Editorial: State of the Journal Address

John Knight

I am pleased to report that the state of the IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering is good. The various changes that we made and which I reported last year at this time continue to be in effect and continue to serve us well. All manuscript processing, including special issues, is now handled through Manuscript Central. This Web-based manuscript processing system gives everybody involved with the journal effective access to the information that they need.

The IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering remains a popular vehicle for publication. A total of 289 papers were submitted during calendar year 2004, roughly the same number as were submitted in 2003. Even with this impressive number of submissions, we have additional publication capacity, and I encourage all authors in the software engineering field to consider TSE.

Naturally, many submitted papers are still in the system and being processed. The time from submission to a decision about a paper varies because of many factors including the length of the manuscript, the workload of the editors involved, and the workloads of the various reviewers. The most recent data available on this time is that it is 115 days for first decisions. Our goal is to try to ensure that all submitted papers receive a decision in 90 days or less, and we are continuing to improve the procedures we use to try to achieve that figure. The most recent data available indicates that the journal’s current acceptance rate is 24.3 percent. For the convenience of everybody involved with TSE, these statistics will be made available on TSE’s Web site in the near future: http://www.computer.org/tse.

The fact that you are reading this means that you are aware that the production of software is a critical industry both for the United States and the world. Software serves us well much of the time yet it remains expensive and time-consuming to produce and is frequently less dependable than is required. An important aspect of dependability is security. Much has been written about the “security” problems that we face in information systems, and extensive effort is being expended to try to improve security. But, in information systems, many of the supposed security problems are really software engineering problems. Flaws in software have resulted in system vulnerabilities that have allowed damaging attacks to be launched with relatively little effort by the attacker. I urge the research community to give this problem as much attention as possible. You can be sure that papers bridging the gap between security and software engineering will be very welcome at TSE.

Security, of course, is not the only area where software flaws have had serious and, in some cases very visible, effects. The challenge to produce software that meets our dependability requirement in a cost-effective and timely manner remains and is more urgent than it has ever been. As I wrote last year, in responding to this challenge, I am anxious for TSE to publish papers that help to document developers’ experience as well as those that report traditional research results.

Publication of TSE is the result of tremendous amounts of effort by a large number of people. We are very grateful for the anonymous efforts of our reviewers and the work undertaken by the editorial board. Once again I thank the editors who have left the editorial board this year, and I welcome those who have joined. The day-to-day operations of TSE are handled by the following dedicated staff at the IEEE Computer Society Publications Office in Los Alamitos, California: Selina Norman, Transactions Assistant; Yu-Tzu Tsai and Steve Wareham, Electronic Media Assistants; Spencer Roper, Production Editor; Suzanne Werner, Peer Review Manager; and Alicia Stickley, Transactions Group Manager. It is my pleasure to take this opportunity to thank them for all of their work and to congratulate Alicia on the arrival of her baby on December 30.

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Editor-in-Chief