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In Response to ‘Vardi’s Insights’

From ACM’s Past President

MOSHE VARDI’S COLUMN ON the preceding page misrepresents some decisions and actions made in regard to ACM’s Open Access (OA) model. As ACM’s President at the time these events took place, he invited my comments but chose not to correct several factual errors I pointed out. That information is included here, by way of clarification.

First, the characterization of ACM’s OA process—which Vardi limits to events between December 2019 and June 2020—as an example of a “gap between ACM members and staff” is contrary to fact. ACM’s progress toward OA began mid-decade. A plan for moving to OA was discussed with ACM Council as early as 2016, and a pilot was instituted soon after. By the end of 2019, the pilot had been evaluated, tweaked, and expanded in a second phase that included more institutions. Each step was discussed and approved by ACM volunteers at meetings with the Publications Board, Executive Committee, and Council; the SIG Governing Board was also provided with regular updates.

Second, the statements about my letter to the Office of Science and Technology are misleading. That letter—which was sent to all ACM members in a Member Bulletin—was not a “retraction.” It stated that ACM indeed opposed the proposed regulation but added our regret that the final wording of the letter emphasized commercial interests rather than those of not-for-profit publishers. I explained ACM’s two concerns with the plan: the aggressiveness of the timeline, and the failure to engage with key stakeholders before setting

the terms. The letter was quite clear that ACM not only supported OA, but that we were already well on the way to achieving it within the next few years.

Finally, it was not the transition to OA that Council approved in June 2020, it was to accelerate the timeline based on member feedback. Our new goal would be to have *complete* OA within five years (that is, required rather than optional, for all SIGs and publications). My farewell Member Bulletin announced that goal, citing the teamwork between volunteers and staff that was involved. Many people responded, applauding the fact that ACM listened to its member community and was “leading the way” for other publishers.

I hope that ACM members will continue to appreciate that there is a unique team relationship between ACM volunteers and staff. It is truly a volunteer-driven organization, and each of us can play a role in shaping future ACM decisions.

Cherri M. Pancake, ACM PAST PRESIDENT

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From Communications’ Editor-in-Chief

THE TWO FOREGOING columns may reflect differing perspectives on ACM and its recent actions. However, readers should understand that Moshe Vardi and Cherri Pancake are both passionate ACM leaders. Each has generously contributed years of service to make our professional society strong. We support open discussion of critical challenges for ACM, so we can meet the challenges of rapid change in the research community, scientific publishing, technical leadership, and computing world.

I find the observation that the interests of membership, staff, and officers are “not always aligned” to be accurate. As *Communications’* Editor-in-Chief, differences in perspective and goals, incentives, and ability to dedicate effort are manifest every day. To strengthen ACM, we must combine these attributes, incentivizing volunteer engagement by making it efficient and impactful, and having clear strategic objectives that enable staff to drive in the direction of ACM’s long-term agenda. We must strengthen this synergy in a world of growing distractions and opportunities that compete for engagement. And we must, if we are to rise and meet the myriad disruptions facing the computing community as opportunity, not disaster.

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