

Interactive Seminar

Writing and Taking Referee Reports

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PLAN

- First you will be given
A PAPER TO REFEREE
(60 min)
- You will present your results
(5 min/group)
- An overview of issues and a panel
discussion
(30 min)

Suggestions for the next 60 min

You should produce a short referee report on an overhead foil, thus a good plan could be:

- 30 min for reading

- 15 min for discussions, and

- 15 min to structure the text on the slide

When you read a paper for
information retrieval
how do you build trust into the
paper?

- The paper says blah and thus it
is true?
- The paper says blah?
- The author wrote blah?

Issues in Refereeing

- The following is based on:
 - „A Guide for New Referees in Theoretical Computer Science“ by Ian Parberry
 - Slides by Olivier Danvy presented at several BRICS retreats

Quality Control

- Refereeing in peer review is the cornerstone quality control mechanism in science
- Used in selecting papers for conferences and journals
 - Conferences (in CS): one way, either accept or reject
 - Journals: two way, if paper not in archival form, improve and try again

The Actors in the Context

- The author(s)
- The editor / program chairman
- The reviewers

Quality Control

- Correctness
- Significance
- Innovation
- Interest
- Timeliness
- Succinctness (correct amount of words)
- Elegance
- Readability
- Style
- Polish

Taxonomy of Research Papers

- Breakthrough
- Ground-breaking
- Progress
- Reprise
- Tinkering
- Debugging
- Survey

It's Got to Be NEW!

- It has been like that for a while in CS
- What is your experience with papers that simplify / refine / generalise existing results?
- It seems to be likely that the 5000 volumes of Lecture Notes in Computer Science are not full of unique novelties
- Thus „Refactoring“ should be added to the previous list

Ethics of Refereeing

- Objectivity
- Fairness
- Speed
- Professionalism
- Confidentiality
- Honesty

Ethics of Refereeing

- Courtesy
 - Would I be embarrassed if this were to appear in print with my name on it?

Taxonomy of Referee Reports

- The subject is out of scope
- Published elsewhere
- Too easy: a grad student exercise
- Minor significance
- Major errors
- Paper is boring
- Too many words for this result
- Poorly written (bad exposition)

Taxonomy of Referee Reports

- Acceptable with minor changes
- The paper is perfect :)

Some Must-Have Elements of a Review

- Convey your understanding of the paper with a summary.
- Double up with an analysis.
- Sum up with an assessment and a recommendation.
- Add a list of remarks if any.

How much time should
I put into refereeing a paper?

What is the relationship between journal and conference versions of a paper?

What if I am actively working
on the same problems?

Should I recommend resubmission
to a „lesser“ journal?

How to Take Referee Reports

- Have you ever had a paper rejected?
 - How did you take it?
 - Were the reports fair?
 - What did you do with the paper?

Links

- Ian Parberry's referee guide:
 - <http://www.eng.unt.edu/ian/guides/referee.html>
- Olivier Danvy's advice:
 - <http://www.brics.dk/~danvy/issues.html>