



Interim Report of the Joint Task Force on Workshop Publications

Joe Konstan
Scott Delman



Association for
Computing Machinery

Advancing Computing as a Science & Profession

Overview

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Background

- Should ACM Publish Workshop Proceedings? And if so, how?
 - This question was raised during a year in which the interim EiCs of ACM's International Conference Proceedings Series noted that a substantial number of workshops were being submitted to ICPS for publication, including:
 - Independent workshops and workshops associated with independent conferences
 - Workshops associated with ACM conferences that don't directly publish the workshop proceedings
 - Independent entities that call themselves conferences, but in fact run more like workshops
 - This is an evolving situation – at one time most workshops would not consider publishing proceedings; today publishing a paper at a workshop confers some status and may be the ticket to funding to attend the associated conference.



Charge

- Pubs Board and SGB Chair jointly charged the task force to:
 - “explore both the need and strategy for developing an ACM publication channel to publish high quality workshops in computing, to complement our existing publication channels for ACM journals, ACM conference proceedings, and ICPS”
 - answer key questions such as:
 - how do we define a workshop and distinguish it from a conference?
 - How do we deal with ACM workshops currently published in ICPS?
 - How do we want to deal with non-ACM workshops?
 - What are the minimum peer review standards for ACM published workshop proceedings?

Task Force Composition

The Board chairs appointed members representing the two boards:

- Joe Konstan, chair (Publications Board)
- Beng Chin Ooi (Publications Board)
- Lin Uhrmacher (Publication Board)

- Jonathan Aldrich (SGB and Publications Board)

- Sayan Ranu (SGB)
- Saket Saurabh (SGB)
- Johanne Trippas (SGB)
- Dakuo Wang (SGB)



Process

- The task force had three hour-long Zoom meetings to discuss these issues; it is our intent to hold a final meeting after receiving feedback from the SGB and the Pubs Board



Findings



On the distinction between conferences and workshops

- The term “workshop” is applied very broadly. It includes events with papers, review processes, and selectivity comparable to high-quality conferences. It also includes events where most papers are short, review seems to be very light, and all or nearly all submissions are accepted.
- The same is true for events that use the term “conference.” While most ACM conferences maintain high selectivity and a strong review process, computing conferences outside ACM have widely varying review processes. Many ICPS conference submissions have papers that are only 4-5 pages and seem to accept nearly all of them.



Findings

On the purpose of workshops at conferences

- The purpose of workshops at conferences has changed over time. 30 years ago, the majority of conference workshops were “working meetings” where people might present works in progress for feedback or might simply get together to discuss a topic of common interest. Today most workshops are supplemental venues for publication and presentation (and are generally less selective than the main conference).
- Many conferences encourage this model by expecting workshops to document their review process and/or by guiding authors of rejected papers to consider submitting to workshops as an alternative way of participating in the conference.



Findings

On the purpose of workshops at conferences, cont.

- Several reasons were identified that contribute to the interest in publishing papers in workshop proceedings:
 - The increased pressure for publication (and expectations of increased numbers of peer-reviewed publications)
 - The difficulty of getting funding to attend conferences without having a work to present at the conference
 - Indeed, some (non-ACM) conferences organize workshops specifically to fit the rejected papers of the conference program
- The nature and scale of workshops at conferences varies widely, but many conferences have vibrant workshop programs with multiple days, large numbers of workshops, and workshops with keynotes, panels, and papers.



Findings

On the archival nature of workshop papers

- While workshop papers were once intentionally non-archival (so authors could later publish the work when it was complete), most authors today seem more interested in getting their work archivally published.
- There are open questions about the re-publishability of work published at workshops. The general practice seems to be that workshop papers can be turned into conference or journal papers later with sufficient new content. In the case of submitting an extended workshop paper to a conference, there is often no formal process for annotating submissions to indicate the prior publication (and double-anonymous peer review may preclude citation).



Findings

On the peer review of workshop papers

- Workshops (and particularly workshops at conference) often have much looser standards for those in charge of carrying out the peer review process.
 - It is common for graduate students (even at times those who've never published in the field) to propose and chair workshops
 - There are rarely standards imposed by the sponsoring conference on the minimum criteria for being a program chair, program committee member, or reviewer for a workshop
- The task force recognizes that this flexibility has developmental value, but also may undermine the confidence one should have in the published works



Findings

On the diversity of papers within a workshop

- Like conference, many workshops have evolved to have multiple forms of participation. It is increasingly common to have workshops where some submissions are abstracts, others are full papers, others may be demos or videos.
- The task force did not believe it would work to apply any single rule to “workshop papers” because there are so many different types of such papers.

Findings

On the value of workshop papers being in the ACM DL

- Task force members were divided on the value of workshop papers being in the ACM DL
 - Some members felt the most important role of the DL is to be comprehensive; any relevant literature in the field should be found through the DL
 - Other members felt the most important role of the DL is curation; only work that has been properly vetted (e.g., through a rigorous peer review process) should be found in the DL
- Task force members agreed that both authors and workshop organizers valued having workshop proceedings published in the DL
- Note that today many ACM workshops publish outside the DL (e.g., in C-EUR).



Findings

On the DL's presentation of workshop proceedings papers

- There is significant inconsistency in the presentation of workshop proceedings papers in the DL, much of it due to different legacy means of publishing those proceedings
 - While most workshop proceedings papers are separate articles in the DL, some workshop proceedings were published as single entities with multiple articles within them.
 - In many cases it is difficult to tell from the article (or even from the landing page) whether an article is a workshop article, a conference article, or anything about the review process or selectivity.
- This inconsistency makes it nearly impossible for DL users to filter out (or explicitly search for) workshop papers.



Findings

On the changes likely in view of ACM Open

- Task force members felt that treating all workshop papers the same as conference papers under ACM Open could cause significant problems:
 - Few authors at non-ACM Open institutions would consider publishing a workshop paper worth the ACM Open APC charges associated with a conference paper
 - Even authors at ACM Open institutions may be concerned about the institutional cost of moving up in subscription tiers due to workshop papers
 - Workshop organizers, realizing this, would likely choose to publish elsewhere rather than continue publishing through ACM
- Task force members did not want to drive workshops away



Findings

On the publication of workshop proceedings from ACM conferences in ICPS

- The task force did not feel that the process under which workshops at ACM-sponsored conferences are published through ICPS makes sense.
 - It creates duplicate effort, with the conference leadership deciding whether to accept the workshop into the conference and ICPS editors having to perform a separate evaluation for publication
 - The ICPS editors lack the proximity to the community and expertise to evaluate the workshop in the way conference leadership could
 - It moves the decision from the SIG to Publications, which seems inappropriate for conference activities
- Though we did not examine this case in detail, the same argument could apply to ACM chapter conferences.



Principles Driving Recommendations

- Provide a variety of options to workshop organizers and sponsoring SIGs – no one size fits all solutions.
- Keep the locus of authority where it currently lies. The Publications Board should set standards for publication types; the SGB should oversee events and ensure that their publication products comply with policy.
- Accept a wide range of quality publications into the ACM DL, but ensure that the markers of quality are readily identifiable and usable as search criteria.



Recommendations

- Each recommendation is framed in terms of the Board to which it would be made. If the Boards are generally in support of these recommendations, the task force is willing to provide guidance on suggested details (or is happy to allow the Board to address the recommendations within its own processes).



Recommendations

Recommendations to the Publications Board (which will require cooperation with the DL Board and SGB)

- Define an explicit article type for a workshop paper. In particular, be explicit about the number of reviews, the qualifications of peer reviewers and program chairs, and the length of papers.
- Evaluate whether conference paper and journal paper should also be different article types.
- Extend ACM's policy covering self-plagiarism to be explicit about how workshop papers can be extended into research articles (conference and journal papers).
- Revise the ICPS charter to include non-ACM workshops.
- Determine whether ACM wants to publish non-ACM workshop paper abstracts (e.g., where there are no full-length papers or where full-length papers are published in arXiv, etc.); if so, this specific case might warrant a sub-brand of ICPS known as ICPS Abstracts.
- Publicize these decisions and mechanisms once made.



Recommendations

Recommendations to the SGB (which will require cooperation with the Publications Board and staff)

- Assume ownership for publications decisions associated with workshops associated with ACM-sponsored conferences.
 - The SGB collectively should set guidelines for minimum standards and procedures.
 - Individual SIGs may choose to set more restrictive guidelines.
 - Determine options for workshop publication (e.g., part of conference publications, separate ACM publication, etc.).
 - Determine whether ACM workshops should be able to publish outside of ACM DL.
- Develop workflow for ACM conference workshop approval and publication.
- Regularly review the compliance of SIG publications with standards for their publication types.



Recommendations

Recommendations to the Publications Board and Business Working Group

- Develop an OA pricing model for workshop proceedings that can support ACM's continued publication of such proceedings. Suggestions include:
 - offering an option of publishing workshops with abstracts-only (which would not be an APC-eligible publication)
 - providing a discounted APC appropriate for workshop papers that fit within a target length (perhaps 6 pages or fewer); evaluating whether those would be applied to institutional subscriptions on the same or different basis
 - publishing fully peer-reviewed research articles (which would be treated the same as conference papers)

Recommendations

Recommendations to the SGB and Business Working Group

- Assess impacts of ACM Open conversion to conference publication and attendance (in particular workshop attendance) to inform both BWG discussions on pricing and SIG planning for ACM Open.



Recommendations

Recommendations to the DL Board (which will require cooperation with the Publications Board and staff)

- Implement an article type for workshop papers (may want a different term) in conjunction with Pubs definition.
- Implement clear identification of article types on article landing pages and on rendered publication displays.
- Implement clear identification of venue types (including ICPS, ACM conference, ACM journal, ACM workshop) on article landing pages and rendered publication displays
- Implement (and disseminate training on) search features to allow searchers to search for / exclude workshop papers.
- Implement interface to allow workshops (and ICPS volumes) to specify article types for each article.
- Ensure that reviewing statistics are displayed within an article type.

Recommendations

Recommendations to ACM EC and/or Council

- Formally adopt guidelines and standards for workshop publication to apply to all non-SIG ACM-sponsored events with publications (e.g., Board and Council-sponsored conferences and workshops).
- Determine whether ACM chapter events should continue to be published through ICPS or should have a different “direct path” to publication through an ACM entity authorized to vet and oversee publications from those events.
- Decide the broader policy question of what ACM unit content must be published by ACM, which may be published by ACM or outside, and which (if any) can only be published outside. This becomes increasingly important in the context of ACM Open.



FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS?



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