

ANNUAL REPORT
of the Distinguished Speakers Program Committee
For the Period: July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018
Submitted by Andrew Conklin

1. BASIC INFORMATION

1.1 Our committee members span several countries and bring expanded diversity over prior years. We have improved in domains of expertise, gender perspective, program representation in geographical hotspots, and practitioner input. The entire committee has transitioned to all new faces since March of 2017, with a by product being a younger peer group.

Member:	Appointment:	Theory or Practice?	Topic Referee of:
Andrew Conklin (Chair, DC)	3/2017	Practice	AI/ML, Computer Vision, NLP, Data Science, Security and Privacy
Sebastian Borza (Chicago)	5/2017	Practice	Hardware, Software Engineering, Networks and Comms
Gavin Doherty (Ireland)	5/2017	Both	CHI, Graphics and CAD, Applied Computing
Valerie Woolard (DC)	6/2017	Practice	CHI, Society & Computing, Web & Multimedia
Todd Chapin (Boston)	6/2017	Practice	CHI, Web & Multimedia, Security and Privacy
Alexandre Renteria (Brazil)	9/2017	Practice	AI/ML, NLP, Computer Vision, Data Science, Web & Multimedia
Srinivas Padmanabhuni (India)	7/2018	Both	AI, ML, Computer Vision, NLP, Computational Theory, Algos, Math, Security & Privacy
Faez Ahmed (NYC)	7/2018	Theory	Architecture & Robotics, Data Science, Applied Computing
Jess Bell (Santa Cruz, CA)	7/2018	Practice	New - TBD

1.2 Purpose:

To bring distinguished speakers from academia, industry, and government to give presentations to ACM chapters, members, and the greater tech community in a variety of venues and formats.

1.3 List dates of committee meetings.

We hold conference calls for 40 minutes about 6 times a year. We have typically held them on Friday mornings at 11am Eastern Time.

2. PROJECT SUMMARY

Operations.

We had a much stronger year in comparison to prior years. Although we have a lecture given in 34 countries, the EU was the clear hotspot with 39 lectures, followed by India with 35, and the US with 31. All others were single digits. We received the most nominations this year since 2015, with 16 new speakers from the USA and 6 from India.

Out of all the categories that organizer requests come from, only “Conferences” increased. Although Chapters and Universities are the most popular, “Conferences” should be our focus. It had a 9% increase over last year with regard to total requests, and a 20% increase since 2013.

We increased the number of lectures by 48% over the prior year.

We increased audience reach by 10%,
while our budget also increased by 10%.

	Number of Lectures	Total Attendees	Expenses (includes MF)
FY 2018	138	24,740	\$84,562.38
FY 2017	93	22,631	\$74,777.00
FY 2016	96	21,020	\$68,759.00
FY 2015	79	11,110	\$45,007.18
FY 2014	71	17,919	\$65,908.19
FY 2013	100	17,330	\$78,945.40

Projects.

#1 - Completed - We worked with staff to change all DSP forms to be modern and smartphone friendly.

#2 - Completed - We worked with staff to shift the old ColdFusion app into the intranet and away from the public. We expanded the main ACM.org content management website to include DSP content and to interact with the new mobile friendly forms. This also greatly improved the UX of the program.

#3 - Completed - We refreshed the computing topics in the program. We had a series of older and uninteresting topics. This refresh helped to bring more relevant topics of interest to the forefront.

#4 - Completed - Worked with staff to design a UX stakeholder journey of speakers and organizers throughout the program. This led to considerable communications improvements, including new “cancellation” metrics so that we can better manage organizer and speaker responsiveness.

#6 - Completed - Nominee review and referee voting. In addition to assigning computing topics to committee members for nominations, we also got a brand new UX workflow that makes it far easier for committee members to conduct a review.

#7 - Pending - Data cleaning for lectures. It is currently impossible to determine the most popularly requested topics, because of over assignment. We have a pending effort to reduce computing topic labels per lecture.

3. PLANS

Overview.

Our efforts in the coming year will be focused on research and designs for program concepts that appeal to thought leading practitioners from startup to enterprise, as well as bridging our committee members closer to speakers and events activity. We will also re-evaluate long standing policies and see what changes make the most sense for 2018 and beyond.

Projects.

#1 - Planned - \$5k budget approved - We will be working with a non-profit contractor with expertise in research, vision, design, and graphics to provide concept deliverables. The goal is to have a program concept that appeals to thought leading practitioners from startup to enterprise.

#2 - Planned - Review policies and improve Program User Experience. We want to continue our trend of removing frustrations and getting events planned more quickly and painlessly. We also want to be smarter about being more impactful with the budget we have. This could include pre-recorded video lectures with a live conference call Q&A. It could also include allowing more speaker requests if the organizing entity is willing to pick up all costs.

Diversity.

In the past year, we have transitioned to committee member representation for our existing geographical hotspots like India, Bay Area, NYC, Boston, and Brazil. We also added more representation from the practitioner perspective, and we have improved upon our gender gap (previously: 1 out of 8. Now: 2 out of 9 with 2 more prospects).

4. COMMENTS

What I find interesting about ACM is its massive international network of colleagues, while its long standing roots, democratic evolution, and the fast moving tech sector has left it far less connected than it could be potentially be. The prospect of many more integrations could lead to major gains. For instance, if we insert a question of whether someone wants to be a Distinguished Speaker when they are giving a Conference talk related to ACM, or about to give a Learning Webinar, it would greatly impact the evolution of the Distinguished Speakers Program.