Editorial from the Program Committee

The Program Committee developed the Call for papers [1] drawing extensively upon the experiences and precedents obtained from previous Conferences, most especially ascilite Singapore 2007 [2]. We received a record number of submissions (Tables 1 and 6) from a good number of countries, with the ‘Australasian’ region and the UK being well represented. Strong support for the Conference from prospective presenters was matched by excellent support from a record number of reviewers (Table 2).

Table 1: Numbers of submissions and presentations at ascilite Melbourne 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>External review</th>
<th>Full papers</th>
<th>Concise papers</th>
<th>Posters</th>
<th>Rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submitted</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>Presented</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>Presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full papers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concise papers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>216</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data is at 17 Nov 2008. The numbers presented are lower than numbers accepted owing to cancellations and declining of offers, which occurred mainly in the category of "full paper offered poster". The table does not record workshops or special sessions/symposia. Committee received 19 workshop proposals and accepted 9, and 2 symposium proposals and accepted 2.

Table 2: Origins of reviewers by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries or city or province</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia (.au)</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore (.sg)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand (.nz)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom (.uk)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia (.my)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Hong Kong (.hk)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Arab Emirates (1), Greece (1), Japan (1), Oman (1), South Africa (1), Sweden (1), USA (1)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a large panel, we succeeded in keeping the load per reviewer at a reasonable level, namely an average of 2.23 papers per reviewer. After 4 editorial rejects, we commissioned 585 reviews (3 reviews each for 195 papers) and received 561 returns (96%; 24 papers were each missing one review due to reviewers being ill and other unforeseen circumstances; each was checked by Committee to ascertain whether it was reasonable to proceed on the basis of two reviews, and in a few cases a supplementary review was done by Committee members). We thank our reviewers very warmly. Their work is so important in two respects, firstly helping authors to improve their papers, and secondly reviewers and the review criteria they work to enable us to sustain our assurance to Australian authors that the process complies with DEEWR's guidelines [3] for Higher Education Research Data Collection eligibility.

Table 3 is a new addition to our routine compilation of descriptive statistics. The notable and possibly pleasing feature of Table 3 is that the gender proportions are similar for both authors and reviewers. This suggests tentatively, at least in relation to this particular demographic, that we do not have a 'generational gap' or perhaps a 'hierarchial gap' between authors and reviewers.

Table 3: Reviewers and authors by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Not ascertained</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reviewers</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewer and author gender was determined on the basis of first name, or personal acquaintance, or institutional website information. Those not identified within a reasonable amount of searching time were counted as 'Not ascertained'. The author count is for authors of full and concise paper submissions only. Poster authors, workshop presenters and special session/symposia chairs have not been included. The authorship count is on a per submission basis, i.e. authors named on 2, 3, … submissions are counted 2, 3, … times. For similar data on AJET's authors and reviewers, see AJET Editorial 23(3). http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet23/editorial23-3.html

Table 4, to be compared with a similar table for ascilite Singapore 2007 [4] is also reassuring in relation to our goal of building a larger authorship on a regional basis. Table 5 indicates that ascilite Conferences have attained a long term consistency in acceptance rates that seems reasonable for this genre of research presentation and publication.
Table 4: Origins of submissions and acceptances of full and concise papers by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries or city (a)</th>
<th>No. submitted</th>
<th>% of submissions</th>
<th>No. accepted (b)</th>
<th>% accepted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia (.au)</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand (.nz)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom (.uk)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore (.sg)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia (.my)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong (.hk)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA and Canada</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (c)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>72.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Determined from address or home country of the submitting author (usually, but not always, the first author).
b. Accepted as full or concise papers.
c. South Africa 3, and one from each of Belgium, India, Pakistan and Portugal.

For similar data on AJET’s submissions and acceptances, see AJET Editorial 24(4), http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet24/editorial24-4.html

Table 5: Full paper acceptance rates for asilite Conferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. full papers submitted</th>
<th>No. of full papers accepted*</th>
<th>% acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average acceptance rate 2004-2008: 69.8%

* Does not include full papers that were accepted subject to revision to concise format.

With growth in the number of presentations of full and concise papers, we were forced to do some 'squeezing' in the timetabling of presentations. One group of full papers had to be allocated 'short' presentation times and we regret that necessity. We regret also that in relation to total numbers, increased numbers accepted for full and concise categories were offset by significantly decreased support for the poster format, and an increase in withdrawals of full and concise papers (Table 6). These are matters which we suggest for particular attention by the Society and future Conference Committees.

Table 6: Numbers of presentations at asilite Conferences 2001-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Melb 01</th>
<th>Auck 02</th>
<th>Adel 03</th>
<th>Perth 04</th>
<th>Bris 05</th>
<th>Syd 06</th>
<th>Sg 07</th>
<th>Melb 08*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no. submissions received***</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number presentations***</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full papers ('traditional' pres.)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concise papers ('short' pres.)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster presentations</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * Melbourne 08 data is at 17 November 2008.
** The table does not record numbers of workshop, special session or symposia submissions and presentations. Melbourne 2001 numbers are from the Conference website. Numbers for others are from the printed Proceedings and the websites. There are some minor discrepancies between Programs and Proceedings, presumably due to cancellations, not detailed in this table.
*** The number of presentations is lower than total accepted due to cancellations and declining of offers, which occurred mainly in the category of "full paper offered poster".

Authors and readers may notice that the general standard of copy editing for Proceedings papers does not match the standards that apply for journal papers. This is a problem arising from the much larger numbers of papers and the much more compressed timeframe that editors face with the Proceedings, compared with a journal. However, in addressing this problem the main element very likely will have to be better educating and informing of authors, because finding more editors, or allowing more time for their work, or higher rejection rates are not attractive options for societies and conference committees generally. For our part, we hope to prepare more detailed advice for authors and reviewers, for later publication via asilite channels, being very hard up against today’s deadlines!

Roger Atkinson and Clare McBeath
For asilite Melbourne 2008 Program Committee
References


Data compilation: Roger Atkinson rjatkinson@bigpond.com, for ascilite Melbourne 2008 Program Committee. For the most recent version of ascilite Melbourne 2008 data Tables 1-6, please see http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/melbourne08/procs/

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Kristine Elliott, The University of Melbourne
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Allan Ellis, Southern Cross University
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Sally Firman, University of Ballarat
Andrew Fluck, University of Tasmania
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