

Chair's Message

This is my first Chair's Message, having taken over from Rick Snodgrass as SIGMOD Chair only a couple of weeks ago. As you can imagine, I am struggling somewhere along the upward slope of the learning curve and the peak is not yet in sight. I want to first thank the previous SIGMOD Executive, Rick Snodgrass, Meral Özsoyoğlu, and Joachim Hammer, for the extraordinary service they have performed for our community. Rick and Meral are still dealing with SIGMOD matters, trying to bring me and Marianne Winslett (Vice Chair) up to speed. Joachim Hammer is re-elected as Secretary/Treasurer, which gives me great comfort since I don't have to learn the budget issues immediately. On behalf of the three of us, I would like to thank the SIGMOD community for their trust.

I want to use my first message to take stock of where SIGMOD is at this point. First let me comment on SIGMOD membership – we are in a healthy state. Even though many SIGs are experiencing membership decreases, SIGMOD has experienced a healthy increase over the last couple of years. According to the latest official ACM statistics, we are the fourth largest SIG, with 3,288 members, behind SIGGRAPH, SIGCHI, and SIGPLAN. Perhaps more interesting is the trend. Table 1 gives the starting and ending membership numbers over the six-year interval between 1995 and 2001 for some sample SIGs, while Figure 1 depicts the trend. Note how SIGMOD's membership starts below all the other SIGs in 1995, but by 2001 has exceeded all of them. The traditional “big three” are not included, even though SIGPLAN, with its 4,087 members, is in our sights.

SIG	1995 Members	2001 Members
SIGSOFT	7595	3144
SIGOPS	4701	2214
SIGART	4502	2072
SIGCOMM	3646	2343
SIGARCH	3400	1621
SIGMOD	3229	3288

Table 1: Membership in June 1995 and June 2001

A significant factor in the healthy state of membership is the set of services that SIGMOD members enjoy. Our SIGMOD and PODS conferences are very high quality and bring value to our community. We have taken a leadership position in providing Web accessibility to our Conference proceedings and publications, and we have the unique SIGMOD Digital Library with the Anthology and the annual DiSCs. This part of our services has grown so much that it is treated separately in the article “Accessibility of the Database Literature” that appears in this issue. Many thanks to Rick for agreeing to put together this article. Shortly you will receive Volume 5 of the Anthology, the 2001 DiSC, and the Silver Edition of the Digital Library that covers the same material in DVD. We will likely be moving to DVD technology for our future offerings, but I will communicate that separately when we come to a decision.

As Joachim's Treasurer's Report indicates, SIGMOD is doing well financially as well. Even though we have reduced our fund balance somewhat, we are still in a very healthy state. The existing balance should allow us to comfortably address unexpected occurrences and to judiciously

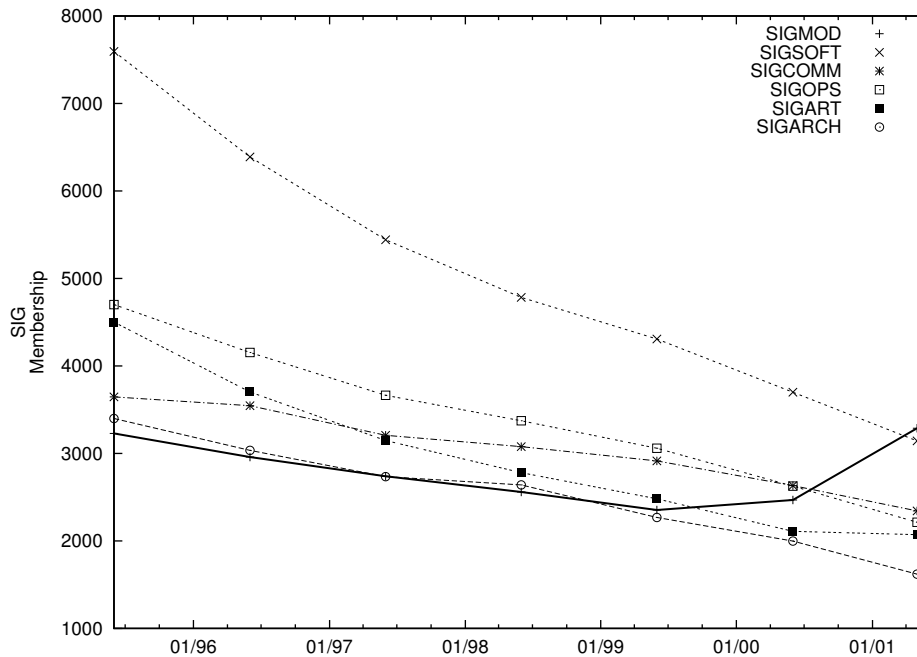


Figure 1: SIG Membership Trend over the Past Six Years

undertake new initiatives. After all, we are not a bank and there is no sense in holding on to a very large fund balance if there are activities that we can undertake for the benefit of our community. The previous Executive has been very successful in balancing activities and fiscal caution. We hope to follow their example.

As I noted in my candidacy statement, even though we are doing very well with membership in general, I believe that we can do better with international membership. SIGMOD is an international organization and its membership and activities should reflect that. We will be taking some steps in this direction and I hope to announce those as the issues are finalized after discussions within the Executive Committee and the Advisory Board. I believe that some of these activities can (and should) be taken jointly with our sister organizations such as the VLDB Endowment and IEEE Computer Society Technical Committee on Data Engineering. We will work on collaborative efforts that may bring added value to the community.

I look forward to a very exciting and enjoyable term as SIGMOD chair. We are now organizing various SIGMOD bodies, which, I hope, will be completed by early fall. Announcement regarding these will appear in future issues of the *SIGMOD Record*. I hope that you will provide us with many suggestions, challenges, and (hopefully fewer) criticisms. Above all, I hope you will be willing to participate as volunteers in the many activities that SIGMOD undertakes. Drop me a line with your thoughts...

M. Tamer Özsu
July, 2001