

# Letter from the SIGMOD Executive Committee

Dear SIGMOD members:

We are now half way through our four-year term as elected SIGMOD officers and SIGMOD Executive Committee. In these first two years, SIGMOD has continued to thrive. We continue to be a very healthy community with many new people, new scientific challenges, and new ideas. We are living in a golden age of data management research in many ways, and it seems that things will get even better. Some of the success is just good fortune, but most of it is the result of the efforts of the people in this community, for which we would like to thank all of you.

As SIGMOD Executive Committee, our primary goal is to stay out of your way and silently make sure that all the organizational issues of our community are taken care of. So, we want to change as little as possible. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement, and we continue to be eager to hear about your ideas and problems. Some ideas are simple and can be implemented in a straightforward way. An example is to relax the 12-page limit of SIGMOD papers to accommodate more references and a more detailed discussion of related work. This idea was brought to our attention at SIGMOD 2014 in Snowbird, became implemented at SIGMOD 2015, and has now become a standard. Some ideas, however, are more disruptive and require a deeper involvement of the community. This letter describes some of these changes and other SIGMOD news of the last two years.

**Conference:** Starting in 2016, the SIGMOD Conference will have only two parallel tracks, plus one track for PODS. In comparison, SIGMOD 2015 had up to five parallel sessions, plus PODS. The goal of this change is to have more lively discussions in the sessions, increase attendance at the talks, and create a greater sense of a shared experience at the conference. We hope that this change will be particularly beneficial to students and young researchers because they will be getting a much larger stage than before.

Before implementing this change, we had discussions with many of you. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and that is why we are moving forward with the plan. Unfortunately, there is also a cost associated with this change. In order to make room, the regular research talks will be shorter. For detailed discussions, each paper will also present a poster and we will put much more emphasis on the

poster sessions. Furthermore, there will be a change in the tutorial program: All SIGMOD tutorials will be presented on Friday, rather than Tuesday to Thursday as in the past. (PODS tutorials will continue to be part of the regular PODS program.) There are also a number of smaller changes aimed at tightening the program and improving the conference experience, but we speculate that you will not even notice them.

We hope that we will be able to implement these changes as seamlessly as possible and that you will enjoy the more intense experience during the sessions. Nevertheless, it is likely that this transition will not be perfectly smooth. Please, do let us know if you notice anything during SIGMOD 2016 and have ideas for improvements so that we can learn and improve for SIGMOD 2017 and the following years.

**SIGMOD Record:** As you may have already noticed, there have been a number of exciting changes with regard to the SIGMOD Record. The September 2015 issue of the SIGMOD Record was a special issue on "Vision Papers". The response to the call for papers was overwhelming and we were thrilled to produce a very strong first edition of this special issue. In the long run, we plan to have such special issues every two years, alternating with the CIDR conference for publishing visionary ideas in data management.

Another exciting change is the introduction of a new award, the "SIGMOD Research Highlight Award". Every year, the authors of the best papers of our major conferences (and journals in the long run) will be invited to prepare a version of the paper for a broader audience. These papers will be published in another special issue of the SIGMOD Record. We expect to publish about a dozen such papers every year and hope that people from other communities will find this a useful resource. Furthermore, we will forward the best of the best for consideration as a Research Highlight in Communications of the ACM.

A welcome side effect of these special issues is that it will become more competitive to publish a regular paper in the SIGMOD Record. The SIGMOD Record editorial team is currently revising the reviewing process and will announce changes as soon as they have been implemented. The other columns of SIGMOD Record (e.g., distinguished profiles, database principles, surveys, etc.), however, will not change: They have been great and we will all continue to enjoy them in pretty much the same way as before.

**TODS:** A number of ideas are being discussed and developed at TODS. One recent change is that the authors of an “original” TODS paper, which is not an extension of a previously published conference paper, are now invited to present their paper as a poster at the SIGMOD Conference. For details, see the June 2015 issue of the SIGMOD Record. We will keep you posted by means of the TODS column in the SIGMOD Record as other ideas take form.

**Website:** The SIGMOD website is currently undergoing a major revamp. The goal is to put more content online and to have fresher and more dynamic content. In the future, we should all be checking “sigmod.org” first thing in the morning. Please, stay tuned.

**Awards:** This year has been a particularly exciting year for SIGMOD in terms of awards. First, we have been extremely successful in winning awards at the ACM level. Jennifer Widom won the ACM Athena Lecture Award; this is the first time that somebody from our community won this extremely prestigious award. We continue to be super-successful with our nominations of ACM Fellows. Last but not least, Mike Stonebraker won this year’s Turing Award.

Within our community, the biggest news is that we established the “SIGMOD Systems Award” and announced the first winner at SIGMOD 2015 in Melbourne: The winners were Mike Stonebraker and Larry Rowe for Postgres. Another important change is that we raised the prize for many awards. The Codd Innovation Award and the SIGMOD Systems Award now each come with a prize of 10,000 USD. The prize for the SIGMOD Systems Award is sponsored by Microsoft. The prize for the Codd Innovation Award is partly supported by a personal gift from Mike Stonebraker. We are very grateful for these sponsorships and gifts.

We would like to congratulate all award winners. Their achievements are fantastic and they reflect back on the whole community so that we all benefit from them. What might be less obvious is that these awards are the result of hard work of many people in the community. First, serving in an award committee is very hard work. There are too many volunteers to list them all, but as representatives we would like to thank Elisa Bertino, David DeWitt, Tova Milo, and Juliana Freire for chairing the three SIGMOD Award committees in 2015.

Second, and may be even more important, there are no awards without nominations. We need to share

this task and everybody in the community should think at least twice a year about whom to nominate for which kind of award (within SIGMOD and beyond SIGMOD). Even though we have been extraordinarily successful recently, maintaining this success requires that more people become involved in nominations. We would like to particularly encourage you to nominate women for awards: While we are lucky to have so many women doing great work in our community, these women are not getting their fair share in terms of awards. Even if your nomination is not successful, this exercise of thinking about other people in the community and nominating them for awards is extremely important for the health of the community. It helps build up respect and better put the contributions of our community into perspective.

**Executive Committee:** There have been a number of changes in the SIGMOD Executive Committee. After six years as TODS Editor in Chief, Meral Ozsoyogul retired from this role and Christian Jensen took over, including Meral’s seat in the SIGMOD Executive Committee. After four years as SIGMOD Record Editor in Chief, Ioana Manolescu retired and Yanlei Diao took over. Furthermore, Tova Milo is now the PODS representative in the SIGMOD Executive Committee, replacing Rick Hull in this role. We would like to thank all past members for their hard work and dedication and welcome the new members.

We have also established a new SIGMOD Advisory Board that is significantly larger and more diverse than the old SIGMOD Advisory Board. We are discussing strategic initiatives such as the SIGMOD Conference format with that Advisory Board.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the many volunteers who have made our lives so enjoyable and who are really the heart of this community by running the conferences, journals & publications, and other services (e.g., DBjobs, DBLP, etc.). Without this volunteer work, there would be no “SIGMOD and VLDB” community. We all do a bit of this volunteer work every day, e.g., by reviewing papers, writing letters, making nominations for awards, providing feedback to discussions, etc. Please, continue to do all this work and stay involved.

Donald Kossmann, Anastasia Ailamaki, Magda Balazinska, K. Selçuk Candan, Yanlei Diao, Curtis Dyreson, Yannis Ioannidis, Christian Jensen, Tova Milo, Fran Spinola.