Editorial Policy

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revised from PETER J. DENNING
(June 1978)

Background

In the late 1960s, ACM perceived a need among its members for a journal to help people discover new specialties, and to help practitioners stay abreast. It perceived, among its members, a strong base of expertise for achieving these purposes. It founded the *COMPUTING SURVEYS*.

The *SURVEYS* began publication in March 1969 with Bill Dorn as Editor-in-Chief and Myrtle Kellington as Executive Editor. Lee Revens became Executive Editor in 1970, and Art Blum in 1976. Each printing run of the *SURVEYS* is presently about 37,000 copies—only the *Communications of the ACM* prints more copies per issue (about 47,500). The *SURVEYS* is the option of first choice for about three quarters of our members.

In its earliest days the *SURVEYS* was managed single-handedly by the Editor-in-Chief with the quiet assistance of referees. In early 1973 ACM discontinued the experiment of paying honoraria to *SURVEYS* authors, without noticeable effect on the influx or quality of papers. On taking over from Bill Dorn in 1973, Elliott Organick established an informal editorial panel—senior people who advised both on the suitability of particular papers and on areas of special interest or importance. He promoted this panel to an Editorial Board in December 1975. He instituted the practice of publishing special issues. Through the end of 1978, there have been special issues on programming (December 1974), computer architecture (December 1975), database management (March 1976), software reliability (September/December 1976), parallel processors (March 1977), queueing network models of computer system performance (September 1978), and graphics standards (December 1978). Special issues

on encryption, on psychology, and on programming language research are expected in 1979–1980.

Peter Denning took over from Elliott Organick at the start of 1977. With the December 1977 issue, he elevated the Editorial Board to a Board of Associate Editors. He established the *Surveyors' Forum* in order to provide readers with an opportunity to comment on papers published in the *SURVEYS*, and instigated the option to submit short notes. The first *Forum* appeared in September 1977; the first short note appeared in March 1978. Under Peter Denning's centralized control, the mean editing time for accepted papers was around eight months, a responsiveness that is a tribute to his methods and manner of managing the review process.

Table I was constructed from the *COMPUTING SURVEYS* tables of contents, 1969–1978 (see Vol. 10, No. 4 (Dec. 1978) 509ff). It summarizes the distribution of papers and pages among subjects. The first three categories of the table account for about 42 percent of the papers and 37 percent of the pages. The SIGs with direct interests in these three categories comprise about 40 percent of all SIG memberships—the *SURVEYS* has, to a first approximation, matched its attentions to our members' interests. During the period 1969–1978, the average paper was about 25 printed pages, or nearly 60 manuscript pages—no wonder the referees, authors, and editors complain of exhaustion.

I took over from Peter Denning at the start of 1979, pleased to be given the opportunity to continue such prestigious history.

What Are Surveys and Tutorials*

The main differences between a survey paper and tutorial paper are emphasis and audience. A survey paper assumes its audience has a general knowledge of the field; it emphasizes an overall view of the literature. A tutorial assumes its audience is inex-

* Peter Denning wrote this section with special thanks to D. L. Parnas and E. I. Organick for many of the ideas expressed.

TABLE 1. Summary of Computing Surveys Vols. 1-10 (1969-1978)

Subject	Papers		Pages	
	No.	%	No.	%
Programming: Methods, Validation, and Testing	23	19.7	451	15.4
Data Management; Information Systems; Business Applications	15	12.8	359	12.3
Computer Architecture	11	9.4	260	8.9
Modeling, Measurement, Simulation, and Evaluation	17	14.5	289	9.9
Graphics, Picture Processing	11	9.4	356	12.2
Computer System Design	7	6.0	246	8.4
Programming Languages	5	4.3	275	9.4
Theory of Computation	5	4.3	100	3.4
Man-Machine Interface; Software Packages; Text Editors	5	4.3	135	4.6
Compiling and Loading	4	3.4	85	2.9
Fault-Tolerant Software	3	2.6	90	3.1
History	3	2.6	55	1.9
Data Communication, Networks	2	1.7	69	2.4
Privacy, Legal Issues	2	1.7	48	1.6
Industrial Process Control	1	0.8	32	1.1
Humanities Applications	1	0.8	22	0.8
Artificial Intelligence	1	0.8	20	0.7
Soviet Computing	1	0.8	30	1.0
	117		2922	

pert; it emphasizes the basic concepts of the field. In practice, most of the papers published in *SURVEYS* combine the two approaches: they survey a range of material and explain the underlying concepts.

The primary purpose of a "pure" survey is a guided tour through the literature in an area. By assuming its audience is familiar with the field's basic concepts, it can concentrate on classifying the literature, on developing a perspective of the field, and on evaluating trends. It is up to date and comprehensive. It may be as long as an extended discussion of the literature with many citations, or it may be as short as an annotated bibliography with a preface.

The primary purpose of a "pure" tutorial is explaining a topic to a nonexpert who is familiar only with the basic concepts. Through its title, abstract, and introduction, a tutorial sets out clearly both what it assumes of a reader's background and what it intends to tell him. A tutorial may be simple, written for people with almost no background; or it may be advanced, assuming that its readers are already versed in the subject. A tutorial's point of view is too new to have appeared in a text; yet it is similar to a text, on a small scale. A tutorial need not contain new results or define new

research problems; rather, it binds together old results in a new way. A tutorial need not be easy—to wit, an advanced tutorial, a tutorial on a different subject, or a tutorial explaining a new way of thinking.

What Does Computing Surveys Publish?

We have no preconceptions about which subjects to emphasize in *SURVEYS*. We will publish any survey or tutorial paper of worth, on any subject of interest to ACM. Our concerns are quality, accuracy, and clarity.

We insist that papers of whatever ilk published in *COMPUTING SURVEYS* meet minimum standards. A standard of first importance is *technical accuracy*: readers should not have to contend with errors or omissions. Of equal importance is *clear writing*: crisp, concise, coherent prose is every bit as important as technical accuracy.

Many prospective authors shy away from the *SURVEYS* because they believe surveys and tutorials *must* be lengthy. That the average paper's length during the first nine years was around 60 manuscript pages feeds this misconception. We want to encourage more authors to step forward with short

papers having modest objectives. For lengthy manuscripts, referees are reluctant reviewers reticent to render reports rapidly; shorter papers are easier to review, revise, and read. Don't misunderstand our intent: authors of long papers are as welcome as ever. But authors of short papers are welcome too.

Shorter papers will be published in our *Short Notes* Department. To qualify, a paper must meet all our other standards and must not exceed 4000 words (16 manuscript pages) complete. We will strive for rapid reviewing and timely publication of such material.

Surveyor's Forum Policy

However hard we try for accuracy and clarity, we sometimes err. To allow readers to take us to task, to note errors, and to comment on papers we have published, we established the *Surveyors' Forum*.

Provided that suitable comment is received, the *Surveyors' Forum* appears in every issue of *COMPUTING SURVEYS*, including special issues. The subject matter is restricted to material previously published in *SURVEYS*. The Editor-in-Chief has sole responsibility for determining which submitted comments are suitable and will be published.

The commenter(s) will submit the comment, typed or printed double space, to the Editor-in-Chief. The comment should not exceed three pages; however, the Editor-in-Chief will determine if a particular case justifies a longer comment.

The Editor-in-Chief will edit the comment, have it retyped, and secure the approval of the commenter(s). This may be iterated until an agreement is reached.

The edited comment will be sent to the author(s) of the subject paper, who will be invited to reply. The Editor-in-Chief will edit the reply and secure the approval of the author(s).

The Editor-in-Chief will assign a title to the comment and reply, and will arrange a common numbering scheme for any references cited. The entire package will be sent to the Executive Editor for publishing in the next available issue of the *COMPUTING SURVEYS*.

Are You A Prospective Author?

If you are planning on submitting a paper to the *COMPUTING SURVEYS*, you should submit four (4) copies of your manuscript following the typing guidelines given below. Your cover letter should identify your manuscript as a (regular) Paper, a Short Note, or a Forum Letter. Your cover letter should also declare your intention to transfer your copyrights to ACM should the paper be accepted (see below).

You should submit all manuscripts directly to the Editor-in-Chief who may, in turn, direct it to one of the Associate Editors for processing. Papers and Notes will be reviewed by at least two referees. The referees, and any Associate Editor involved, will make recommendations to the Editor-in-Chief, who will make the final decision.

As you prepare your paper, keep in mind that we want positive answers to all the following questions that we pose to the referees:

- 1) *Is the paper technically accurate?* If the paper is a survey, is it adequately comprehensive? Are there deficiencies or misleading statements, too many opinions, or insufficient examples? Does it give proper credits?
- 2) *Is the paper clearly written?* Is it crisp? Coherent? Concise? Well organized? Does it avoid undue formalism, needless notation, cabalistic symbols? Is it harder than the subject requires? Would a glossary be useful?
- 3) *Does the paper emphasize intuition rather than detail?* Does it interpret results rather than merely stating or deriving them? Does it show how to use results? Explain their limitations? Can difficult, but necessary, material be put in appendices?
- 4) *Does the paper define its audience and meet its objectives?* Does it set forth clearly the assumptions on the reader's background? Are these assumptions reasonable? Does it tell the reader what to expect? What not to expect? Does it tell what material is included? Excluded? If the paper is long, does the introduction advise various classes of readers which sections to read or omit?

- 5) *Is the paper interesting?* The subject timely? Thought-provoking? is the subject of wide interest or applicability? If the paper is a tutorial, does it use examples well? Define terminology sufficiently? Does it stimulate the imagination?
- 6) *Can the references be improved?* Would annotating or categorizing items add useful information?
- 7) *If revisions in the paper are advisable, is it likely that the author will implement them satisfactorily?*

The most common criticisms from referees are: the audience is not clearly defined, the objectives and scope are not obvious, the writing is loose and verbose, and there is more detail than intuition.

Typing Guidelines

Your entire manuscript, including the bibliography, should be in double-spaced type on separated $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ sheets. The front page should include

Title
 Authors and Affiliations
 Abstract
 Key Words and Phrases
 Categories for *Computing Reviews (CR)*.

There should be a Table of Contents whose main sections include:

INTRODUCTION
 ...
 SUMMARY
 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
 REFERENCES

In the text, main-section headings should be all capital letters.

COMPUTING SURVEYS uses alphanumeric bibliographic keys, such as DENN78a, DENN78b, and COX70. The capital letters are the prefix, four letters or less, of the first author's last name. The two digits specify the publication year. A trailing a, b, c, ... distinguishes multiple papers by the same author published during that year. If different authors would have the same key, the fourth key letter is replaced by another distinguishing letter such as the author's first initial. Keys cited in the text are enclosed in square brackets [DENN78a] except when used as nouns—as in “see

DENN78a.” The reference list should be double-spaced in the usual lexicographic ordering by authors, identified by keys in the left margin.

The papers of this issue illustrate these conventions.

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Page Charges

At its meeting on June 15, 1977, the ACM Publications Board instituted a voluntary page charge of \$20 per printed page for authors of accepted papers. The purpose of page charges is to help defray some of the publications cost. Publication does not in any way depend on payment.