How to Get Your LISA Paper Accepted

Tom Limoncelli
Paul Anderson
Adam Moskowitz

Who We Are

- Tom Limoncelli
  - LISA 2007 tutorial instructor, guru
- Paul Anderson
  - LISA 2007 Program Chair
- Adam Moskowitz
  - LISA 2007 program committee, tutorial instructor, workshop leader

Street Cred

- 17 LISA program committees
  - 11 unique LISA conferences
- 11 LISA papers
- At least 4 books
- Too many invited talks, workshops, tutorials, other papers, and other committees to count

Should You Listen to Us?

- Maybe
- If one of us says something
  - Take it with a grain of salt
- If two of us say the same thing
  - Use less salt
- If all three of us say the same thing
  - Ignore at your own peril

No Guarantees

- Each committee is different
- Your mileage will almost certainly vary
- This is simply the best advice we can give you

“My Name is Tom Limoncelli”

- Tom had to leave early
- Here are his slides from last year

Read the Fine Manual

- Complete instructions are in the Call for papers
- READ THEM!
- And follow them!

What is an Extended Abstract

- 4 to 5 pages
  - NOT 4 - 5 paragraphs
- A near-complete outline of the full paper
- Not a teaser
  - Must actually explain the technology, concept, etc.

What Makes a Good Paper?

- Tom's opinion
- There are 3 rules:

Rule 1:
Know the Audience

- The committee is highly technical
- Don't explain how to install, don't explain the history of the world.
- DO show that you've researched what's already out there.

Rule 2:
Give Up the Goods

- Start out with the innovation even if you use terms that may not be clear.
- Later explain terms and process.
- The opposite of what you learned in school

Rule 3: Explain Why the Work is Original

- "How is your work different from others?"
  - This is Tom's most important criteria for determining accept/reject

“My Name is Adam Moskowitz”

A Good Paper . . .

- Is relevant
- Is new, or disproves something old, or significantly improves on prior work
- Clearly describes the problem AND the solution
- Clearly shows method, data, and results!

Good Paper (cont'd)

- Discuss prior work, how this work differs, why existing solutions not used
- Demonstrates knowledge of prior related work
- Is well-written (clarity, usage, grammar, spelling)

“My Name is Paul Anderson”

- You can get more out of writing a paper than you might initially think ...
  - it forces you to look at what other people are doing
  - it forces you to understand your ideas well enough to be able to explain them
  - people working on similar things are likely to approach you in the future

- You don't need to be a complete "expert" on a topic to write a paper ...
  - you just need a good idea
  - or some practical experience/results that others might find useful
- But you do need to expend some effort

- Make sure that you spend time looking at what other people have done in the area ...
  - explain why your own work is better/different
  - talking about what is bad (as well as good) with your solution is valuable
  - use language and terminology that helps people relate your work to previous work

- Not doing this well enough is a common fault!
  - people won't trust your solution if you can't be bothered to look at existing solutions
  - people will give up trying to read your paper if they have to work too hard to relate to it

- Use simple language ...
  - do not rely on overly formal/theoretical language to explain the basics of your idea
  - if you think this is absolutely necessary, LISA is probably the wrong venue or you simply don't understand the idea well enough yourself!
  - be clear and simple, but not colloquial

- Make sure your writing is clear ...
  - have a non-specialist read it and comment
  - have it edited by a native English speaker if necessary
  - read a book such as Zinsser's on technical writing

- You submission needs to convince the committee that you have something valuable to say
  - clearly explain the idea in the introduction
  - include evidence and real results where appropriate

- And that you are capable of saying it in a paper
  - if you just submit an extended abstract, this requires care
  - demonstrate the ability to write reasonably
  - include an outline of the final paper with comments showing what each section will contain

Resources

- READ THIS:
  - “How to write a great research paper” by Simon Peyton-Jones
  - http://research.microsoft.com/~simonpj/Papers/giving-a-talk/writing-a-paper-slides.pdf

Resources (cont'd)

- This is also interesting:
  - "On Writing Well" by William K. Zinsser
  - http://www.amazon.com/Writing-Well-25th-Anniversary-Nonfiction/dp/0060006641
- Read the notes on the submission web pages.

Help is Available

- We will help you with your abstract
  - Early review and suggestions
- Contact the 2008 program chair (Mario Obejas) for help
  - Address is on the USENIX web site