Conference Papers

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How to Get Your Conference Paper Rejected

... even when the research is good

- Distract the referee with misspellings, bad grammar and poor layout.
- Don’t give any examples.
- Don’t reveal your problem or solution until the bottom of page 3.
- Require the referee to read two other papers to understand this one.
These things help too:

- Fail to cite relevant work of the program committee.
- Send in a paper that is all text, without figures or tables.
- Make the paper 50% longer than the stated page limit.
- Include absolutely every bit of data you gathered.
- Forget to state your contributions.
- Send your submission to the wrong person.
- Miss the deadline
- Ignore the formatting instructions
Conference Papers

Conference Process

1. “Call for Papers” issued, usually two to three months before the due date.
   - topics of interest
   - program committee
   - length and form
   - How/where to submit,
     - almost invariably an automated website
   - Number of copies, if paper
   - schedule, including:

2. Author prepares and submits paper.

3. Papers received by chair and assigned to PC members.
Conference Process 2

4. PC member reads assigned papers and prepares reviews and ratings for PC.
4a. Sometimes: author response period

5. PC meets, argues, selects papers for conference.

   Not always “best” results. One PC concern is having a balanced program
   Inter-personal dynamics

6. PC chair sends authors accept or reject. If accept, usually get reviews and formatting instructions.
Conference Process 3

7. Author prepares revision according to format and sends to proceedings editor, usually with copyright release.

8. Editor assembles papers, sends to publisher for “printing”.
   Note: No re-review.

   Not usually on paper any more

10. Sponsoring organization makes proceedings available for sale, electronically and on paper.
Variations

Small vs. Large Program Committee (PC)

- Small PC, everyone assigned all papers, paper length usually shorter (<10 pages).
- Large PC, 3 or 4 readers for each paper, longer papers (up to 20 pages).

Workshops

- Original submissions as “pre-prints” at workshop meeting.
- Sometimes no assignment of copyright.
- Sometimes final version collected for a proceedings after the workshop.
- Sometimes unclear if workshop papers count as “publications”
Variations 2

Long and Short Papers

Sometimes a short paper format for work in progress or experience reports.

Might have same or different lengths in proceedings.

Abstracts only

Papers accepted on the basis of 1-page abstracts.

Submissions might be restricted to organization members

Pledge to present—might be a requirement that you agree to present paper at conf.

Could mean a profit-oriented conference
Variations 3

Best papers might be recommended for special issue of a journal.

Papers usually appear in longer form.

Might get direct contact from PC chair or PC member—

Conference tracks

Have to choose a track to submit to.

Track chairs will usually route paper to correct track, but:

Double-blind review: must remove all signs of authorship
Choosing a Conference: The 3 R’s

1. Relevance

Prior proceedings and PC composition often say more than list of topics in Call for Papers.

Does your paper refer to papers from the conference?

2. Reputation

Ask someone in the field: which conferences are highly regarded?

In CS, often sponsored by a professional organization and held on a regular basis.

Do you see citations to papers from the conference?
Choosing a Conference 2

3. Reach—will a lot of people see it?

High attendance

Are proceedings published by a sponsoring organization or publishing house?

Are proceedings automatically sent to some group?

Will proceedings be in the ACM Digital Library?

Does it attract industrial attendees?
Deciding to Submit

Is the work ready?

Problem, Solution, Defense

Do you have anything to back up your results?
Preliminary results okay.

Conferences will sometimes take idea papers, but usually on basis of author’s reputation.

Is the work timely?

Conferences are interested in the latest developments.

Work you did 4 years ago and are just getting around to submitting will not get a good reception.
Rejection

What if you get rejected unjustly?

Probably little you can do about it—don’t whine to PC chair,

Okay to resubmit a rejected paper

But don’t resubmit without revising

Someone will notice

Is the paper more suited to a journal?
Writing a Conference Paper

Remember, the reviewer is reading many papers in a short time period:

– Legitimate to reject a paper if it is sloppy, ambiguous or hard to read, even if the results are good.

– Make sure that you explain both the problem and your contribution (a) in the abstract and (b) in the first few paragraphs of the Introduction.

– Violating the spirit of the page limit will irritate the reviewer.
Writing a Conference Paper (2)

It should be a different paper for a small PC than for a large PC.

Don’t expect to say everything you know on a topic. Keep it focused.

Don’t overlook work by PC members.

“Beyond the scope of this paper” is a red flag.
Extended Abstract vs. Full Paper

For an “extended abstract”, you will have to omit material.

Trick is to convince reviewer that you can fill in gaps.

Consider omitting or summarizing parts that take a long time to read

- Proofs
- Programs
- Tables of data
- Long definitions
- Language grammars

Don’t sacrifice diagrams to cram in more words!

- or make them too small to read
Extended Abstract (2)

Don’t write a prospectus for “the full paper.”
   An “extended abstract” is really just a short paper.

Don’t expect the reviewer to
   – read some other source first
   – check your website

Don’t omit the examples
   — omit anything else first!

Easier to shorten than lengthen a draft.
Start Early

Get the paper done early enough to get a second opinion

Offer to read papers for others so you have ‘points’ on account.

A day at the start is worth as much as a day at the end

Giving a short talk on the topic to friends is a good way to organize your ideas, and see what needs the most explanation.

Look at referee’s instructions, and rating sheet, from previous years.
What Can Help Get Your Paper Accepted?

Exposure of results to PC members before paper is submitted
  But most will be too busy to comment on drafts.

Removal of “distractions”
  misspellings, poor layout, tiny type, ambiguous sentences, waffle words

Results on a platter (reviewer as champion)
  “Identify the Champion”
  http://www.iam.unibe.ch/~oscar/Champion/

Clear distinction from other work.
Good examples and figures.