From the Papers and Notes Chairs

CSCW was formed 20 years ago by a small group of disparate researchers. Realizing they had research interests in common, they created the ACM CSCW 1986 Workshop as the forum to share their work. Today, CSCW is both a discipline and a community, and the ACM CSCW Conference has a special role within it. Many researchers consider ACM CSCW as *the* place to submit and present their work, and to discover emerging new work from others. ACM CSCW's status is hard-earned, in part because of its rigorous review process. Here is a glimpse into how this process works.

Full Papers. The people who manage submissions, while all specialists in CSCW, are chosen to reflect the diversity of the community. The two papers co-chairs have an international perspective (Greenberg is from Canada, and Mark has strong ties and work experience to both the U.S. and Europe), and differ in training (Greenberg is a computer scientist, while Mark is a social scientist). Their job was to select twenty one Associate Chairs (ACs), and to run the Program Committee meeting. The ACs were also diverse. The committee was comprised of 13 males and eight females, 15 from universities and six from industry. The ACs were from seven countries: twelve were from the U.S., two from Canada, two from the UK, two from Germany, and one each from France, Mexico and Japan. They included 'old' well-established researchers, as well as 'young' rising stars. Their particular strengths and training included hard-core systems design, groupware system building, psychology, sociology, management science and anthropology.

Each AC managed 10-12 papers, and assigned at least three referees knowledgeable in the paper's topic. Refereeing was through blind review. Each referee returned a recommendation along with a detailed review. Additional reviews were sometimes solicited.

The Conference, Program and Notes Chairs as well as all ACs then met face to face in Banff. Rigorous discussions took place and the majority of papers were read by a second AC as well. The decision process was highly visible so that the committee could calibrate itself. In total, 217 papers were submitted, one of the highest submission rates in the history of the conference. Forty-seven papers were accepted, yielding an acceptance rate of 22%. This is somewhat similar to our partner conferences UIST and CHI, and to most previous years in CSCW.

Notes. Notes were handled slightly differently. Eight Associate Chairs representing a range of disciplines were each responsible for 9-10 notes. As with the full papers, ACs assigned three knowledgeable reviewers and then integrated the reviews to make a recommendation. Additional reviews were sought when there was a lack of consensus. Members of the Notes AC committee met virtually to make final decisions. In total, 87 notes were submitted and 15 were accepted, giving an acceptance rate of about 17%.

Of course, this is not a perfect process. There is always the issue of where to 'draw the line' between accepted and rejected papers. Some rejected papers were very close to the edge, and the committee agonized over these. The committee was also limited in that they had to judge a paper more or less 'as is'; thus some papers were rejected even though their faults could have been overcome in a real revision cycle (i.e., as found with journals). As well, the conference itself imposes severe constraints, as there are only so many papers that can fit within its current three track structure.

There are a number of issues that the CSCW community needs to consider for future conferences in light of the rising submission rate and overall paper quality, For example, how permissive should the conference be for paper acceptance? Should the conference expand by adding more tracks and presentations or should the conference occur annually? Such changes in conference structure clearly introduce trade-offs. After twenty years CSCW has changed, and the community needs to reexamine these issues.

We praise the commitment of the referees for all their work. This is what a community is about: so many people give so willingly of their time. We also give special thanks to the ACs. Each not only gave up considerable time to this process, but did so at their expense: traveling from both North American coasts and as far away as Europe, England and Japan. What a commitment!

We are very pleased with the final result. The research areas represented in this year's conference represent both the old and the new. Some areas, such as email, remain topical after 20 years. Other areas in this year's conference have emerged over the 20-year CSCW history: mixed reality, social network analysis, blogs, computer gaming, collaboratories, collaborative software development, home technologies, and mobile technologies, to name but a few. Altogether, such topics, both longstanding and new, demonstrate the breadth that CSCW research has achieved over its short 20-year lifetime. Who could have predicted at the ACM CSCW 1986 Workshop that CSCW would have addressed such diverse and challenging research issues, and would have gained as much importance as it has today?

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