THE IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering is justifiably recognized as one of the foremost journals in Software Engineering, with a long and prestigious history of publishing high quality archival papers.

My first year in the role of Editor-in-Chief has been spent learning the ropes and trying to avoid the knots! As Editor-in-Chief, I see all of the submitted papers and am amazed and impressed at the variety of results reported and the originality that they demonstrate. My goal is to continue to improve the quality of the papers that we publish, to increase the journal’s relevance and appeal to both researchers and practitioners, and to ensure responsiveness to authors with timely publication.

Paper Submission and Quality. TSE continues to receive a healthy selection of papers covering a wide variety of topics relevant to software engineering. Around 300 papers were submitted during the calendar year 2006. Even with this impressive number of submissions, the journal has additional publication capacity and I encourage all authors in the software engineering field to submit their best work to TSE.

To be accepted for publication, papers must make a significant contribution and be scientifically sound and clear. The contribution can be the validation of current approaches and techniques through critical assessment, formal argument or experiment; the extension of current knowledge by the provision of new underlying theory, formalisms, techniques and practice; or the opening of new avenues of research through the identification and precise description of critical problems and applications.

How can we elicit even more high-quality papers? As indicated in my editorial in January 2006, I have asked Associate Editors to be on the lookout for exciting and innovative work and to invite those responsible to submit a journal version of their work to TSE for consideration. In my experience, authors respond well to personal invitations and gain much satisfaction from the opportunity to describe their work more comprehensively in a journal-length paper.

Are some comprehensive archival papers too long for submission to TSE? In order not to discourage submission of such papers, I would like to reiterate that there is now no length limit on regular papers submitted to TSE. However, papers should not be longer than necessary. It is still recommended that papers not exceed 14 journal pages, judged by using the two-column IEEE CS author submission template. Papers that do exceed this recommended length might suffer some delay in editorial review or publication. Furthermore, accepted papers may be subject to mandatory page charges on the excess pages unless there is clear evidence and support from the reviewers and Associate Editor that the content justifies the additional length of the paper. In this case, the charges may be reduced or waived.

Paper Reviewing. The current reviewing process is rigorous and efficient. Our reviewers generally provide an excellent service, returning expert, thorough and helpful comments and recommendations to authors. This voluntary service is essential and their contribution is very much appreciated.

I am delighted to report that the average time from submission to a first decision has been reduced from four months in 2005 and is currently running at just under three months (84 days to be exact)! Further, for accepted papers, the average time from submission to an accept decision has been reduced from nine to eight months. The average submission to publication time is around 13 months. Naturally, there is a large variance, and many submitted papers are still in the system and being processed. The decision time for a particular 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. Our goal is to try to reduce the variance and to ensure that more of the submitted papers receive a first decision within 90 days.

Papers which are out of scope or poorly written are rejected without review as there is no point putting them through the review process unless they satisfy these minimum requirements. In order to maintain quality, publication in TSE is not and should not be easy. The most recent data available indicates that the journal’s current acceptance rate is around 15 percent.

Editorial Board Members. Over the last year, I have enlarged and strengthened the Editorial Board. The Board is the foundation upon which TSE is built. Board members are responsible for selecting reviewers, overseeing the reviewing process and for making the final recommendations regarding acceptability. Members are not just experts in their area. They have excellent international reputations and are active in the community, which places them in a good position to identify, elicit and encourage paper submission. I would like to express my thanks to the editors who left the editorial board last year and to welcome those who have joined.

Thanks. I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank all of the wonderful staff and volunteers at IEEE who have helped me during the past year. 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 Flynn and subsequently Niki Gifford, Transactions Assistant; Kathy Santa Maria and Keith Bush, Production Editors; Suzanne Werner, Peer Review Manager; and Alicia Stickley, Transactions Production Manager.