

A Call for Surveys

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The database field is experiencing an increasing need for survey papers. We call on more researchers to set aside time for this important writing activity.

The database field is growing in population, scope of topics covered, and the number of papers published. Each year, thousands of new papers enter the database research literature. As a result, it has become a daunting task to maintain a basic understanding of more than a few major areas of database technology. Even relatively narrow topics have dozens of papers, making it hard for students, researchers, and engineers to get a quick overview of the state-of-the-art.

The increasing demand for surveys has recently been recognized by commercial publishers, such as Morgan-Claypool with their Synthesis Lectures series, Now Publishers with their Foundations and Trends in Databases series, and Springer with their SpringerBriefs series. There is also a Surveys section of SIGMOD Record. We applaud these efforts, but feel that the field would benefit from a great many more surveys than are currently being published.

While the *raison d'être* of research journals is primarily to publish original research results, many journals welcome the submission of surveys. However, few submissions are received. In particular, The VLDB Journal has always welcomed surveys, but the submission rate is lower than we would like. To further encourage the submission of surveys, we offer prospective authors of a survey the option of contacting us in order to gauge the level of interest before investing the effort.

In addition to the altruistic reason of writing a survey to help other researchers, there are also selfish reasons to invest time to write a survey. A survey is great way for junior and senior researchers alike to establish a presence in a research area and to become better known to a wider community. It is

also a good way to increase their citation count. For example, according to Microsoft Academic Search, the two most highly-cited papers in The VLDB Journal are surveys. And according to Springer, a third survey is the most frequently downloaded paper from the journal.

New Ph.D. graduates who worked on a well developed topic have already done a literature review which, possibly in collaboration of their advisor, could be extended into a high-quality survey paper. Similarly, researchers who have prepared tutorials at research conferences are also well on their way to generating an excellent survey on a timely topic.

A survey covers an area with a well-established body of work rather than introducing novel solutions in the surveyed area. Successful surveys are authoritative and offer comprehensive coverage within their chosen scope. They may offer broad coverage of an area or in-depth coverage of a narrower subarea. A survey can add value by synthesizing new ways of understanding the relationships among previous contributions. In addition to reviewing the key results in an area, a survey may give the reader a deep understanding of goals, requirements, solutions, open questions, and example systems and applications. A survey that analyzes, integrates, and classifies what is known about a topic in a clear and comprehensive fashion by means of a conceptual framework is a tool for thought that provides a baseline from which the field can make faster progress, and it represents a valuable contribution in its own right.

The VLDB Journal has no minimum length for surveys, but they must comply with the general maximum length restriction for papers.

About the Authors: The authors are currently the editors-in-chief of The VLDB Journal, published by Springer.

See http://vldb.org/vldb_journal.