

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. This means that the proceedings are published by ACM, and that the symposium is organized “sponsored by ACM” (more precisely, sponsored by ACM SIGACT & ACM SIGGRAPH) or “in cooperation with ACM”. The latter happened only a couple of times, namely when SoCG was in Korea in 2007 and when it was in Denmark in 2009. Being affiliated to ACM has certain advantages, but also certain disadvantages, as detailed below. Hence, at the business meeting of this year’s SoCG in Paris, an alternative was discussed: organizing SoCG as an independent symposium, with the proceedings being published by Dagstuhl in their LIPIcs series (see below). A straw poll was taken, and the vast majority of the participants wanted the Steering Committee to investigate this issue further, which we do through this opinion poll. We hope you want to participate in this important poll.

The opinion poll consists of three simple questions stated below: one about your preference for the future of SoCG, and two about your relation to SoCG and your current position. 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 November 21, 2011.** All votes will be treated confidentially. Before voting, please first read the background information given below.

The SoCG Steering Committee:

Mark de Berg (secretary), Joseph Mitchell, Günter Rote, Jack Snoeyink (chair), Monique Teillaud.

Background information

The current situation

- 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 significant 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.

An alternative

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)

The Poll.

Please indicate which of the following options has your preference:

- A. I prefer to stay with ACM.
- B. 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.
- C. I prefer to leave ACM, and organize SoCG as an independent conference with proceedings published in LIPIcs.

Your vote (A,B, or C):

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):

Your answer (A,B,C, or D):