

ACM SIG Policies toward Retirees

Review and Recommendations

ACM SGB Task Force - October 2014

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Context

In February 2014 the Executive of the ACM SIG Governing Board decided to form a small task force in charge of reviewing the current policies of ACM SIGs toward retirees and to come up with a set of recommendations for SIGs. This report is the result of this work.

The membership of the group was constituted on recommendation by Erik Altman, chair of the executive, and formed shortly after the regular spring SGB Meeting on March 21, 2014. The group worked mainly by email deliberation.

Status

The status of policies towards retirees in different SIGs is heterogeneous. Some SIGs have explicitly formulated policies, others react to requests on an ad-hoc basis, some others do not apply special consideration to retirees. At this time there is no unified approach.

In general, retired members of ACM SIGs have been members of SIGs and ACM for a substantial number of years and have contributed both time and money to activities of ACM and their special interest groups. With retirement, these members lose their professional affiliation, which might have supported their ACM SIG membership through research funding. In most cases, their retirement income is substantially less than the income during their professional careers. This reduction causes even long-time members to reconsider their obligations and benefits under membership organizations.

ACM offers its members a retiree discount, however the amount of this discount is moderate and pales in comparison to what IEEE offers to its retirees. As many of ACM and ACM SIG members are simultaneously members of IEEE, we are at risk of losing out on our retirees.

Goals

Ultimately, the goal of this study is to bring about an improvement and systematization of policies within ACM SIGs in regard to retirees. The policy we envision would be one that allows members of ACM SIGs

- to maintain their ACM status, whether as senior, distinguished or fellow members,
- to continue having access to the DL after they leave their employer; and
- to continue to attend conferences and workshops organized by ACM SIGs.

In a nutshell, we aim at ways to help retirees “stay in the loop” and continue to pay their roles as volunteers in the organization.

What we did

The group inquired within ACM-SIGs as to what the status of retirees’ treatment is in different SIGs. We also studied the rules for treatment of retirees in other professional organizations. We then discussed a set of recommendations that we present in this document.

ACM SIGs

Most SIGs do not provide discounted membership rates to retirees. However, a few SIG sponsored conferences allow for discounted registrations fees for retirees, among them CPR, JCDL, GECCO, PACT, and SC. At this time, the number of members making use of these discounts is minimal, in the single digit percentage range, with small impact on conference economies. This might, however, change as a more general model across SIGs is implemented.

ACM

While somewhat outside the purview of this study, the Task Force felt that the overall professional organization should be kept in the picture as far as policies toward retirees is concerned. Although we are not in a position to make definitive recommendations to ACM as a whole, we might nevertheless be able to raise awareness that this is an issue to be looked at in more detail by the responsible parties.

Other Professional Organizations

A comparison between different professional organizations produces the following picture:

	Regular	Retired	Lifetime
ACM	\$99	\$74	\$1,485
IEEE	\$187	\$94	\$0**
APS	\$141	\$71	\$2,115
AAAS	\$151	\$119	-
SIAM	\$142	\$38	\$710
AMS	\$180	\$68	\$1,800

** Restrictions apply (see below)

It was pointed out to us that many SIGs have members that are not primarily Computer Scientists. For these members, a change in the policy of the overall organization will have less relevance than for those that have an ACM membership in addition to a ACM SIG membership. Nevertheless, the issue has to be taken into account when assessing the overall situation.

IEEE – A closer look

We decided to take a closer look at IEEE. What piqued our interest was the fact that there are lifetime members (most of them retirees) who do not pay any society fees. IEEE waives fees for members with a sum total of years of membership in IEEE and age exceeding 100 years. For someone retiring at age 65, this would mean she/he would have been a continuous member since the age of 30.

IEEE also stipulates that for these members, registration fees at conferences must not exceed the registration fees for students.

Lifetime members continue to receive the same benefits that are available to other IEEE members, as long as they notify IEEE each year that they wish to continue the membership. They also can participate in IEEE member discount programs.

Recommendations

As a result of our internal discussions about these observations we offer the following recommendations to the ACM SIG Governing Board:

1. SIGs be permitted to grant retirees the same member pricing as students;
2. SIG-sponsored conferences and workshops should offer a reduced registration rate to retirees in line with their student rate;
3. For the first few years after adoption, the number of discounted rates extended to attendees should be tracked, e.g. via conference reporting in order to see if this new policy induces a spike in retiree attendance;
4. The confirmation of retiree status should be based on the honor system;
5. We also recommend that ACM consider investigating possible changes in the rates and benefits for retirees in the light of what other large professional organizations do.

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