

Chair's Message

Another successful SIGMOD/PODS Conference is over. While many SIG Conferences are experiencing reductions in attendance (in some cases serious drops) we seem to be going strong. This year's total paid attendance was 518, almost identical to last year's. Yannis Papakonstantinou, as the General Chair, ran a difficult event as he had to deal with FCRC issues along with the usual organizational problems. The technical program put together by Alon Halevy and his Program Committee continued the excellent tradition of SIGMOD Conferences. I wish to thank Yannis, Alon, their PODS counterparts, Catriel Beeri and Tova Milo, and everyone associated with the conference (too many to list) for a successful event.

This year was the first time SIGMOD/PODS was held as part of FCRC. This posed significant organizational and technical program-related difficulties for us. On the other hand, being part of FCRC provided SIGMOD/PODS attendees the opportunity to attend 14 other events. We certainly hope that many of you took advantage of this opportunity and that this was a worthwhile experience. Based on my entirely unscientific and very incomplete inquiries among the attendees, the opinions about participation in FCRC were mixed. Please drop me a line with your thoughts as to what worked and what did not work with this arrangement so that we can have some more data points the next time (if there is a next time) we may consider participation in FCRC.

I am writing this column in July, long before you will see this issue of *SIGMOD Record*. We have been working hard to get Volume 5 of SIGMOD DiSC (also known as DiSC03) ready. DiSC03 will contain publications from 2002. I will go on a limb and say that you should have received this DVD together with this issue. As I write this, we still have a few permission issues to resolve, and if we can resolve them quickly, production will commence immediately, allowing us to ship it in September. If not, expect it with your December 2003 issue.

While on the topic of DiSC, there is a change that I'd like to announce. Aidong Zhang, who has been serving as DiSC Editor since 2001, is stepping down. The upcoming DiSC03 will be the last one she produces. On behalf of the SIGMOD, I want to thank her for her very hard work over the past two years. Shahram Ghandeharizadeh (USC) is replacing Aidong starting September 2003. Shahram is already hard at work in re-establishing the Editorial Board and preparing for DiSC 2004. As I have written a number of times already, we are trying to get to a schedule where we can ship DiSC volumes more regularly and in the first half of the year. I want to thank Shahram for his willingness to take on this responsibility that has a heavy workload.

I would like to end this column with a sad personal note. As you may know, Gisli Hjaltason, a very promising database researcher who had joined my department last fall as a faculty member passed away in June. Some of you may have known him personally, some others may have read his papers (he had many). If you are in these groups, you already know his wonderful personality, his brilliant mind, his excellent research abilities and his persistence in producing excellent results. The papers are gems to read. Gisli and I had many discussions – both technical and social – over the past year while he was trying to settle in as a junior faculty. In the process, he had become a good friend. I and my colleagues in the database group at University of Waterloo will miss him dearly. More importantly, the passing of this very promising young researcher is a serious loss to the database community. His friends and colleagues have put together a memorial piece in this issue; I suggest you read it to learn a bit more about this brilliant colleague and wonderful friend whose loss we mourn.

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July, 2003