

The CHI Conference Review Process: Writing and Interpreting Paper Reviews

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KEYWORDS:

Review process, CHI technical program

INTRODUCTION

The CHI technical program has a very thorough and somewhat complex review process. Every year, a pool of over 1000 reviewers provide an average of eight reviews for 350 or more technical papers. A group of 30-40 associate chairs read and interpret these reviews and write a metareview for each paper. The associate chairs then discuss each paper at the technical program committee meeting, weighing the quantitative and qualitative evaluations of the reviewers, and make the final selection for the conference.

The purpose of this special interest group is to explain the details of this process to both reviewers and potential authors. Reviewers can learn how to write reviews that have an impact and authors can learn how to interpret their reviews and, we hope, improve their chances of being accepted.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SIG:

We'll begin by explaining the review process for long papers: what happens from the time a paper is received to the time it is accepted or rejected. We'll also briefly describe how this process differs from other presentation categories at CHI, such as panels or short papers. We'll discuss the role of CHI reviewers: what is expected of them and how to join the pool of reviewers. We'll also describe what associate chairs do, including writing metareviews and the final selection process at the technical program committee meeting. Current and previous technical program committee members will describe how they write reviews and how they interpret other people's reviews when putting together a metareview. We'll also describe how the program committee is run and how final decisions are made.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

In previous years, the CHI review pool consisted primarily of former CHI paper authors. This year, anyone who was willing to do the work and sign up was added to the pool. This had the benefit of making the process

more open, but also meant that many more inexperienced reviewers entered the pool. We hope that people who have reviewed or would like to review CHI papers will attend, both to better understand the process and to learn how to write reviews that count. Authors who have submitted papers to CHI should also attend, to better interpret their reviews. Both reviewers and authors are invited to ask questions, provide feedback and give suggestions for improving the process.

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

The format will be very informal, with a mix of information about the process, comments and experiences from senior technical program committee members, and questions and suggestions from the audience. We'll discuss the following:

What is the overall review process?

Who does what, when? How are papers allocated to reviewers and associate chairs? What happens if there are not enough acceptable reviews?

What do CHI reviews do?

How do you join the reviewer pool? How are the reviewer "interest" ratings used to help allocate papers? What you should (or should not!) write in a review. What difference does the paper category make? How should you rate your "expertise" on a topic?

What do associate chairs do?

How do they evaluate a set of reviews? Why are some reviews discounted or dismissed entirely in the metareview? What role does "expertise" play? How are quantitative and qualitative ratings balanced?

How are final decisions made?

What happens during the program committee meeting? What happens to papers written by committee members or when there are conflicts of interest? Why are some papers accepted that have lower numerical ratings than others that are rejected? What is the "statistically equivalent" pool?

Feedback

What worked well this year? What didn't work well? What can we do to make things better from the reviewer's perspective? From the associate chairs perspective? From the author's perspective?