

Twenty Years at the Bulletin

It is hard for me to believe that 20 years have gone by since I took up the task of being Bulletin editor. It surely has not seemed that long— a sure sign that I have enjoyed the job. Over the years, the Bulletin has changed in format but not in purpose. In format, the Bulletin has gone from being a purely paper publication to one with both paper and a web presence, to finally a purely electronic web form. The primary format for each issue is now pdf, with a web table of contents. These all seemed new and interesting at the time, but have now simply become "the way things are".

One thing that hasn't changed is the Bulletin mission, which is to publish issues focused on a particular topic, containing early papers, and bringing together both academic and industrial authors. It is this mission that has kept me engaged for the past twenty years. I hope you all have enjoyed participating in this endeavor, whether as editors, authors, readers, or a combination of all these roles. And thank you all for the role you have permitted me to play. It has not all been fun, but it has been deeply satisfying.

TCDE Chair Election Results

I want to congratulate Kyu-Young Whang, who this fall was elected as the Chair of the Technical Committee on Data Engineering. Kyu-Young has a distinguished career as a database researcher and is an "eminence grise" of the Korean database community. Kyu-Young also has extensive experience in professional organizations, including both the ICDE Steering Committee and the TCDE Executive Committee. You can read Kyu-Young's introductory TC Chair letter on page 2. I wish Kyu-Young the very best as he starts his tenure as chair.

The Current Issue

I believe that "economics rules". That is, a low-priced alternative, assuming it is in most respects comparable to a high-priced alternative and with a large cost differential, will win the market. An historical example is PC-based servers, which were substantially lower in cost than either mainframe or mini-computer servers, while being "roughly comparable" in other respects. That kind of cost differential now applies when comparing servers a customer hosts himself vs servers in the cloud.

The question then is whether cloud-based servers can be made "roughly comparable" in other respects to servers on customer premises. This is where security and privacy enter the picture. On-premises servers have at least the illusion of being secure, in part because of lockable doors and trusted staff. In the cloud, things are much murkier. It would seem that it is the cloud provider whose doors need to be locked and whose staff needs to be trusted. So a customer has much less control of these aspects and is correct in proceeding carefully.

The current issue of the bulletin addresses exactly this topic. Sharad Mehrotra, as issue editor, has brought together a cross-section of papers in exactly the area of security and privacy, focused on how to provide them in the cloud. This is a technical challenge, and one not fully faced in the past. Hence it is both a great research area and a very important technical area and challenge. And there is money riding on the outcome!

This issue brings together a diversity of approaches to security and privacy. And while this is clearly not the last word on these subjects, it can serve as a great overview of the area and a very encouraging sign that progress is being made. I want to thank Sharad for his efforts in successfully bringing to the issue a very broad collection of approaches in an exciting and challenging area.