Chair's Message

As I write this, I'm reflecting on the fall SIG Governing Board meeting, from which I just returned.

An important part of these meeting are the SIG viability assessments. Each SIG is evaluated every four years. With 36 SIGs, and two SGB meetings a year, four to eight SIGs are evaluated each meeting. Some SIGs are moved to transitional status, some are moved back to viable status, and occasionally, one is decommissioned, as with SIGBio.

It was SIGMOD's turn this meeting. The self-assessment appears in the Reports section of this issue. In addition, the SGB Executive Committee does its own assessment. As you might expect, the SGB gave our SIG an enthusiastic thumbs up.

SIGKDD as a new SIG has been on provisional status for the first two years of its existence. Won Kim, the SIGKDD chair, reported on the strong growth of this SIG and its conference, and the SGB was unanimous in converting SIGKDD to viable status.

When SIGKDD was proposed, many within the database community felt that it represented a threat to SIGMOD's existence, fearing that many members would flock to SIGKDD. Others argued that SIGMOD has an identity that, yes, intersected with SIGKDD's proposed charter, but also was distinct from the topics that SIGKDD focuses on.

This conflict was echoed at the meeting, not between SIGMOD and SIGKDD, but between two other SIGs with overlapping interests. It was revealed that these two SIGs had frequent fracases; their interaction was characterized as "frosty". Each viewed the other as impinging on their turf.

SIGMOD had 2,257 members in December, 1999, when SIGKDD came into being. The most recent membership figures show that SIGMOD now has 3,112 members, and SIGKDD now has 1,315 members. SIGMOD is growing faster than any other mature SIG, and SIGKDD is growing faster than any other SIG (and in fact is now larger than 24 SIGs, putting it in the top third of all SIGs). (As a footnote, total SIG membership grew this last year for the first time since such records were kept, over the last eleven years; SIGKDD and SIGMOD provided most of that growth.) My guess is that most SIGKDD members are also SIGMOD members, indicating that people find both organizations to be beneficial.

This experience, as well as that of the *SIGMOD Anthology* and *DiSC*, which have benefited greatly from contributions from other societies, indicate that cooperation helps all, that SIGMOD has nothing to fear by supporting and nurturing other organizations, and indeed, that by being a good societal citizen, SIGMOD has much to gain.

On another topic, some people claim that in fast moving fields like computer science, conferences are often more important than journals. I've even heard database people state that "journals are irrelevant".

Summarizing a citation analysis of database literature, considering over 100,000 citations, the web page

`http://www.acm.org/sigmod/dblp/db/about/top.html`

lists the top-cited papers and books.

- 30 *ACM TODS* papers appear on this list;
- 31 papers were from all other journals combined; the largest was *ACM Computing Surveys*, with 11 papers;
- 21 SIGMOD conference papers; and

- 17 papers were from all other conferences combined; the largest was the VLDB conference, with 6 papers.

This data tells me that while conferences are indeed very important, the really lasting results are more likely to be found in journals.

As another measure, of the top ten papers, eight are from journals (again, mostly *TODS*) and two are from conferences (both SIGMOD).

Just some food for thought.

Rick Snodgrass
October, 2000