

State of the Journal

David A. Forsyth



At time of writing (November 2015), I have been editor in chief for nearly 35 months and *TPAMI* is in strong shape. The institution is strong enough to keep ticking under a change of editors, and will have to do so fairly soon. My term ends in 13 months—fewer by the time this gets to you—and a search will be under way for a new editor in chief.

These are difficult times for many scientific journals, but *TPAMI* is extraordinarily strong. The main challenge is coping reasonably quickly with the very large quantity of material that comes for review. We are lucky that our community is a fertile source of exciting intellectual creations and scientific discoveries. Many editorial boards would be quite happy to try and manage the rich supply of fine papers *TPAMI*'s board sees.

Coping with this flood of material is the duty of the large community of volunteers who find and promote strong papers. I can name the associate editors in chief (AEIC's) over this period, Amir Globerson, Christoph Lampert, Kyoung-Mu Lee, Dale Schuurmans, Stan Sclaroff, Tinne Tuytelaars, and Max Welling. Each has brought tremendous effort, skill, and professionalism to the role. Named elsewhere are the associate editors, who do much of the work of ensuring papers find the right referees. Too many to name are the referees and the authors. The journal flourishes through the efforts of all these volunteers, and I thank them.

There have been some changes at *TPAMI*. Over the year, Max Welling left to concentrate on other duties and Christoph Lampert has joined as a machine learning AEIC. By the time this text is published, Stan Sclaroff will have left to become a dean, and Kristen Grauman will have joined as a computer vision AEIC. The entire *TPAMI* community owe Max and Stan a great debt. Each has made major contributions to the institution. Max drove forward *TPAMI*'s foray into machine learning, and pushed persistently and sensibly for better open access policies. Stan ensured there was no drama on the computer vision side, which sounds like a small thing, but isn't, not even slightly.

I expect the journal to be running at a steady state of six AEIC's. Generally, AEIC's decide which papers should proceed to review (and write brief notes explaining why others should not, which is demanding work); allocate those papers to AE's; and advise me and correct my errors of commission and omission. Having a relatively large pool of AEIC's allows *TPAMI* to benefit from a broad range of expertise; allows the work to be done in shifts; and ensures that there is a broad pool of opinion for me to consult when I consider changes.

You will notice that the pool of AE's has expanded, too. I thank the new AE's for their courage. I thank current AE's for their hard work. Over the year some AE's have left us, and I thank them for their service and wish them productive uses for their new free time.

I can fill some of the remaining space with statistics. In 2013, *TPAMI* received 959 submissions, of which 151 were accepted. In 2014, *TPAMI* received 1018 submissions, of which 160 had been accepted by 12 Nov 15. By November 2014, *TPAMI* had received 871 submissions. There is mild evidence in these numbers of an end-of-year rush. I think there is growth in the submission pool, as there is in the main vision conferences. But the evidence isn't unequivocal. By November 2015, *TPAMI* had received 853 submissions, which would mean 2015 might see about the same number of submissions as 2014. For the one person reading this who follows this sort of thing, notice that in the 2015 state-of-the-journal editorial, I stated that 173 of the 2014 submissions had been accepted by November 2014; this number must be wrong.

I try to ensure the journal is efficient at handling papers, but frustrating delays do still occur, and I believe this situation is getting slightly worse, rather than slightly better. For papers submitted from January 1, 2014, to November 12, 2015, the submission to first decision time was, on average, 3.6 months. This number is likely biased down by the fact that desk rejects typically occur early. For papers submitted from January 1, 2014, to November 12, 2015, the submission to accept time was, on average, 10.22 months. Again, this number is likely biased down (obvious accepts occur early).

Papers do get marooned with forgetful AE's or inefficient referees. I chase the sources of delay fairly actively (you know who you are!), but it is difficult to compel volunteers to act as swiftly as one wants. I apologize to authors affected by delays, and I shall try to become shriller and more effective in chasing the tardy.

I receive occasional appeals as Editor in Chief, and I try to handle these efficiently, but without any particular success. As a matter of *TPAMI* policy, appeals must be dealt with only by the editor in chief; appeals addressed to anyone else may eventually find the EIC, but cannot be resolved by anyone else. Please do not appeal unless there is overwhelming evidence of procedural irregularities. The vast majority of appeals boil down to the author disagreeing with the referees. Such appeals always fail, however cross the author might be, as I will not substitute my technical

judgement for that of AEIC's, AE's and referees. I can correct procedural irregularities, but they occur less often than authors suspect. If you must appeal, please try to explain the procedural problem involved. Remember that my email is very full, and I sometimes miss appeals.

In earlier editorials I committed the journal to shrinking the gap between what *TPAMI* offers to authors and what, say, *JMLR* offers to authors in Open Access. This remains an important goal, and I have started in that direction. There isn't much to report yet. I committed myself to ensuring that the *TPAMI* EIC is responsible to a steering committee rather than the Computer Society. In practice, though not yet in paperwork, that goal has been achieved.

I will finish by thanking the professional staff at the Computer Society, who contribute to the efficient functioning of the journal in ways that only the EIC really sees, and my family for various acts of tolerance and support.

David A. Forsyth
Editor-in-Chief