

TCDE Activities

I wanted to give a very brief update on where the effort to change the governance of the Technical Activities Committee (TAC) stands. The governance subcommittee (chaired by Hilarie Orman from the TC on Security and Privacy) has produced a specific recommendation as to how to change the Computer Society rules to permit TC chairs to elect the chair of the TAC. As one of the subcommittee members, I am strongly supportive of the proposed change. The issue is presently being debated via email by the TC Chairs represented on the TAC. I hope that I can report again on this in the December issue, and tell you that the change in governance structure has progressed, perhaps even that it has been adopted.

The Current Issue

It never ceases to surprise me how much effort needs to go into “data processing” before the data can be usefully exploited or stored within a database system. Raw data is frequently very “dirty”, containing typos or outright misinformation. This is a real burden on the users of the data. Further, to make textual data, e.g. from web sources, useful in a database system requires the introduction of “schema”. And that requires information extraction technology. In industrial practice, this is all very resource intensive and costly. What is clearly needed are tools, by which I mean computer systems or applications, that are targetted at improving the quality and usefulness of the data. Such tools do exist, but much much more is needed.

The current issue directly addresses this subject, being on “Data Quality with Fusion and Cleaning”. Wang-Chiew Tan and Xin Luna Dong, the issue editors work in this field themselves, know the state of the art, and knows those who are working in the area. The current issue thus contains a good cross section of the ongoing work, both from industry and academia. The diversity of the papers and their approaches reflects that no one approach will be the miracle solution. Rather, the field needs to make progress on multiple fronts to advance the state of the art. I want to thank Luna and Wang-Chiew, who have done a fine job in selecting the authors and in overseeing the issue. This is an area that cries out for more work. The current issue is a great place for starting to educate yourself about this area.