Editorial: The First

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this first issue of 2018—and to my first editorial as Editor-in-Chief of *ACM Transactions in Autonomous and Adaptive Systems (TAAS)*. I am honored to have been selected to take on this role, grateful for the vote of confidence, yet a little daunted by the task ahead.

Why daunted? Because the “ACM Transactions” brand carries with it an implicit assurance of the highest quality, of research content, transparency, and rigors of the peer review process. This is hard to achieve at the best of times, but two factors in particular exacerbate the challenge. The first is the reliance on volunteers who have the expertise and time to review manuscripts of variable quality, and without much recognition nor appreciation of their efforts. The most seasoned of these experts have many pressures on their time, and are in high demand as reviewers. The second is the breadth of scope of the TAAS journal, a liberal interpretation of which means that it covers a very large proportion of computing systems research, and many of its specializations. This makes the journal attractive to a very broad readership and authorship, but perhaps also makes it less attractive as a first-port-of-call for the specialist reader and writer.

Over the coming months, I would like to engage with the TAAS community—readers, writers, editors, and reviewers—to better understand what the community wants and expect of *its* journal. These requirements will almost certainly conflict, and my job will be to navigate the possible solutions available and make some trade-off decisions. For example, the journal may need to narrow its scope in order to attract more targeted and higher quality submissions, at the expense of losing some of its more general readership. It may need to vary the kinds and lengths of papers it publishes, to attract more readers but also to make it more worthwhile for referees to review for the journal.

In the short term, there will be few visible changes to the journal. However, one change that I will introduce, effective immediately, is to reduce the reliance of TAAS on special issues associated with conferences. That is not to say that the links with aligned conferences will be severed; on the contrary, the aim is to *strengthen* these links by drawing on the very best that these conferences have to offer, and to publish those contributions in themes that define or redefine the scope of journal. Selected papers from conferences like SEAMS, SASO and ICAC will continue to be published in TAAS, but when they are ready for publication—not by some artificial deadline imposed by a special issue schedule. This may also improve the consistency of how articles are handled by associate editors.

I will also discuss with the organizers of aligned conferences ways in which TAAS can contribute to their individual programs. One option might be a new “Journal First” mode of publication (common in other research communities), in which authors of articles describing original work that first appears in TAAS, may then be presented (but of course not republished) at related conferences. I would welcome the community’s views on this and other ideas.

I am pleased to say that a number of conference and discipline leaders have agreed to join the TAAS editorial board as associate editors, in order that they can contribute directly to both to improving the quality of the research published in the journal, and to improved relations with related conferences. I welcome to the TAAS editorial board: Siobhán Clarke, Ada Diaconescu, Samuel

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Kounev, Sam Malek, and Jan-Philipp Steghöfer. At the same time, a number of existing editorial board members have stepped down after many years of distinguished service, for which, on behalf of the community, I thank them. They are: Tarek Abdelzaher, Marco Dorigo, Anthony Karageorgos, Jeremy Pitt, and Dongyan Xu. Last but not least, I take this opportunity to thank my predecessors, Manish Parashar and Franco Zambonelli, who have been tremendously helpful and supportive in the transition period. I am pleased to say that they have both agreed to continue their association with the journal in an advisory role, as Emeritus Editors-in-Chief.

A special thanks to Nicola Biccocchi and Laura Lander who have also held my hand during the first few months, and have responded to my endless questions about, and requests for, reconfiguring the manuscript handling system. I'd like to say that their work is done, but it's not quite. So, please feel free to email us feedback on the journal and the system. My new TAAS email address is taas-eic@acm.org and Nicola's email address is taas@acm.org.

Finally, let me end with how I should have started, with my vision for the journal, which can be simply stated: To evolve the journal to become the world's leading archival publication for autonomous and adaptive systems, and to do so by publishing the highest quality research in the field, in a timely and transparent manner. I cannot, of course, do this on my own. The hundreds of reviewers, orchestrated by an active editorial board are key, as is a community that will submit its best work to the journal.

I encourage you to engage with TAAS in whatever role you can, and I will do my best to make the experience rewarding.

Thank you.

Bashar Nuseibeh
The Open University (UK) & Lero (Ireland)
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Editor-in-Chief