Conference and Journal Papers

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How to Get
Your Conference Paper Rejected

… even when the research is good

- Distract the referee with misspellings, bad grammar and poor layout.

- Don't give any examples.

- Don't reveal your problem or solution anywhere in the abstract or introduction.

- Require the referee to read two other papers to understand this one.

These things help, too:

- Fail to cite relevant work of the program committee.

- Send in a paper that is all text, without figures or tables.

- Make the paper 50% longer than the stated page limit.

- Include absolutely every bit of data you gathered.

- Forget to state your contributions.

- Miss the deadline

- Ignore the formatting instructions

Conference Papers

Conference Process

1. "Call for Papers" issued, usually two to three months before the due date.
   - topics of interest
   - program committee
   - length and form
   - how/where to submit,
     - almost invariably an automated website
   - Important dates

2. Author(s) prepare(s) and submits paper.

3. Papers received by chair and assigned to PC members.

   Often, PC Members "bid" for papers

4. PC member reads assigned papers and prepares reviews and ratings for PC.

4a. Sometimes: author response period

5. PC discusses, selects papers for conference.

> Not always "best" results. One PC concern is having a balanced program
> Might be PC chair who makes final selection

6. PC chair sends authors accept or reject. If accept, usually get reviews and formatting instructions.

7. Author prepares revision according to format and sends to proceedings editor, usually with copyright release.

8. Editor assembles papers, sends to publisher for "printing".
   Note: usually no re-review

9. Proceedings distributed at conference.
   Not usually on paper any more

10. Author presents paper or poster

11. Sponsoring organization makes proceedings available

Variations

Small vs. Large Program Committee (PC)

Small PC, everyone assigned all papers, paper length usually shorter (<10 pages).

Large PC, 3 or 4 readers for each paper, longer papers (up to 20 pages).

Workshops

Sometimes no assignment of copyright.

Sometimes final version collected for a proceedings after the workshop.

Sometimes unclear if workshop papers count as "publications"

Sometimes no proceedings to make it clear!

Long and short papers

Sometimes "short papers" for work in progress or experience reports.

Might have same or different lengths in proceedings sometimes "short papers" get longer presentation slots!

Short presentations and poster sessions

Abstracts only

Papers accepted on the basis of 1-page abstracts.
Submissions might be restricted to organization members

Pledge to present—might be a requirement to attend & present paper at the conference

Require an author to register to be in proceedings

Best papers might be recommended for special issue of a journal.

Papers usually appear in longer form, and later

Might get direct contact from PC chair or PC member—

Conference tracks

Have to choose a track to submit to.
Track chairs will usually route paper to correct track, but:

Double-blind review: must remove all signs of authorship

Hard for a systems paper, or a follow-on study

Choosing a Conference: The 3 R's

1. Relevance

Prior proceedings and PC composition often say more than list of topics in Call for Papers.

Does your paper refer to papers from the conference?

2. Reputation

Ask someone in the field: which conferences are highly regarded?

In CS, often sponsored by a professional organization and held on a regular basis.

Do you see citations to papers from the conference?

3. Reach—will a lot of people see it?

High attendance

Are proceedings published by a sponsoring organization or publishing house?

Are proceedings automatically sent to some group?

Will proceedings be in the ACM Digital Library or IEEE Xplore?

Does it attract industrial attendees?

Rejection

What if you get rejected unjustly?
Probably little you can do about it—don't whine to PC chair,

Okay to resubmit a rejected paper
But ***don't*** resubmit without revising
Someone *will* notice

Is the paper better suited to a journal?

Writing a Conference Paper

Remember, the reviewer is reading many papers in a short time period:

- Legitimate to reject a paper if it is sloppy, ambiguous or hard to read, even if the results are good.
- Make sure that you explain both the problem and your contribution (a) in the abstract and (b) in the first few paragraphs of the Introduction.
- Violating the spirit of the page limit will irritate the reviewer.

Don't expect to say everything you know on a topic. Keep it focused.

Don't overlook work by PC members.

"Beyond the scope of this paper" is a red flag.

Extended Abstract

For an "extended abstract", you will have to omit material.

Trick is to convince reviewer that you can fill in gaps.

Consider omitting or summarizing parts that take a long time to read

- Proofs
- Programs
- Tables of data
- Long definitions
- Language grammars

Don't sacrifice diagrams to cram in more words!

- or make them too small to read

Don't write a prospectus for "the full paper."
An "extended abstract" is really just a short paper.

Don't expect the reviewer to
– read some other source first
– check your website

Don't omit the examples
— omit *anything* else first!

Easier to shorten than lengthen a draft.

Start Early

Get the paper done early enough to get a second opinion
  Offer to read papers for others so you have 'points' on account.

Giving a short talk on the topic to friends is a good way to organize your ideas, and see what needs the most explanation.

Might find gaps requiring more experiments or analysis.

A day at the start is still 24 hours!

Journal Papers

Conference and journal papers (in CS) are converging:

- Papers at selective conferences regarded highly
- More steps in conference process: author feedback, re-writes, re-reviews
- "Open" submission timetable
- Conference proceedings published in parts
- Journals shortening reviewing times
- "Proceeding of the ACM" *are* conference proceedings

Journal Paper: Process

1. Author submits manuscript (MS) to journal
   - to editor-in-chief, or directly to an associate editor
   - with cover letter indicating corresponding author and giving contact information.
   - often using the journal's web site

2. Editor sends MS to reviewers; seasons pass, flowers bloom and wither … After 4–6 months you can contact the editor.

3. Once editor has collected enough reviews, makes an accept/revise/reject decision. Usually <u>revise</u>. Outright accepts are rare.
   - might have major and minor revisions
   - sends reviews to author in any case

4. If "revise", author prepares revision, sends back to editor. <u>Include a list of changes</u> that address the reviewers' comments.

5. Editor sends to (same) reviewers for re-review, decides again accept/revise/reject. (Might decide without second review, but usually reviewers see MS twice.)

6. If accept, editor forwards MS to publisher, or may request LaTeX source for manuscript.

7. Might be a *copyeditor* involved
   - Journal's house style
   - Grammar, clarity, consistency

8. *Might be a typesetter*

> *You will see the typeset version, in galleys or page proofs or both*

electronic

You might see copy-edited version before typesetting, or get page proofs, or frantic phone calls.

~~More and more~~ **ALL** journals/conferences are ~~accepting or~~ requiring electronic versions.

Why Journal rather than Conference?

Looking for "archival quality", suitability to journal coverage.

Fewer restrictions on length, but may have various categories: comments, letters, brief reports, articles, views ...

Not the same time pressure as conference papers, so a promising paper may be kept alive, rather than being rejected out of hand

There is a means to follow up for corrections and errors after publication.
- Author's errata
- Letters from others

Variations on Journal Theme

Correspondence, Letters, Short articles
    Usually special section of a journal (or an entire journal) for
    expedited publication of short pieces

Special issue: a theme for all or part of an issue,
    usually with a guest editor.
    can be a good deal
        » fast track—rapid turn-around
        » with other articles on same topic

Survey, Tutorial, Retrospective, Patterns
    Not looking for original research here, but often is an original
    contribution in terms of synthesis.

Advice for Journal Submission

Prepare your MS with care.
  Don't make your submission the next-to-final draft.

When you return a revised MS, useful to add a cover letter explaining how you've dealt with major comments of reviewers. (Often required.)
  You're not required to make *all* suggested changes, but you should say why you didn't.

Minimum Publishable Unit (MPU)

— takes time to understand what MPU is.

— Trust advice.

Acknowledge generously—especially financial sponsors.

Assignment of Copyright

You own the copyright on what you write

Publisher may ask you to assign copyright to them as a condition of publication
> You can refuse
> You can agree, and reserve rights
> All they actually *need* is a "license to publish"

Is it reasonable for a publisher to prohibit you from putting your own work on your own or your employer's web site?
> ACM *Author-Izer*

Lots of information available. ACM options:
> http://authors.acm.org/main.html