

Conferences confronted by challenges of maturity

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My views in a nutshell



- ❖ The systems conferences are approaching a crisis point
 - Overwhelmed by numbers of submissions, hard to convince people to do the PC job properly
 - Many signs of this “stress”

- ❖ We need to fix these problems before they cause some form of collapse

Case in point



- ❖ Why are the numbers of papers so high?
 - Students feel huge pressure to have a lot of papers
 - ... but they also feel that conferences are a roll of the dice, hence tend to “gamble” by submitting a lot

- ❖ Why are conferences rolling the dice?
 - Mostly due to issues in the first round
 - The PC doesn't really get involved until late in the second round, except the most dedicated members

The First Round



- ❖ Ken assigns 30 papers to Mary Smith
 - Mary shudders and goes into denial
 - Eventually farms out a lot of the work to her students
 - Many of these have very little experience

- ❖ Back come reviews (with scores!)
 - And lots of good papers bite the dust

- ❖ The PC does a much better job on those that survive

Could we fix this?



- ❖ By any reasonable estimate the systems community numbers in the thousands
 - Just track past participants in SOSISP, SICOMM, OSDI, NSDI, etc
 - Many have published, many attend lots of conferences.
- ❖ Why not have our own community do the first round reviewing, using a “social networking” approach that HotCRP (or Google) could support?

More ideas



- ❖ My paper lists other ideas....
 - Clear the backlog the way medical conferences do: by accepting a LOT more papers as “communications”
 - Key: they need to be citable on your CV and included into the proceedings (in a “communications” section)
 - Evokes a vision of short papers. But in fact, why not eliminate length restrictions completely?
 - Review based on 6-8 page extended abstracts but (all) papers could be as long as the material demands
 - Institutionalize rebuttal opportunities
 - Track histories of reviews (and lives of papers...)