

September 19–21, 2011
Tokyo, Japan



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ICFP'11

Proceedings of the 2011 ACM SIGPLAN

International Conference on Functional Programming

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ISBN: 978-1-4503-0865-6

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Printed in the USA

Foreword

Welcome to the 16th ACM SIGPLAN International Conference on Functional Programming – ICFP’11.

The picture, on the front cover, is of Mount Fuji, seen from the 20th floor of the National Institute of Informatics (NII). It was taken by Sebastian Fischer in January 2011. In Japanese, the characters “human” and “lambda” have a similar shape, and the text is a combination of famous Japanese proverbs where all occurrences of “human” have been replaced by “lambda”. It translates as follows:

Lambda has a history
Lambda exists in the place where virtue is
Respect heaven and love lambda
One lambda is worth a thousand (things)

This bouquet of proverbs was composed by Zhenjiang Hu and the local organizers at NII, and has benefited from the kind assistance of Kenichi Asai and Jacques Garrigue. It was written by Isao Sasano’s calligraphy teacher, Keigai Nukata.

There were 112 submissions this year: 92 research papers, 8 functional pearls, and 12 experience reports. The Program Committee selected 33 research papers (1/3), 2 functional pearls (1/4), and 3 experience reports (1/4). Out of the 112 submissions, 8 were “forces majeures” (acts of God) related to the earthquake in Japan. Among those, 4 were selected. In addition to this selection, the PC also chose to invite Andrzej Filinski and Makoto Takeyama. For simplicity, there were no submissions by PC members.

Each submission was reviewed by at least 3 PC members. In addition, we consulted 113 external reviewers. All PC members attended the PC meeting, which took place on May 26–27, Avenue d’Italie, in Paris, courtesy of the PPS Laboratory (Preuves, Programmes et Systèmes) at the University of Paris 7. Notifications were sent within hours of the completion of the PC meeting, and updated reviews in the course of the following week.

It has been a pleasure to team up with General Chairs Manuel Chakravarty and Zhenjiang Hu, and to interact with Zhenjiang Hu’s team at NII and with Soichiro Hidaka (local arrangements) and Wouter Swierstra (publicity). Also, throughout, Ian Zerny has been a selfless and first-rate help with the submission web site (HotCRP). Our PC meeting has received the support of PPS Director Thomas Ehrhard and of Microsoft Research, and its local organization has rested on Alexis Saurin and Marine Meyer’s resourceful shoulders. The ICFP steering committee was its usual helpful, friendly, and level-headed self. I have also benefited from the wisdom of previous program chairs: Stephanie Weirich, Andrew Tolmach, Peter Thiemann, Norman Ramsey, Julia Lawall, Benjamin C. Pierce, Kathleen Fisher, and Philip Wadler as well as Greg Morrisett. Overall, running ICFP’11 was thrilling: an intense feeling of service and scientific contribution, and a continued amazement at the diversity and health of the functional-programming community, from authors to external reviewers to PC members. My heartfelt thanks to all.

Olivier Danvy
ICFP’11 Program Chair

On Submissions and Resubmissions

At ICFP 2011, and with the approval of the ICFP steering committee, I ran the following experiment about resubmissions:

Authors of re-submissions can attach a confidential *revision history*, i.e., an annotated copy of the reviews of the previous submission(s) specifying how each point in each review was addressed. If one of the reviewers of a previous submission is asked to review the re-submission (and assuming that he has kept a copy of his review even if he has discarded the corresponding submission), this re-reviewer sends his original review to the program chair, who sends back the annotated copy. This way, the re-reviewer directly sees how the previous review was addressed, and can start reviewing the re-submission on an informed footing. Nobody else knows that a submission is a re-submission or is brand new before completing his own review. No new reviewer of a re-submission sees the annotated reviews of the initial submission.

The declaration that [the submission was brand new, or was the revision of a previous submission] was optional. There were 12 such declared resubmissions. One submission presented itself as brand new, but was subsequently identified as a resubmission (which was not counted against it). So among 112 submissions, at least 13 were resubmissions, i.e., 11%.

Enclosing the revision history was also optional. Among the 12 declared resubmissions, 5 had annotated copies of previous reviews, and 7 did not:

- among the 7 that did not, at least 3 were reviewed by a reviewer of the previous submission; all 7 were accepted;
- among the 5 that did,
 - 3 reviewers identified themselves as a previous reviewer, and asked me for a copy of the previous review;
 - 1 (sub-)reviewer suggested the resubmission be rejected on the ground that it still had problems, which I spotted while going through this review; I then asked the reviewer for a copy of his previous review, and I sent him the corresponding annotated reviews; this sub-reviewer then realized that his main issue had actually been addressed. This made him change his mind and suggest the submission be accepted – which it was.

Among these 5, 4 were accepted.

At the PC meeting, the reviewers appeared to be neutral about whether a submission was brand new or was a resubmission. All re-reviewers, however, were interested about how their initial review had been addressed.

Conclusion: This experiment suggests that attaching a revision history to a resubmission has a positive effect:

- It forces the authors to spell out how they have addressed (or not) the previous reviews.
- It makes it possible for the re-reviewer to read – or not – the annotated copy of the previous review, so that (s)he has the choice of starting either on a fresh footing, or on an informed footing. And if the reviewer chooses not to read the annotated copy of his/her previous review, it is with the knowledge that the points of this previous review *were* considered (though of course not necessarily addressed) by the authors.
- The time invested in writing a review is better spent, particularly if there is a concrete prospect of seeing the points of the review being addressed in the future.

The experiment also illustrates the value of reading through reviews and responses to the reviewers.

Olivier Danvy
ICFP'11 Program Chair

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