Opinion Poll on ACM affiliation for the Symposium on Computational Geometry

Dear SoCG community,

Since its start 27 years ago, SoCG has always been affiliated to ACM. Following a discussion at SoCG 2011, the SoCG Steering Committee sent out a poll in Fall last year about the relation between SoCG and the ACM. In particular, you were asked to choose one of the following three options: see also the background information given later.

　i.　　I prefer to stay with ACM.

　ii.　　If involvement of ACM can be restricted to publishing the proceedings, at low cost for SoCG, then I prefer to stay with ACM; otherwise I prefer to leave ACM.

　iii.　　 I prefer to leave ACM, and organize SoCG as an independent conference with proceedings published in LIPIcs and with financial backing provided through other means.

As you may recall, the outcome of the poll was: 29 votes for (i), 48 votes for (ii), 47 votes for (iii).

We then started a discussion with ACM, with the following outcome:

- It is not possible to publish proceedings as an ACM Symposium without organizing the conference sponsored by (or in collaboration with) with ACM.
- ACM allocates 16% of the budget of any ACM symposium to the sponsoring SIGs. In other words, the symposium pays ACM a 16% "fee", which goes to the SIGs involved. In the case of SoCG the 16% thus go to SIGACT and SIGGRAPH. For future SoCG's, SIGACT and SIGGRAPH are willing to return half of this to SoCG; this is to be used, for instance, for student travel, invited speakers. ACM and the SIGs do not want to formalize this into a contract, because similar arrangements with other conferences are not written down either.
- ACM symposia are usually organized "sponsored by" ACM; in certain situations they may be organized "in cooperation with" ACM, in particular, in order to address administrative issues that may come with organizing some international events. An event that is "in cooperation" with ACM involves less paperwork than a "sponsored" event, but does not have the financial backup and insurance provided by ACM so is only done in cases in which the organizers have secured alternative financial backing and insurance. Two prior SoCG events were "in cooperation" with ACM – SoCG 2007 (Korea) and SoCG 2009 (Denmark). For SoCG 2011 (Paris), ACM declined a request for "in cooperation" status; the organizers experienced considerable inconvenience because of this, for a variety of reasons. In discussions with the Steering Committee, ACM has affirmed that they are willing to agree, on occasion and with justification, to the "in cooperation" status for SoCG in future events, if requested by the local organizers. However, there is no guarantee that "in cooperation" status will be granted whenever SoCG organizers ask for it.

It is important to think about the logistics and financial implications of leaving ACM; it is not simply a decision about the publication of the proceedings. As a community, we would have to secure our own financial backing for the events. This could potentially be done through donations, other sponsorship, or the building of a "fund" through increased registration fees for some period of time, in order to secure a sufficient set of resources to provide liability insurance and backup as needed for event organizers. The Steering Committee would have to consider very carefully how to go forward The "clout" that comes with having the ACM brand on the conference is an important factor for some organizers, who may not be easily able to secure institutional support without the ACM sponsorship. For example, the Kyoto bid for SoCG 2014 was predicated on it being an ACM event; on the flip side, Zurich opted not to bid for SoCG 2014 because of potential difficulties in working with ACM. Some institutions also put high value on affiliation with ACM in evaluating the prestige of conference publications in making promotion and tenure decisions; often, ACM (or IEEE) conferences are held in highest regards in comparison with the myriad of other workshops and conferences. SoCG has an outstanding reputation for excellence, of course, and we would work to be certain that its reputation continues, even without the ACM brand on it.

Now the time has come to make a final decision: do we want to stay with ACM or not? So we are asking your input again, through the opinion poll below, which consists of three simple questions: one about your preference for the future of SoCG, and two about your relation to SoCG and your current position

- If the outcome of the poll is undecided (both alternatives receive at least 45% of the votes) or the number of votes is too low (below 80) then the Steering Committee may decide differently than the majority vote.
- A decision to leave ACM will likely not be enacted before the SoCG 2015 event; SoCG 2013 and SoCG 2014 may still be organized with ACM if so desired by the organizers.

You can participate in this poll by sending your answers to socg.steering@gmail.com (do *not* vote by replying to this email). **The poll closes Monday, November 12**. All votes will be treated confidentially. Before voting, please first read the information above, as well as the background information at the end of this email. For better reading, a pdf is attached to this email. The information will also be posted on http://www.computational-geometry.org. We hope you will participate in this important poll.

The SoCG Steering Committee:
Mark de Berg (secretary), Joseph Mitchell, Günter Rote, Jack Snoeyink (chair), Monique Teillaud.

The Poll.

Please indicate which of the following options has your preference:

A. I prefer to stay with ACM.

B. I prefer to leave ACM, and organize SoCG as an independent conference with proceedings published in LIPIcs and with financial backing provided through other means.

Your vote (A or B): ……………..
Comments (optional): ………………

Some information about yourself:

How many SoCG's have you attended in the past 10 years?

A. 0
B. 1—2
C. 3—5
D. more than 5

Your answer (A,B,C, or D): ……………

What is your current status:
A. Faculty member
B. Postdoc
C. PhD student
D. other (please specify):

E. Your answer (A,B,C, or D): ………………

Background information provided in the previous poll (2011)
<u>The current situation</u>

- The proceedings are published by ACM. For some, this gives the symposium extra prestige. It also means the publication process is handled by (Sheridan for) ACM. Finally, it means the proceedings are published in ACM's Digital Library. The latter implies that the proceedings are not open access: one must have a (personal or institutional) subscription to the Digital Library. Note, however, that ACM recently started to give authors the option to add a link to their publication on their personal homepage. These links let any visitors to your personal bibliography pages download the definitive version of the articles for free from the ACM Digital Library. See http://www.acm.org/publications/acm-author-izer-service for details.

- The conference is organized "sponsored by ACM". This means that ACM will cover any financial losses incurred by the conference—but as far as we know, there has never been any loss—and that ACM can help contacting hotels when the conference is organized in the US. In return, the ACM requires the following: first, they charge a fee of 16% of the conference budget which goes to the SIG's involved (SIGACT and SIGGRAPH). [For SoCG 2011 (Paris), for instance, the ACM overhead was 9,000 euro, which was slightly over 50 euro per participant.] Second, ACM requires the budget, which has to be submitted to ACM for approval some time before the conference, to have a 10% contingency; any money that is left goes to ACM. The ACM involvement also causes administrative overhead for the conference organizers. This can be especially cumbersome for the organizers when the local system is not very compatible with ACM's system. Finally, ACM rules require that ACM members get a lower registration fee than non-ACM members.

- As mentioned, SoCG has also been organized a couple of times "in collaboration with ACM". This means that ACM is not involved as much in the organization (less paperwork for the organizers, no requirement on contingency in the budget, but no financial backup from ACM). However, this option is no longer offered by ACM.

<u>An alternative</u>

When thinking about alternatives for an ACM affiliated conference, there are two issues to consider: publication of the proceedings, and organization of the conference.

- Dagstuhl recently started to publish conference proceedings. In particular, they started the Leibniz International Proceedings in Informatics (LIPIcs). The goal is that LIPIcs only publishes proceedings of high-level conferences. (Dagstuhl also offers publication in their OASIcs series for less selective conferences and workshops.) Conferences published in LIPIcs currently include: STACS and FSTTCS, and some conferences on logic or related issues (CSL, ICLP, RTA).   Proceedings published in LIPIcs are open access—anyone can access them for free—and only published electronically; conference organizers are allowed to print and distribute the proceedings. Dagstuhl has an agreement with the German National Library, which ensures the electronic publications are archived and maintained. LIPIcs publications are indexed by DBLP and submitted to Thomson Reuter's Conference Proceedings Citation Index (CPCI).

The publication fee for LIPIcs proceedings is estimated to be in the range 500—800 euro per volume; with 125 participants, say, this would amount to 4—7 euro per participant. The preparation of the proceedings is done for a large part by the pc chairs (or any other person designated by the conference); essentially the conference has to upload pdf's of the papers (as well as some metadata) onto the LIPIcs server, the rest is taken care of by the LIPIcs office.

More information on LIPIcs can be found at http://www.dagstuhl.de/en/publications/lipics. There you can also see what electronic proceedings published in LIPIcs look like.

- One advantage of being affiliated with ACM is that they can give financial guarantees and cover any possible losses. If the symposium is no longer affiliated with ACM, the Steering Committee would

investigate the possibility of setting up a small fund (say: 10,000 euro) that can serve as guarantee for organizers. Initially the fund could be filled by donations from individuals or other sponsors.

Summary

Staying with ACM, advantages
- prestige of the ACM label
- financial backup for organizers
- compiling the proceedings is taken care of by ACM (Sheridan)
- paper proceedings (or USB sticks) for conference participants can simply be ordered from ACM

Staying with ACM, disadvantages
- proceedings not open access (but: new ACM linking service from author's homepages)
- more expensive (estimated difference about 50 euro / participant)
- administrative hassles for the organizers

Moving to LIPIcs, advantages
- proceedings are open access
- cheaper (estimated difference about 50 euro / participant)
- less administrative hassles for conference organizers

Moving to LIPIcs, disadvantages
- LIPIcs does not (yet?) have any prestige
- more work for the conference (pc chairs) to compile proceedings
- no paper proceedings, unless organizers decide to print them (most likely, the policy would be not to have printed proceedings to save costs and trees)
- no financial backup for organizers (but: Steering Committee will investigate setting up a fund for this)