

Some comments regarding the Australasian Computer Science Week

At ACSW it was decided to elicit feedback regarding systemic improvements to ACSW. This was in addition to the discussion paper written by Aditya Ghose and other emails circulated around the community.

This paper attempts to crystalize some of these comments and to provide some concrete proposals for some of the aspects of the conference week.

Proposal 1 - ACSW should continue.

The general consensus (certainly not universal) is that ACSW is valuable as a container into which various conferences, which may change from time to time, might socialise their costs and effort. As such it should continue.

Colocation with other conferences was also suggested, either with one specific conference or with a different conference each year. Both suggestions, while attractive, contain longer-term risks in terms of the status of the conference week and the flexibility of ACSW.

The suggestion is that ACSW remain distinct and welcome whatever other conferences and workshops that wish to adhere to the quality benchmarks that might be imposed.

However, the visibility of ACSW should be reduced and the individual conferences and workshops take more of a prominent role. That is, ACSW becomes less of an event in its own right and more of an administrative envelope within which individual events can flourish. ACSW would be externally visible only when it enhances attendance at the individual conferences and when necessary for administrative purposes (such as registration and payment).

Proposal 2 - ACSW should continue in January.

The consensus is that no time of the year is ideal and that people have come to expect ACSW January. There is some debate on whether it should be within Primary and Secondary School terms times or not. Generally the suggestion is that it be during term times when held in major capital cities that are not otherwise tourist locations and during School holidays when held close to tourist destinations. Care should be taken as not all states and Schools start term 1 on the same date.

Proposal 3 - ACSC should continue.

The status of ACSC within ACSW remains problematic as submission rates drop and its identity is lost. However, general consensus is that it serves a useful purpose as:

- A container for those papers not suited for a specialist conference,
- A container that allows sub-critical workshops to contract into. (ACSW as gene pool).

Proposal 4 - Cost.

The cost of attendance at ACSW has risen substantially over time. The major components of that have been the following:

1. Venue - For most institutions, suitable on-campus facilities capable of sustaining a conference exist. It is thus proposed that in most situations, the venue selected should not be off campus unless the cost is low or is offset by a specific "conference venue sponsor".
2. Refreshments/dinner - Since networking is one of the major reasons for conference attendance, no recommendations regarding this are proposed.
3. Keynotes - The status and cost of keynote speakers is an important concern. While most people believed that invited international speakers were important, the cost of invited speakers is a significant component of the overall ACSW budget. The proposal is to limit the funding for keynotes to allow for only national airfares and a registration-waiver. Any additional funds needed to invite an international speaker would have to be sourced from elsewhere.

A target conference registration fee should be established.

Proposal 5 - Proceedings.

The status of the proceedings generated much debate. The various positions put forward have been as follows:

1. All (or a significant subset of) papers should be directed directly at some form of journal. This would increase attractiveness in a discipline where the journal is becoming more prominent.
2. The CRPIT series should be replaced by IEEE or some other publisher. The issues here are cost (which was the reason CRPIT was created in the first place) and open access (Citation rates for the 2001 and later conferences published by CRPIT are up to treble those of the 1998-2000 conferences published by IEEE behind the digital library).
3. Each conference should determine its own publication venue. This would be attractive for some conferences but some may struggle to find a publisher.
4. Publication should remain as it is now.

At the same time there is a parallel concern over the status of JRPIT as well as a concern over the cost of the JRPIT to the ACS.

The proposal is to discuss with the ACS, a merger of the JRPIT and the CRPIT along the following lines:

1. JRPIT and the CRPIT would be merged to create a new international journal (called JournalX for the purposes of this paper) with grand-parenting of all ACJ, JRPIT and CRPIT issues as previous issues. For example:

ACJ Volume 1 Issue 1 would become JournalX Volume 1 Issue 1

The 2012 Volume of JournalX would be Volume 44:

Issue 1 - JRPIT Volume 44, Issue 1

Issue 2 - JRPIT Volume 44, Issue 2

Issue 3 - JRPIT Volume 44, Issue 3

Issue 4 - JRPIT Volume 44, Issue 4

Issue 5 - CRPIT Volume 122 (Special issue - Thirty-Fifth ACSC)

Issue 6 - CRPIT Volume 123 (Special issue - Fourteenth ADC)

Etc.

2. JournalX would be open access and online only (saving the ACS considerable costs, but see below). It would be co-owned by the ACS and CORE.
3. A funded secretariat would be established (funded by some of the savings above) to avoid some of the publication delays that have occurred in the past. A fractional administrative position may be appropriate.
4. Because of the grand-parenting provision, JournalX would likely be able to take advantage of the indexing arrangements already in place.
5. An oversight committee would be established with representatives from the ACS and CORE that would appoint the editor-in-chief and to whom the editor-in-chief would report.
6. A new editorial board would be sought that would meet at least annually. The interim editors-in-chief would be (if they wish to continue) the current editors of the JRPIT and CRPIT for a period of 6 months. Funding for the editor-in-chief would be sufficient to provide teaching relief equivalent to around a day a week (or ~20% of, say, a Level D salary). Terms would be strictly 3 years, potentially renewable but normally not.
7. Issues of the journal would be of three types:
 - a. Regular submitted papers,
 - b. Special issues resulting from conferences,
 - c. Special issues compiled by guest editors.
8. Papers in the issues would be of three types:
 - a. Regular full-length papers, (perhaps the best of the accepted conference papers)
 - b. Short papers, (perhaps the rest of the accepted conference papers)
 - c. Invited papers.
9. A strict set of quality guidelines would be established that would manifest themselves at the conference level through, perhaps, maximum acceptance rates.
10. The oversight committee would be encouraged to establish strong performance benchmarks in terms of citation rates, turnaround times and other metrics.

Proposal 6 - Publication Categories.

The different conferences have adopted different publication categories, leading to some confusion. The proposal is to have three publication categories for submitted papers:

1. Full papers. These would be published in JournalX as regular full-length papers. These would normally be limited to the top 33% of submitted papers (but conference program chairs would have some latitude here).
2. Short papers. These would be published in JournalX as short papers. These would normally be limited to the top 50% of submitted papers.
3. Posters. These would not be published in JournalX but would be bound (either physically or electronically) by the ACSW organisers and provided at the conference.

The status of invited papers would be handled on a case-by-case basis as some invited speakers provide full papers while other provide abstracts only. Perhaps those providing full papers might be invited to submit those papers as invited JournalX papers?

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Disclaimer - I hold no position with CORE or the ACS and currently have no involvement with either CRPIT or JRPIT. These suggestions are for discussion only.