A Front Row Seat to *Communications'* Editorial Transformation

For the past five years, we have been co-chairs on *Communications'* editorial board for the Contributed Articles and Review Articles sections. In this short span of time we have

seen a dramatic shift in the kinds of articles submitted to and published in these popular sections of the magazine. This shift has not been by accident.

To appreciate the ever-changing dynamics of *Communications'* readership, we should start at the beginning. ACM was founded in a meeting at Columbia University in 1947 as the Eastern Society for Computing Machinery. It was formed as an outgrowth of the increasing interest in computing that was dawning at that time. ("Eastern" was dropped from the name shortly thereafter).

In the beginning, ACM members were primarily academic researchers interested in the science, development, construction, and application of computing machinery. As we all know, that early interest in computing has since spread explosively to virtually all aspects of human endeavor and has transformed today's world into an intimately connected information society. Indeed, ACM has evolved into "an international scientific and educational organization dedicated to advancing the art, science, engineering, and application of information technology, serving both professional and public interests."

In 2005 David Patterson, then ACM's president, formed a task force co-chaired by Stu Feldman and Mary Jane Irwin to study new directions for *Communications* in the 21st century. The motivation for commissioning this task force was growing dissatis-

faction with what was being published in the magazine at that time.

The broadening of ACM's membership to include researchers and practitioners presented challenges for what kinds of articles to publish in *Communications*. By 2005, ACM's magazine—*ACM Queue*—had a devoted following among many of the practitioners in the field. At the same time, scholars in management information systems viewed *Communications* as the top publication venue for their field. But many computer science researchers felt *Communications* no longer enjoyed the reputation of being the leading scientific publication in the field, a reputation it had enjoyed many decades earlier.

The task force recommended a *Science* magazine-like format for *Communications*. *Science* is a huge success for the American Association for the Advancement of Science. It appeals to scientists across many different fields of science and each issue has a collection of departments ranging from news to perspectives, which invites a wide readership. Most importantly, virtually all scientists consider *Science* among the most, if not *the* most, prestigious publication in all of science.

Communications was refocused to follow the *Science* model. The sections of each issue now include Letters, News, Viewpoints, Practice, Contributed Articles, Review Articles, Research Highlights, and often a Last Byte. A website for the magazine was

also established to not only highlight the print matter but also serve as a news and scientific research tool.

It is still too early to determine whether *Communications* will enjoy the same preeminent scientific reputation in computer science as *Science* enjoys in the biological and physical sciences, but the early indicators are very encouraging. Editor-in-chief Moshe Vardi has made the scientific and technical quality of the entire editorial board his primary concern. All the departments are staffed with preeminent researchers and practitioners who have access to the best reviewers in the field.

As co-chairs of the Contributed Articles/Review Articles sections, we would like to mention the articles we now receive are representative of the expansive reach of information technology. In addition to cherishing scientific excellence in what we publish, we look for original articles that are suggestive of the impact that IT can have on all areas of science and society. Our editorial board also insists on clarity in exposition so the significance of the results being reported can be appreciated by a universal audience. Please continue to submit your best work to *Communications*! Ⓒ

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