Introducing short papers at CoNEXT 2013

The CoNEXT Steering Committee

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There have been many recent discussions within the computer science community on the relative roles of conferences and journals [1, 2, 3]. They clearly offer different forums for the dissemination of scientific and technical ideas, and much of the debate has been on if and how to leverage both. These are important questions that every conference and journal ought to carefully consider, and the CoNEXT Steering Committee recently initiated a discussion on this topic.

The main focus of the discussion was on how to on one hand maintain the high quality of papers accepted for presentation at CoNEXT, and on the other hand improve the conference's ability to serve as a timely forum where new and exciting but not necessarily polished or fully developed ideas could be presented. Unfortunately, the stringent "quality control" that prevails during the paper selection process of selective conferences, including CoNEXT, often makes it difficult for interesting new ideas to break-through. To make it, papers need to ace it along three major dimensions, namely, technical correctness and novelty, polish of exposition and motivations, and completeness of the results. Most if not all hot-off-the-press papers will fail in at least one of those dimensions

On the other hand, there are conferences and workshops that target short papers. Hotnets is one of such venues that has attracted short papers presenting new ideas. However, from a community viewpoint, Hotnets has several limitations. First, Hotnets is an invitation-only workshop. Coupled with a low acceptance rate, this limits the exposure of Hotnets papers to the community. Second, Hotnets has never been held outside North-America. The SIGCOMM and CoNEXT workshops are also a venue where short papers can be presented and discussed. However, these workshops are focussed on a specific subdomain and usually do not attract a broad audience. The IMC short papers are a more interesting model because short and regular papers are mixed in the single track conference. This ensures broad exposure for the short papers, but the scope of IMC is much smaller than CoNEXT.

In order to address this intrinsic tension that plagues all selective conferences, CoNEXT 2013 is introducing a *short paper* category with submissions requested through a logically separate call-for-papers. The separate call for paper is meant to clarify to both authors and TPC members that short papers are to be judged using different criteria. Short papers will be limited to six (6) two-column pages in the standard ACM conference format. Most importantly, short papers are not meant to be condensed versions of standard length papers and neither are they targeted at traditional "position papers." In particular, papers submitted as regular (long) papers will **not** be eligible for consideration as short papers. Instead, short paper submissions are intended for high-quality technical works that either target a topical issue that can be covered in 6 pages, or are introducing a novel but not fully flushed out idea that can benefit from the feedback that early exposure can provide.

Short papers will be reviewed and selected through a process *distinct* from that of long papers and based on how good a match they are for the above criteria. As alluded to, this separation is meant to address the inherent dilemma faced by highly selective conferences, where reviewers typically approach the review process looking for reasons to reject a paper (how high are the odds that a paper is in the top 10-15%?). For that purpose, Program Committee members will be reminded that completeness of the results should NOT be a criterion used when assessing short papers. Similarly, while an unreadable paper is obviously not one that should be accepted, polish should not be a major consideration either. As long as the paper manages to convey its idea, a choppy presentation should not by itself be ground for rejecting a paper. Finally, while technical correctness is important, papers that maybe claim more than they should, are not to be disqualified simply on those grounds. As a rule, the selection process should focus on the "idea" presented in the paper. If the idea is new, or interesting, or unusual, etc., and is not fundamentally broken, the paper should be considered. Eventual acceptance will ultimately depend on logistics constraints (how many such papers can be presented), but the goal is to offer a venue at CoNEXT where new, emerging ideas can be presented and receive constructive feedback.

The CoNEXT web site[1] provide additional information on the submission process of short (and regular) papers.

1. REFERENCES

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[3] J. Freyne, L. Coyle, B. Smyth, and P. Cunningham. Relative status of journal and conference publications in computer science. *Commun. ACM*, 53(11):124–132, Nov. 2010.

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[1] http://conferences.sigcomm.org/co-next/2013/