop chairs are free to make alternative arrangements, but SIGPLAN does not undertake to cover costs for such arrangements.

The ongoing arrangement means that Rich Gerber is willing to implement features and improvements to meet SIGPLAN's needs. At SIGPLAN's request, he has implemented support for the ABCD rating scale, as recently used by POPL and ICFP; and support for author response, as recently used by PLDI, POPL, and ICFP, where referee reports are made available to authors at a fixed date, and authors may write brief responses that are available at the program committee meeting. START also supports blind refereeing, to be used by PLDI 2007, which hides the authors' names from the referees, as well as hiding the referees' names from the authors. Feedback from SIGPLAN users has also led to several small improvements in START.

If you are a program committee chair, in the last section of this note you'll find advice on how to configure START, and a description of the rating scales (ABCD/XYX/PQR) used for POPL 2006. To arrange for conference support, contact Rich Gerber (rrgerber@softconf.com). Please report on your experience with Softconf to Philip Wadler (wadler@inf.ed.ac.uk).

Conference style Typography is a subtle business. If it is not done well, you may not be able to identify the problem, but your eyes will ache. In the past, the LaTeX style used by most conferences was put together by volunteer effort of working researchers. The people involved included Olin Shivers, Ken Traub, Kevin Theobald, Mike Sperber, G.K.M. Tobin, and Gerry Murray, and the succession of style files included acmconf.cls, sigplan-proc.cls, and acm_proc_article-sp.cls. These people provided a great service to the community, but we felt we could provide an even better service at a modest cost by hiring a professional.

The new ACM SIGPLAN style implemented by Paul C. Anagnostopoulos of Windfall Software, with the assistance of an advisory board consisting of Andrew Appel, Olivier Danvy, Benjamin Pierce, Simon Peyton Jones, Michael Sperber, and Philip Wadler. Many researchers have strong—and sometimes conflicting!—views about how to typeset their research. Paul and the advisory board participated in lively discussions, and they deserve the commu-

nity's thanks for their efforts. Norman Ramsey deserves special credit for initiating this project during his term on the Executive Committee.

The new LaTeX class is called sigplanconf.cls and replaces all of the previous class files and their variants. The new class file, a template to get you started, and a user manual are available from the SIGPLAN web site.

http://www.acm.org/sigs/sigplan/conferences.htm

The new style file has been well received. Papers look better, and the same amount of text can be presented in less space. A paper that required 12 pages with the old style file may require only 11 with the new.

Please address questions and problems to Paul C. Anagnostopoulos, (panagnostopoulos@acm.org) with a copy to Philip Wadler (wadler@inf.ed.ac.uk).

Rating scales

If you are a program committee chair, this section gives some advice on how to configure START, and describes the rating scales (ABCD/XYZ/PQR) used for POPL 2006.

START makes it easy to include ratings on a large number of different numerical scales, but please don't do this. Most experienced PC chairs use only two scales, an overall rating (ABCD) and an expertise rating (XYZ). POPL 2006 introduced a new scale for innovation (PQR). The ABCD and XYZ scales were introduce by Oscar Nierstrasz, "Identify the Champion", in *Pattern Languages of Program Design*, N. Harrison, B. Foote, and H. Rohnert (Eds.), vol. 4, Addison Wesley, 2000, pp. 539–556, and Simon Peyton Jones introduced the PQR scale for use in POPL 2006.

Rating A corresponds not to an absolute evaluation of the paper, but whether the reviewer wants to *advocate* acceptance of the paper to the conference. Conversely, a reviewer with a D rating is a *detractor*, arguing that there is a good reason not to accept the paper. Ratings B and C are lukewarm, with B leaning toward acceptance and C leaning against.

A great advantage of the ABCD scale is that it avoids ranking papers by a numerical average. Instead you group papers by highest and lowest rating, resulting in ten groups:

AA	AB	AC	AD
	BB	BC	BD
		CC	CD
			DD

The groups do not form a linear order, since AD neither precedes nor follows BC, but they do form a useful scaffolding for discussion by the program committee. Papers in AA and AB are likely to be accepted, those in AC, AD, BB, and BC may require significant discussion (especially AD!), and those in the other categories are likely to be rejected.

START also allows an arbitrary number of text fields, but again it is best to keep to a small number. Typically, there is one for comments to be seen by both the PC and the authors, and one for comments to be seen by the PC only. Sometimes there is also a field reserved for a summary of the paper, and (if there is author response) a field reserved for specific questions the reviewer would like the author to answer. If your conference uses author response, you may want to remind authors it is in their interest to be brief and polite, and warn authors that pc members may not have time to revise their reviews to reflect the responses, even if they are taken into account at the pc meeting.

Following are the scales and text fields used for POPL 2006.

Evaluation:

- A: Good paper. I will champion it at the PC meeting.
- B: OK paper, but I will not champion it.
- C: Weak paper, though I will not fight strongly against it.
- D: Serious problems. I will argue to reject this paper.

Confidence:

- X: I am an expert in the subject area of this paper.
- Y: I am knowledgeable in the area, though not an expert.
- Z: I am not an expert. My evaluation is that of an informed outsider.

Innovation:

- Q: Quirky, exciting, interesting, fun, provocative, fresh, intriguing, original, just possibly the start of Something New.
- R: I'm sitting on the fence.
- S: Another brick in the wall: solid, thorough, worthy, useful, but just doesn't set the blood racing.

The "innovation" rating is intended to allow you to give a thumbs-up to paper that is innovative, provocative or

fun, even if its execution is flawed in some way (such as being incomplete, lacking thorough proofs or experiments). A solid, well-executed paper in a very well-trodden area might get an AS rating; a fascinating and original paper that has some flaws of execution might get CQ.

Detailed comments Please supply detailed comments to back up your rankings. These comments will be forwarded to the authors of the paper. The comments will help the committee decide the outcome of the paper, and will help justify this decision for the authors. Moreover, if the paper is accepted, the comments should guide the authors in making revisions for a final manuscript. Hence, the more detailed you make your comments, the more useful your review will be - both for the committee and for the authors.

Questions for Authors The space below can be used to ask specific questions of the authors. During the author response period, authors will be able to respond to these questions (and the rest of the review) if they wish. Their responses will be available during the PC meeting.

Confidential Comments for Committee You may wish to withhold some comments from the authors, and include them solely for the committee's internal use. For example, you may want to express a very strong (negative) opinion on the paper, which might offend the authors in some way. Or, perhaps you wish to write something which would expose your identity to the authors. If you wish to share comments of this nature with the committee, this is the place to do so.

Philip Wadler is Professor of Theoretical Computer Science at the University of Edinburgh. He holds a Royal Society-Wolfson Research Merit Fellowship and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Previously, he worked or studied at Avaya Labs, Bell Labs, Glasgow, Chalmers, Oxford, CMU, Xerox Parc, and Stanford, and visited as a guest professor in Paris, Sydney, and Copenhagen. Wadler is a winner of the POPL Most Influential Paper Award, and sits on the ACM SIGPLAN Executive Committee. He contributed to the designs of Haskell, Java, and XQuery. He has delivered invited talks in locations ranging from Aizu to Zurich.

Further professional information is available at: http://homepages.inf.ed.ac.uk/wadler/

ACM SIGPLAN

Conference Corner

Calendar

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- **ICSE '06: International Conference on Software Engineering**
  May 20–28, 2006; Shanghai, China. Sponsored by ACM SIGSOFT, ACM SIGPLAN.
  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.isr.uci.edu/icse-06`
- **PLAS '06: ACM SIGPLAN Workshop on Programming Languages and Security**
  June 10, 2006; Ottawa, Canada. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN.
  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.cis.upenn.edu/stevez/plas/plas06.html`
- **ISMM '06: The 2006 International Symposium on Memory Management**
  June 10–11, 2006; Ottawa, Canada. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN.
  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.cs.technion.ac.il/erez/ismm06`
- **TRANSACT '06: First ACM SIGPLAN Workshop on Languages, Compilers, and Hardware Support for Transactional Computing**
  June 11, 2006; Ottawa, Canada. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN.
  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/jv/events/TRANSACT`
- **PLDI '06: ACM SIGPLAN 2006 Conference on Programming Language Design and Imple mentation**
  June 11–16, 2006; Ottawa, Canada. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN.
  For more information, contact URL: `http://research.microsoft.com/conferences/pldi06`
- **LCTES '06: ACMSIGPLAN/SIGBED Conference on Languages, Compilers, and Tools for Embedded Systems**
  June 14–16, 2006; Ottawa, Canada. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN, ACM SIGBED.
  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.elis.ugent.be/lctes2006`
- **VEE '06: International Conference on Virtual Execution Environments**
  June 14–16, 2006; Ottawa, Canada. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN (in conjunction with PLDI).
  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.veeconference.org`
- **ISCA '06: The 33rd Annual International Symposium on Computer Architecture**
  June 17–21, 2006; Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Sponsored by ACM SIGARCH, IEEE.
  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.ece.neu.edu/conf/isca2006`
- **ITiCSE '06: The 11th Annual Conference on Innovation and Technology in Computer Science Education**
  June 26–28, 2006; University of Bolgona, Italy. Sponsored by ACM SIGCSE, University of Bologna.
  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.iticse06.cs.unibo.it/`

- **ICS '06: The 20th AC International Conference on Supercomputing**
  June 28–July 1, 2006; Queensland, Australia. Sponsored by ACM SIGARCH.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.ecse.monash.edu.au/conferences/ics/2006/index.html`

- **MPC '06: 8th International Conference on Mathematics of Program Construction**
  July 3–5, 2006; Kuressaare, Estonia. Sponsored by Institute of Cybernectics.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://cs.ioc.ee/mpc-amast06/mpc/`

- **ECOOP '06: European Conference on Object-Oriented Programming, 20th Edition**
  July 3–7, 2006; Nantes, France. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN, ACM SIGSOFT, INRIA, CNRS.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.emn.fr/x-info/ecoop2006/`

- **ICALP '06: 33rd International Colloquium on Automata, Languages and Programming**
  July 9–16, 2006; Venice, Italy. Sponsored by University of Venice.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://icalp06.dsi.unive.it/`

- **PPDP '06: Eighth ACM-SIGPLAN International Symposium on Principles and Practice of Declarative Programming**
  July 10–12, 2006; Venice, Italy. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.dsi.unive.it/ppdp2006/`

- **ISSTA '06: International Symposium on Software Testing and Analysis**
  July 17–20, 2006; Portland Maine. Sponsored by ACM, ACM SIGPLAN, ACM SIGSOFT.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.cis.udel.edu/issta06`

- **PACT '06: The 15th International Conference on Parallel Architectures and Compiliation Techniques**
  September 16–20, 2006; Seattle, Washington. Sponsored by IEEE CS, IEEE TCPP, IEEE TCCA, ACM SIGARCH, ifip.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.cs.virginia.edu/ pact2006/`

- **ICFP '06: The 11th ACM SIGPLAN International Conference on Functional Programming**
  September 18–20, 2006; Portland Maine. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://icfp06.cs.uchicago.edu`

- **ISESE '06: 5th ACM-IEEE International Symposium on Empirical Software Engineering**
  September 21–22, 2006; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (in conjunction with ESEIW 2006). Sponsored by ACM SIGSOFT, IEEE CS, SBC, UNIRIO.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.cos.ufrj.br/ght/isese2006`

- **GPCE '06: Generative Programming and Component Engineering**
  October 22–26, 2006; Portland, Oregon (in conjunction with OOPSLA 2006). Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN, ACM SIGSOFT.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.program-transformation.org/GPCE06/WebHome`

- **OOPLSA '06: ACMSIGPLAN International Conference on Object-Oriented Programming Systems, Languages and Applications**
  October 22–26, 2006; Portland, Oregon. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN, ACM SIGSOFT.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.oopsla.org/2006/`

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- **FSE 14: ACM SIGSOFT Symposium on Foundations of Software Engineering**
  November 5–11, 2006; Portland, Oregon. Sponsored by ACM SIGSOFT.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.cs.uoregon.edu/fse-14/`

- **POPL '07: The 34th Annual ACM SIGPLAN-SIGACT Symposium on Principles of Programming Languages**
  January 17–19, 2007; Nice, France. Sponsored by ACM SIGPLAN, ACM SIGACT.

  For more information, contact URL: `http://www.cs.ucsd.edu/popl/07/`

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