

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Computer Society News

The Technical Committee on Data Engineering (TCDE) is part of the IEEE Computer Society, the largest society within the IEEE. As such it is governed by the technical committee framework established by the Computer Society. The Computer Society itself is governed by a Board of Governors (BOG) that decides policy for the society within the constraints permitted by the IEEE. I recently became a BOG member and have some (limited) first hand knowledge of what is happening in the Computer Society and how it may impact technical committees, e.g. TCDE, and the conferences that they sponsor.

The BOG met in the first week of June. At that meeting it adopted a new policy (which I played a role in originating) that directly impacts the TCDE and our flagship ICDE conference. The new policy divides conference surplus into equal thirds, going to conference (for the next conference instance), technical committee, and Computer Society. And, perhaps most importantly, it gives the TCDE the ability to accrue a balance that continues indefinitely. This will permit the TCDE to plan things on a longer time horizon than is currently possible. My hope is that it will stimulate more activity at the TC level of the Computer Society. This would be a very big plus for the entire organization.

The Current Issue

One of the spooky things about the world we live in is how much information is widely available about us and what might be done with it- either with or without our knowledge. One of the great things about this world is all the great services that can be provide to us based on data that is widely available about us. Interesting dilemma. Do we resist this world or seize it with gusto?

We, as citizens in this world need to understand both the personal data that is available and the services that we might usefully exploit based on that data. It is easy to understand the utility of location information- which we give up willingly (at least in circumscribed conditions) to enable GPS systems to provide us with directions. More difficult to get a handle on is social network style data. But varying kinds of machine learning operating over "big data" make it possible to personalize experience, such as providing restaurant recommendations. Of course, this same data can be used to "foist" annoying ads your way. But no one ever promised that life would be either easy or simple.

The current issue explores this interaction of location data and social data. This is incredibly timely, both from a personal "they know that about me and how do I stop this" or "what a useful service" viewpoint and as a technical research area. As a research area, this is at the intersection of data platforms and data management on the one corner, and machine learning at another, and social media at a third. This is a great place to be as a researcher as there are several directions that are emphatically worth exploring. Xiaofang Zhou has assembled a great collection of papers in precisely this intersection of technical areas. The issue is by no means encyclopedic, but it is a very useful sampling of good work going on right now. Hence it is a great place to start when (1) trying to discover what companies might do with your data, and (2) for exploring research opportunities in this space. I want to thank Xiaofang for a great issue of the Bulletin on a topic of great current interest.

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