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PROGRESS ON ACM'S BECOMING THE PREFERRED PUBLISHER

In June 2001 ACM Council approved a strategic plan (www.acm.org/pubs/strategy.pdf) for ACM publishing for the next three years. The vision underlying this plan is simple: to realize ACM CEO John White's stated goal of ensuring that ACM becomes the preferred publisher for computer science. ACM publications have relevance to several constituencies: authors, readers, reviewers, editors, conference program chairs and committees, institutional subscribers, libraries, and the Association itself. The ACM Publications Board desires that the policies, publications, staff support, and pricing be configured so that every constituency is unequivocally convinced that ACM is their preferred publisher.

As a first step, the Board endeavored to articulate a set of principles that should be realized by a preferred publisher. This led to a set of specific rights that ACM should guarantee. We then realized that coupled with these rights is a set of responsibilities our constituencies must assume if we are to maintain a viable and effective publishing program. The resulting policy is the *Rights and Responsibilities in ACM Publishing*, reprinted here in full.

This far-ranging document outlines a set of 53 specific rights that ACM will guarantee. Where the rubber hits the road is in defining *metrics* that state whether we are achieving these guarantees and in putting into place *processes* that ensure the metrics are where they should be. These metrics and processes are required for each right; defining them has occupied the Board for the past year and they will take several more years to fully implement. Let's look at a few examples:

The first right listed is a critical one—on-time publication. Here the metric is clear: the average delay from the first day of the issue month to the printed date and the date the issue appears in the ACM DL (whew!) shall be zero. As of a few months ago, the ACM Publications staff is rigorously tracking this average. Unfortunately, its value is not zero, for several complex reasons. Issues are often not being delivered by editors-in-chief in a timely fashion, and the production itself is often not completing issues in a timely fashion. Both of these constituent delays are being actively addressed by the Board and Headquarters staff; these delays have been reduced by half, but there is more work to do.

The metric for enabling fast access (the eighth right) is less clear. Here one might like the delay from the time a request is made to the ACM DL until the article is displayed on the user's screen to be but a few seconds. However, that end-to-end interval includes delays contributed by parts of the Internet over which ACM has no control. ACM's solution is to contract for various content delivery services to ensure critical parts of the ACM DL are cached appropriately and access to the DL works well throughout the world. While this solution has increased ACM's networking charges significantly, this is a necessary expense to achieve this stated right.

The time needed to fix galleys is a pet peeve of authors. Most authors are familiar with having their paper accepted, then receiving out of the blue many months later a packet containing the galleys, with a strongly worded demand to send any changes within 72 hours. This is common practice by scholarly pub-

lishers. ACM has changed its production process to let authors know at all times where their paper is in that process and to give adequate advance notice when feedback is needed. This is just one part of becoming the preferred publisher. In a similar vein, manuscripts will no longer be thrown "over the transom" to a reviewer; instead, the review will first be requested, as a matter of courtesy.

The timely review of a paper is of critical concern to authors, yet few publishers, ACM or otherwise, fully achieve this. The metrics here involve average time from submission to editorial decision for a reviewing round, and average time from initial submission to acceptance or declination for a submitted manuscript. These metrics need to be captured in a consistent and meaningful way, which has not been done to date. ACM is putting into place a comprehensive Web-based manuscript tracking system, which will enable these metrics to be measured. Only then can the Board institute policies to ensure timely review. This tracking system will also provide turn-around-time statistics that can be made available to authors, something that again few publishers now provide.

As one can imagine, going through this analysis with all 53 rights is a daunting effort, but one that holds the promise of dramatic improvements in ACM's efforts at high-quality, cost-effective dissemination of knowledge.

It is somewhat ironic that the ultimate goal is for other publishers to equal ACM in their commitment to these constituencies. In becoming the preferred publisher for computer science, ACM will provide a positive role model for other publishers, both commercial and nonprofit. If publishers across the board adopt these practices, then eventually ACM won't be *the* preferred publisher but will be only one among many superlative publishers, to the benefit of all. **C**

RICHARD T. SNODGRASS chaired the ACM Publications Board when the strategic plan and this Rights and Responsibilities policy were developed.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN ACM PUBLISHING

ACM recognizes that quality publishing is a team effort—not only must authors contribute, but so must editors, reviewers, and professional staff. Together the ACM Council, the Publications Board, the Special Interest Groups, program chairs and committees, editors-in-chief, and editorial boards aim to provide the framework that allows all constituencies, including readers and libraries, to participate fairly and effectively. As part of this effort, ACM provides this document that summarizes the rights and responsibilities of readers, authors, reviewers, editors, program chairs and committees, and libraries. Although this statement focuses on these six core groups, the importance of the professional staff is implicit throughout the document. For example, the rights of authors and editors can only be met by good service from the professional staff. Conversely, the professional staff cannot succeed by themselves.

Our most fundamental principle is that the publication process exists to support the membership of the ACM and the computing profession in general. ACM believes its success should be judged broadly in terms of its high-quality, cost-effective dissemination of knowledge and not narrowly in terms of a publications program. We emphasize that the process of dissemination includes papers, audio and video presentations, Web postings, technical reports, conferences, etc. The quality of the publications and the responsibilities that everybody assumes are means to these broader ends.

This document pertains to journals, Transactions, magazines, conference proceedings, and SIG newsletters published by ACM, referred here generically as publications. When particular rights and responsibilities are limited to some subset of our publications, that subset will be specifically noted. Note that some exceptions to this policy can occur. These exceptions are generally found in ACM's professionally managed magazines and news services with special timeliness needs. However, the goal of these publications, as for ACM's other publications, is to provide the best in information services.

ACM is making a best-faith effort to implement the rights and responsibilities described in this document. Please realize that people and organizations can make mistakes. However, ACM will strive to correct any problems that do occur.

ACM encourages other publishers to also recognize the rights and responsibilities of readers, authors, reviewers, editors and libraries, as set forth in this document.

Readers

Readers consult articles in ACM publications because they value the reputation of these publications and find the information contained therein valuable and relevant.

Readers can expect ACM to
- Publish on time with the printed and Digital Library versions available the first day of the issue month
- Ensure that articles are accurate and of high quality
- Ensure that the electronic and printed version of an article match within the limits of the style guidelines of each format
- Ensure that journal, Transactions, and magazine articles are professionally copy edited
- Ensure consistent formatting of articles in each publication
- Make publications available at low cost to individual subscribers, for the current year and for all previous years
- Take into account the needs of readers in economically emerging countries and in economically undeveloped countries
- Enable fast access to the electronic version of each article, throughout the world
- Permit low-cost purchasing of individual copies of articles (printed or electronic version).

And ACM expects readers to
- Appropriately acknowledge uses of the work
- Respect the copyright of the work.

Authors

Authors submit their work to ACM because they value its reputation and its cost-effective publication facilities as a place to report their ideas (usually research) to the computing community. Authors rightfully expect ACM to facilitate this goal through a smooth and timely process of review and production. In return, ACM expects that authors submit works that are ready for publication and that authors be responsive to reasonable requests during the publication process. There are three crucial components in creating a quality publication where the author has both rights and responsibilities in their interaction with the ACM: *review of the submission, processing of an accepted work*, and *dissemination*.

Reviewing

When an author makes a submission, a confidential review process is initiated. The aim of the review process is to make an appropriate and timely decision on whether a submission should be published. Such decisions are based on proper review by well-qualified and impartial reviewers. Authors have the right to expect prompt, clear, and specific feedback. To facilitate this process, a submission must follow publication requirements and authors must be attentive in responding to questions.

Thus authors can expect ACM to
- Keep them informed on the status of their submission
- Use impartial reviewers
- Issue timely review and clear feedback
- Maintain confidentiality.

And ACM expects authors to
- Submit their work to only one publication at a time
- Follow submission requirements, e.g., topic areas, page limits, accurate citations, originality, cleared rights, designated contact, acknowledging contributions to work appropriately
- Respond appropriately and in a timely manner to reviews
- Respond to reviews with one voice even if there are multiple authors
- Respond positively to requests to act as referee for other papers.

Processing of accepted works

Once a submission has been accepted, authors can expect ACM to publish the work in a timely and professional manner. Authors can expect to have approval of all changes to the work. In addition, ACM will strive to not cause authors to perform unnecessary work. However, authors do have a responsibility to work with ACM to complete the publication process.

Thus authors can expect ACM to
- Provide reasonable time to fix galleys for journal, Transactions, and magazine articles
- Note all copy-editing changes for journals and Transactions
- Seek author approval of the final copy for journal, Transactions, and newsletter articles
- Not introduce errors in the production process
- Add no material without the corresponding author's approval
- Be financially responsible for its own internal preparation costs
- Ensure metadata accuracy for all publications.

And ACM expects authors to
- Speak with one voice even if there are multiple authors
- Respond appropriately to reviews and comments when creating the final version
- Work with publisher and editor to satisfy design and quality constraints.

Dissemination

Publication is only a part of the broader goal of disseminating ideas and results. Authors can expect ACM to contribute to this wider goal, and in particular to encourage dissemination in multiple forums. ACM expects authors to acknowledge ACM's contribution and not to publish the same material in other venues, except as permitted by ACM copyright policy.

Thus authors can expect ACM to
- Allow a submission to be posted on home pages before and after review
- Allow an authors' version of their own ACM-copyrighted work on their personal server or on servers belonging to their employers
- Allow metadata information, e.g., bibliographic, abstract, and keywords, for their individual work to be openly available
- Allow authors the right to reuse their figures in their own subsequent publications for which they have granted ACM copyright
- Provide statistics for each journal, Transaction, and newsletter on its average turnaround time and its current backlog of articles.

And ACM expects authors to
- Appropriately acknowledge the publisher's effort
- Ensure that whenever the authors or their employers provide a link to a personal copy that there is a link to the ACM definitive version
- Ensure that all versions copyrighted by ACM bear the ACM copyright.

Reviewers

ACM recognizes that the quality of a refereed publication rests primarily on the impartial judgment of their volunteer reviewers. An editorial board or program committee should approach an individual reviewer infrequently and only with a manuscript that both comes under the reviewer's expertise and meets the publication guidelines. (Note that some magazines do not formally review all articles, and that many SIG newsletters and some magazines do not referee articles.)

Thus reviewers can expect ACM to

- Maintain their anonymity
- Ask them if they are willing to review before the submission is sent to them; the deadline for the review will accompany its request
- Provide guidelines on what constitutes a reviewing conflict of interest
- Request them to review only submissions for which the editor feels they have expertise, and request only a limited number of reviews over the course of a year.
- Recognize that they have the right to decline a requested review
- Give a reasonable length of time for a review, where the particular length of time depends on the publication
- Not routinely ask them to make up for delays introduced by other participants in the reviewing cycle
- Not ask them to provide reviews for submissions that do not satisfy either stated publications requirements (e.g., page count restrictions) or which are obviously inappropriate for the publication
- Acknowledge their efforts in the publication process, while maintaining confidentiality of which submissions they reviewed
- Inform them of the editorial decisions for the submission, including the author-visible portion of reviews
- Tell them who will see their review

And ACM expects reviewers to
- Make known to the requesting editor any possible conflicts of interest
- Review the submission by the agreed-upon deadline
- Understand the charter and reviewing standards and procedures of the publication
- Read the entire submission carefully, prepare the review with care, apply professional judgment, use appropriate language in a review, and fill out provided review forms in full
- Adequately document in their review the reasons behind their recommendations
- Review subsequent revisions of a submission that they initially reviewed should the editor feel that is appropriate.
- Not use results from submitted works in their works, research or grant proposals, unless and until that material appears in other publicly available formats, such as a technical report or as a published work
- Not distribute a submission to anyone unless

approved by the editor handling the submission
• Maintain the anonymity of the other reviewers, should they become known to that reviewer.

Editors, Program Chairs, and Program Committees

ACM recognizes that editing a publication is a major task performed by volunteers, and for some magazines, by professional staff. ACM seeks to provide editors and program chairs and committees with the maximum possible support so that they can effectively complete their task. In return, editors and program chairs and committees must be conscientious in managing the review process.

Editors and program chairs and committees can expect ACM to
• Provide the clear, effective, and moral support of the publisher
• Provide a clerical and software infrastructure that supports tracking submissions and administration of publications
• Have clear, written policies
• Listen and respond in a timely manner when help or information is requested
• Recognize that editors and program chairs determine content
• Recognize that the editor-in-chief or program chair has final rights with regard to content
• Recognize that the editor-in-chief or program chair appoints the editorial board
• Abstain from micromanagement
• Recognize that an editor or program chair can propose changes to the publication's charter and process for publications
• Specify the term of appointment for an editor or program chair of a publication
• Have effective appointment and reappointment processes for publications
• Provide transition support and editor or program chair orientation for publications.
And ACM expects editors and program chairs and committees to
• Inform the publisher in a timely manner of the status of all submissions
• Understand and follow through on author rights, reviewer rights, reader rights and library rights. In particular to provide clear, timely and impartial feedback
• Ask for help when needed
• Be an advocate for their publication and to represent the ACM well
• Manage the review process in a timely and

appropriate manner
• Responsibly cover all sides of important issues and not use the publication as a forum to further their own views and opinions
• Recognize that the editor-in-chief or program chair has ultimate responsibility for the content of the publication
• Maintain adequate records
• Use volunteers effectively and fairly
• Cooperate with the publisher on its goals of supporting the membership of the ACM and the computing profession in general
• Implement with quality and appropriateness the charter of the publication.

Libraries

Libraries acquire and provide access to information resources in many formats to support the teaching, research, and learning missions of their constituents. They subscribe to or purchase ACM products because they provide relevant, high-quality, affordable information needed by their users.

In addition to reader rights, libraries can expect ACM to
• Provide institutional access to electronic versions at a reasonable price and take into account the needs of economically emerging and economically undeveloped countries
• Enable fast access to the electronic versions throughout the world
• Provide ongoing access, upon request, to electronic content to which a library has electronically subscribed, for the subscription period, should the subscription ever be canceled or should ACM remove titles from their electronic products, possibly for a fee
• Respect fair use provisions of U.S. copyright law
• Allow libraries to fill interlibrary loan requests, for teaching, research, and other not-for-profit uses.
And ACM expects libraries to
• Respect the copyright of the work and inform users of copyright law and restrictions on use
• Make good faith, reasonable efforts to prevent misuse of ACM products
• Respond in a timely manner to reports of alleged breaches of contract or agreement.