Chair’s Message

This year marks a number of important events for SIGMOD. This is the thirtieth year of the founding of SIGMOD and the start of our annual SIGMOD Conference. Prior to 1975, there was no SIGMOD and no SIGMOD Conference; it was SIGFIDET and SIGFIDET Workshop on Data Description, Access and Control. I was recently going through some of the papers in this first conference proceedings and I could not help but think of the advances our field has made over the last thirty years. It also occurred to me that 1975 also corresponds to my first study of databases (from the first edition of Date’s book) and my initial membership in ACM (and probably SIGMOD). I think I have dated myself pretty well!...

This year’s 30th anniversary conference marked the first time that we have gone out of North America. All but two of the past 29 events were held in the US (the 1977 and 1996 conferences were held in Canada). SIGMOD is an international organization and it is important that all of our activities reflect that character. This year’s conference continued the trend of highly successful SIGMOD/PODS Conferences with an excellent technical program and organization. I would like to thank Patrick Valduriez (General Chair) and Gerhard Weikum (PC Chair) and their PODS counterparts Catriel Beeri and Dan Suciu. The many colleagues who served on various organizational roles and on the PCs also deserve many thanks. The attendance at this year’s conference was around 525, which is on par with the attendance at the previous two events. What is more gratifying is that we had about 110 colleagues from France for many of whom this was their first SIGMOD/PODS. We hope to build on this year’s success and organize SIGMOD/PODS outside of North America every three or four years.

One of my biggest joys during the annual conferences is the awards ceremony where we get to recognize colleagues who have contributed to the field with their innovations and contributions. SIGMOD gives three awards every year: the Innovations Award for “for innovative and highly significant contributions of enduring value to the development, understanding, or use of database systems and databases”, the Contributions Award for “significant contributions to the field of database systems through research funding, education, and professional services”, and the Test of Time Award, which “recognizes the best paper from the SIGMOD proceedings 10 years prior, based on the criterion of identifying the paper that has had the most impact (research, products, methodology) over the intervening decade”. In most years we also recognize one paper in that year’s proceedings as the best paper. This year we renamed our Innovations Award as the “SIGMOD Edgar F. Codd Innovations Award” in recognition of the foremost pioneer of our field Dr. E.F. Codd who passed away in April 2003. Dr. Codd is undoubtedly the most influential figure in database systems. He single-handedly put the field on a sound scientific footing, and his insights were in large part responsible for the development of the multi-billion dollar relational database industry. I invite you to read the tribute to him written by his long-time collaborator and friend C.J. Date in the December 2003 issue of SIGMOD Record. Renaming the award in his name required approval by ACM Awards Committee and ACM Council. We are very happy that the process could be completed in time for us to present the first award at our 30th Conference. This year’s recipient is Dr. Ronald Fagin of IBM Almaden Laboratories, who was a long-time collaborator and friend of Dr. Codd. The Awards Committee’s citation notes “his influential and lasting contributions to the principles and the practice of database systems over a period spanning nearly three decades”.

The SIGMOD Contributions Award this year went to Surajit Chaudhuri of Microsoft Research for the development and hosting of the Conference Management Tool (CMT) that has become the

---

1 Please refer to SIGMOD’s Web site for more detailed citations for all the awards.
preferred system for many conferences to manage their submissions and reviews. The Test of Time Award was given to two papers from the 1994 SIGMOD Conference: “From Structured Documents to Novel Query Facilities” by Vassilis Christophides, Serge Abiteboul, Sophie Cluet, and Michel Scholl, and “Shoring Up Persistent Applications” by Michael J. Carey, David J. DeWitt, Michael J. Franklin, Nancy E. Hall, Mark L. McAuliffe, Jeffrey F. Naughton, Daniel T. Schuh, Marvin H. Solomon, C. K. Tan, Odysseas G. Tsatalos, Seth J. White, and Michael J. Zwilling. Finally, the paper entitled “Indexing Spatio-Temporal Trajectories with Chebyshev Polynomials” by Raymond Ng and Yuhan Cai was recognized as the best paper of this year’s conference.

A final new initiative this year was the production of electronic proceedings on a CD. As you all know, we stopped the shipment of hard copy proceedings to members in 2002 due to the high cost of producing and shipping them. Over the last two years, I heard from many members expressing their displeasure with this decision. Resuming the production and shipment of hard copy proceedings is, unfortunately, not feasible given our finances. However, we have decided to start producing the proceedings on a CD and shipping them to members free of charge as part of their membership benefits package. By now, you should have received this CD along with the June 2004 issue of SIGMOD Record and DiSC 2004. We will continue to produce and ship this CD to members every year. It will be different from the version of the proceedings that is included in DiSC since it will be a faithful replica of the hard copy proceedings and won’t include any of the keynote talk videos, demos, etc. Those will continue to be included in DiSC.

We are continuing to innovate in the benefits that we provide to members and in the way we provide them. There are a number of other initiatives that we are working on that I will report in future reports. As in any professional organization, our primary objective is to provide to our members as good a mix of services as we can afford and to leverage these services to expand our membership, which is now stable at around 2600. With the adjustment of fees this year so that the fee covers the cost of direct membership benefits, we are in a position to start a major drive to sign new members. We should be able to increase the membership to around 3000 and perhaps a bit higher than that. Our field is growing, as demonstrated by the significant increases in the number of paper submissions to our (and other database) conferences and we should all be working to ensure that these new colleagues in the field also become SIGMOD members. Once they join, we do very well in keeping them as members – our retention rate is 79%, one of the highest among all of ACM SIGs. This is a task for all of us and I hope we can achieve our membership targets within a year or two.

M. Tamer Özsu
August, 2004