

Editor's Message

With this January issue, I would like to extend my best wishes for the new millennium (it is only really starting now!) to our CCR readers, and express my thanks to all the people who have made the publication of CCR possible this past year. In particular, I would like to thank the four editors who shared the load of handling papers with me, and without whom meeting CCR's tight publication schedule would have been difficult if not impossible. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank one of them, Prof. Vaduvur Bharghavan, who is stepping down after one year of service in order to concentrate on the challenges associated with his new startup ByteMobile. We wish him the best of luck in what will clearly be an exciting opportunity for him. He will be difficult to replace, but as usual there is a silver lining to his departure. Specifically, I have been able to convince Prof. Andrew Campbell to come on-board as a CCR editor and fill this vacancy. Andrew is starting this January, and in addition to the traditional editor role, he will also initiate an experiment that we may repeat with future CCR issues. This experiment consists of putting together a *special issue* of CCR on "Wireless Extensions to the Internet." You can find the "call for papers" at the end of this issue, and I would encourage everyone to consider submitting a paper. Note that in keeping with CCR goal of fast publication, the special issue is scheduled to take the place of our regular October issue, just four months after its submission deadline.

Besides looking ahead to the many new developments that are in store for CCR in 2001, this first issue is also an opportunity to look back at the past year and assess what has been accomplished and where we stand. If you recall, our goals at the beginning of the year were to continue improving the quality of accepted papers, maintain CCR's fast turn-around time, and attract the submission of more papers. Well, we have been successful in several of our goals, but not all of them, and I want to spend the rest of this column discussing those issues and asking for your help in improving things further, especially in those areas where we have fallen short of our original targets.

On the front of continuing to increase the quality of papers published in CCR, things have been improving steadily. We ended 1999 with an acceptance ratio of about 44% that was quite above our general target that lies somewhere between 25% and 30%. Year-end 2000 finds CCR with an acceptance ratio at about 31.5%, which is close to being in the desired range. Granted, acceptance ratio is not a perfect or even the sole measure of a journal's quality, but it is nevertheless a tangible and reasonably objective measure of its selectivity. Ensuring that CCR gets on par with some of the better journals in the field does call for a careful selection of papers, and we are getting there even if some additional adjustments may still be needed. However, those adjustments cannot be solely in the form of further reducing our acceptance ratio, as this would be neither sufficient nor necessarily desirable. In order for CCR to keep improving and truly become the premier publication venue for original and timely research in the field of computer communications, it must leverage its strengths and uniqueness. This means continuing to ensure a very fast turn-around time from submission to publication, and preserving CCR's focus on timely and original works.

As far as publication timeliness is concerned, we have stayed on track and the increased selectivity of CCR has not been achieved at the cost of protracted review cycles. If anything, our “track record” has improved. In 1999, the average duration of a review cycle, i.e., from the day a paper is received to the day the author receives reviews back together with a first editorial decision, was about 69 days with a standard deviation of 54.5 days, a minimum duration of 10 days and a maximum duration of 318 days (yes, we do occasionally slip...). In contrast, the average review cycle took 56 days in 2000 with a standard deviation of 34 days, a minimum duration of only 3 days, and a maximum duration of 182 days (there are still some slips, but they are getting smaller and rarer). So we have improved on all those statistics. Similarly, throughout the editorial process, the timeliness of a topic or a result has continued to play an important role when making final decisions. So on those fronts, CCR has continued to stay true to its main values and strengths.

However, there is one area where we have not fared so well, and which potentially impacts our ability to continue strengthening and improving CCR. The area where we have fallen short of our goals is in increasing the number of submissions. The total number of papers submitted in 1999 was 42 (actually 60, but this included an 18 papers backlog from 1998), and while we did receive 53 papers in 2000, i.e., an increase of over 20%, this is still short of our goal of about 100 papers, which is about what we need in order to sustain a 25% acceptance ratio. The exposure this introduces is that because of our goal of timely publications, we are running at or close to a zero-issue backlog. In other words, once accepted, a paper is typically published in the next scheduled issue. But this can only be sustainable if there is a sufficient and steady flow of new submissions between issues. In the current situation where the number of submissions can vary significantly from month to month (see the chart below), and where we are trying to keep on strengthening our acceptance criteria, we therefore run the risk of having issues with a smaller than usual number of papers. This issue with only three papers, as opposed to the “usual” number of five or six papers, is actually a good example of such a situation.

As a result, our main challenge for 2001 is to continue increasing our number of submissions to eventually approach, and maybe exceed, our target of 100 papers a year. The experiment with special issues that I mentioned earlier is one of the approaches we are exploring in an attempt to achieve this goal, while preserving quality and targeting topics of interest to CCR readers. However, this alone is unlikely to be enough, and I would, therefore, like to call on all CCR readers to either contemplate submitting papers to CCR or contribute to publicizing CCR to potential authors, highlighting its quality and reach. On our side, I can promise that all four editors and myself will strive to continue improving turn-around time to ensure rapid publication, and will maintain our focus on selecting original and timely works.

If you have any suggestions or comments on how to further improve CCR and in particular achieve our goal of increased submissions, please feel free to drop me an email at guerin@ee.upenn.edu. In the mean time, I want to reiterate my best wishes to you all for the year 2001, and I hope you will continue enjoying CCR and the papers it publishes.

Roch Guerin
CCR Editor

CCR 2000 - Publication Data

