

Greetings

Michael D. O'Dell Editor-in-Chief

*W*elcome to the inaugural issue of *Computing Systems*. The USENIX Association and the University of California Press have joined forces to launch a new international peer-reviewed journal dedicated to understanding the theory, art, science, and engineering of advanced computing systems. *Computing Systems* will be published quarterly and to keep the journal current, we intend to limit publication turn-around to 6-8 months.

In building complex computing systems, theoretical topics provide the foundation to predictively engineer the behavior and the components of systems. Engineering experience, on the other hand, provides the feedback necessary to revise the theory so that it retains its predictive powers. In addition, it brings new problems to the attention of the theorists.

Chronicling the resolution of these two enterprises, theoretical advancement and engineering development, is the primary interest of this journal. Very powerful insights often arise when the engineer and the theoretician trade hardhat and mortarboard to work together in the trenches of advanced system-building. These insights should be recorded and disseminated. This is our calling.

On the Nature of our Title

The word “computing” in the title of the journal is not a gerund, but rather, a progressive verb. The intended implication is that the systems described actually compute and have an operative existence beyond the blackboard of their birth.

An Ideal Article

While all kinds of articles may well be suitable for publication in *Computing Systems*, it is useful to examine the Editors’ notion of an “ideal paper.”

An ideal submission should contain three major components: one is an exposition of the pertinent theoretical foundations. This can be either new results, or, depending on the nature of the work, an overview of important existing results to acquaint readers new to the area.

The second component is an exposition of the engineering, design, or implementation problems being examined. This should clearly address real-world constraints like complexity, performance, reliability, implementability, and testability.

The third is an exposition of how the theory and engineering combine to create new solutions. Actual experimental results (measurements, data analysis, etc.) are certainly in order to support the new insights.

While not every paper will address all three of these areas equally, and almost certainly not in this explicit form, the issues addressed by the components are the important part. Further, to be valuable, results need not be “The Answer” to an entire problem. A partial solution which points down a better path is to be much preferred over the prospect of everyone reinventing each other’s mistakes. Therefore, reports of “incomplete success” are likewise quite valuable. At the very least we can learn where a solution isn’t.

The Editorial Process

The editorial process for *Computing Systems* is quite similar to that of any other peer-reviewed journal. It all starts with a submission. Submissions are the most important part of any journal, for without them, there cannot be a journal. Ergo, the authors and would-be authors are the most important people associated with the journal. Take this association seriously and contribute your understanding and insights!

Submissions arrive to the attention of the Managing Editor. (Instructions concerning submissions may be found in the Instructions for Contributors section on the inner rear cover.) The manuscripts are then reproduced and transmitted to the members of the Editorial Board who have been assigned by the Editor-in-Chief to review the manuscript.

The reviewers all respond (quickly, we hope) with one of four distinct verdicts:

Publish. The manuscript is acceptable as it stands and can be run in the next issue.

Publish with minor revisions. The manuscript is essentially acceptable but needs minor revisions in either form or content.

Publish with major revisions. The manuscript is potentially acceptable but is less than acceptable in its present formulation. It is anticipated by the reviewer, however, that substantive changes would, in fact, make the manuscript acceptable.

*Reject. The manuscript is unsuitable for publication. The reasons for this verdict are many, but one of the more important ones is inappropriateness – we simply aren't interested in publishing papers (in *Computing Systems*, at least) on the mating behavior of tree frogs.*

The anonymous comments of the reviewers are then returned to the author for his consideration. Often, the reviewers will consent to further, non-anonymous discussions with an author to help him or her bring a manuscript up to acceptability. All this requires considerable effort on the part of a reviewer and we are extremely grateful to our Review Board for their gracious assistance.

If the review verdict indicated revisions to the manuscript are required, the author then makes the revisions and the manuscript is resubmitted to the reviewers. This cycle repeats until the reviewers and author are satisfied with the manuscript.

After review and revision, the manuscript is typeset and published in the next available issue.

Acknowledgments

Peter Salus serves as Managing Editor for Computing Systems, and it is through his tireless efforts that manuscripts get routed, yours truly gets prodded when needed, and the million other details in producing a journal get attended. Thank you, Peter. Oh yes, in his leisure moments, Peter also serves as Executive Director of the USENIX Association – a task some claim is not entirely unlike herding cats.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to our Editorial Review Board. The members have signed-up to hard, sometimes tedious work, but it is through their efforts in conjunction with the authors that we set and maintain a standard of excellence for our fledgling journal. Please peruse the list which appears on the back of the Table of Contents. There are names there you know, some you may not, but my sincere thanks go to all of them.

The journal production staff on the USENIX end are Michelle Dominijanni, Copy Editor, and Tom Strong, Production Editor. They have done a great job with other USENIX publications and are taking on this new responsibility with enthusiasm. Thanks.

The people at the University of California Press deserve special mention. They expressed great enthusiasm over the initial idea for *Computing Systems*, and their stature in the academic publishing world lends considerable credence to our new effort. Their experience and enthusiasm have been a great help.

While I have already mentioned that without the authors there would be no journal, the authors in this inaugural issue were both brave and tireless. They published their work in a new journal, and they worked furiously to meet our initial publication deadline. Others will follow, but they are the first and my deepest appreciation goes out to them.

One final acknowledgement must go to the Board of the USENIX Association. They have launched *Computing Systems* at considerable risk. Few similar organizations have successfully mounted an enterprise as ambitious as a quarterly scholarly journal. Their dedication and far-sightedness are very rare and precious. On a personal note, I must say that I was deeply honored when asked to serve as Editor-in-Chief. Launching a new journal is very exciting, and at the same time, a very harrowing experience. Without Peter Salus, it would not be humanly possible. Without the Board, there would be no *Computing Systems*. I thank them both for this opportunity to serve the community, and state that I intend to make them proud of our new journal.

Conclusion: an Unabashed Plea

This is an auspicious new beginning, but unless you people out there contribute, it will not continue. *Computing Systems* exists to record your hard-won knowledge for the benefit of others. Do them the courtesy of sharing your knowledge. We have created a vehicle; it is up to you to use it.

Thanks for coming, and see you next quarter.