

REPORT ON THE EATCS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ICALP 2016, Rome, 14 July 2016

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The annual general assembly of the EATCS was held at ICALP 2016 on Thursday, 14 July, from 16:30 till 18:15. The slides I used for the meeting are available¹, for those who are interested.

I started the general assembly by apologizing to the audience for the problems we had in making the official LIPIcs proceedings available by the conference date. (A preliminary version of the proceedings was available in the form of three large files, one per track, but those were very large and hard to download at the conference hotel. The EATCS Secretary prepared a dedicated web page² from which the files of the individual papers could be accessed, but this page was available too late.) This ICALP was the first edition of the conference with LIPIcs proceedings³ and there were some associated teething problems. (ICALP is the largest conference ever to publish its proceedings with LIPIcs, as far as I know.) I am responsible for this problem and promised that it won't happen again.

During the ensuing discussion, Thore Husfeldt mentioned that, based on his experience as editor of a recent LIPIcs proceedings, he realized that we (theoretical computer scientists) are not good at following the given typesetting guidelines and that this makes the work of the proceedings editors and of the LIPIcs staff harder than it needs to be. (In passing, in a comment to the blog post on which this report is based, Marc Herbstritt from LIPIcs pointed out that some ICALP papers contains flaws that LIPIcs is still trying to resolve as part of publishing a high-quality proceedings volume. He also noted that most of the authors did not comply with the typesetting instructions they were given, which results in a huge amount of additional work for LIPIcs, and asked: "How come?")

I thanked Thore and asked the audience to help the proceedings chair and the LIPIcs staff by sticking to the typesetting instructions they are given. With electronic proceedings, one or two pages more don't matter and there is no point in trying to gain them by hacking the style files or using fonts that are forbidden by the publisher.

As a counterpoint, Mikkel Thorup and Yuval Rabani stated that they felt authors should not be bothered by strict typesetting guidelines, and that they should

¹<http://icetcs.ru.is/luca/files/GeneralAssembly2016.pdf>

²<http://www.eatcs.org/icalp2016/index.html>

³<https://www.dagstuhl.de/en/publications/lipics>

spend their time doing good science rather than having to worry about typesetting guidelines from the publishers. Mikkel stated that “if it typesets, it should be good enough”. He also suggested that a nice web interface to which authors could upload their papers for checking whether they meet the guidelines of the publisher would be very helpful.

I thanked all the contributors to the discussion. The EATCS will take all the suggestions into account and discuss them with LIPIcs. ICALP will also try to cooperate with other conferences and LIPIcs in order to develop some automated support that can help in preparing the proceedings efficiently and professionally.

I then remembered four colleagues who have left us too early: Hartmuth Ehrig, Zoltán Ésik, David Johnson and Helmut Veith. Obituaries for all these colleagues, apart from Zoltán Ésik, may be found in the June issue of the Bulletin of the EATCS⁴. I trust that contributions honouring the memory of Zoltán Ésik will appear in the October issue of the Bulletin. The EATCS Council decided to offer a small donation to the award in memory of Helmut Veith, established by the University of Vienna to support promising students. As usual, I invite the members of the TCS community to honour the memory of the aforementioned colleagues by building on their work and disseminating it amongst our students.

Tiziana Calamoneri delivered the report on ICALP 2016 from the conference organizers. The conference had 239 registered participants, 205 of whom registered by the early registration deadline. In her presentation, Tiziana also analyzed some of the reasons for the lack of workshops at this year’s edition of ICALP. (Tiziana’s slides are available⁵.)

Yuval Rabani, who chaired the PC for Track A of ICALP, delivered the report on the PC chairs. (The slides are at <http://icetcs.ru.is/luca/files/PC-report.pdf>.) Yuval said that chairing the PC of Track A was an unexpectedly pleasant experience and thanked his PC for the splendid work it had done. Apart from reporting on the figures related to accepted and submitted papers, Yuval described the selection process for Track A, building on his blog posts on the topic⁶. Quoting from Yuval’s blog,

The committee identified around 50 borderline papers, and we had to choose among them 5 or 6 papers. (For those familiar with Easy-Chair, most papers with scores 2, 1, 1 were rejected.) Choosing those 5–6 papers out of 50 or 51 papers took up about half of the discussion time, because it was indeed a difficult choice. We felt that almost all of the borderline papers could have ended up in the program. The final choice was made, in part, by assessing the “added value” to already

⁴<http://bulletin.eatcs.org/index.php/beatcs/issue/view/21>

⁵http://icetcs.ru.is/luca/files/ICALP2016summary_Short.pdf

⁶<http://yrabani.tumblr.com/>

chosen papers. For 2 of the 6 slots we ended up voting between 2–3 alternatives for each slot (papers in the same area that were thought to be of about the same quality). Aside from these few last papers, we devoted almost no attention to balancing subareas of theory. Papers were accepted based on pure merit, as judged by experts. Despite the indifference to areas, I think the program came out rather balanced between algorithms and complexity theory, with a nice presence in specialized niche areas. This is a natural outcome of a diverse committee.

Immediately after Yuval’s presentation, I handed out the awards for the best papers and the best student papers at ICALP 2016. The best paper awards went to the following papers:

- Andreas Galanis, Andreas Göbel, Leslie Ann Goldberg, John Lapinskas and David Richerby. Amplifiers for the Moran Process. (Track A)
- Neeraj Kayal, Chandan Saha and Sébastien Tavenas. An almost Cubic Lower Bound for Depth Three Arithmetic Circuits. (Track A)
- Olivier Bournez, Daniel Graça and Amaury Pouly. Polynomial Time corresponds to Solutions of Polynomial Ordinary Differential Equations of Polynomial Length. (Track B)

The following papers received the best student paper awards:

- Samuel Hetterich. Analysing Survey Propagation Guided Decimation on Random Formulas. (Track A)
- Keerti Choudhary. An Optimal Dual Fault Tolerant Reachability Oracle. (Track C)

Congratulations to the authors of the award-receiving papers!

Mikolaj Bojanczyk gave a short report on the organization of ICALP 2017 on behalf the organizing committee. ICALP 2017 will be held in Warsaw, Poland, in the period 10–14 July 2017. The PC chairs will be Piotr Indyk (MIT, USA) for Track A, Anca Muscholl (LaBRI, France) for Track B and Fabian Kuhn (Freiburg, Germany) for Track C. Three invited speakers have already been confirmed. They are Mikolaj Bojanczyk (Warsaw, Poland), Monika Henzinger (Vienna, Austria) and Mikkel Thorup (DIKU, Denmark). A fourth invited speaker will be announced soon.

Mikolaj mentioned that four workshops have already agreed to co-locate with ICALP 2017. If you are interested in organizing a workshop at ICALP 2017, please contact the local organizers.

Jiří Sgall presented a bid to host ICALP 2018, the 45th ICALP, in Prague in the period July 9–13, 2018. The slides for Jiří’s presentation are at <http://icetcs.ru.is/luca/files/ICALP2018.pdf>. The bid from Prague was accepted by the General Assembly. Thanks to Jiří and his colleagues for their kind offer to host ICALP in the beautiful city of Prague! ICALP 2017 and 2018 will also allow us to celebrate the excellent contributions of the Polish and Czech research communities to TCS and discrete mathematics.

After the ICALP-related presentations, I asked the audience the following questions:

- Does ICALP cover TCS sufficiently broadly?
- What do you think of the current acceptance rates at ICALP?
- What would you like to see at ICALP that we don’t do?
- Do you have any criticisms/kudos/suggestions?

There were interesting suggestions from several colleagues. In particular, there was a lively discussion related to the role of the current incarnation of Track C. Despite the best efforts of the PC chairs of the last few years to “brand” this track as a “theory of networking” track, it is fair to say that, despite the high quality of the contributed papers, Track C is still being seen by many as a less competitive version of Track A. This opinion was, for instance, aired by Mikkel Thorup. In particular, Mikkel asked: “What is the role of the current Track C rather than allowing PC members for Track A to submit to the conference?” I reminded the audience that Track C was meant to cover “emerging areas” and that its scope should therefore be regularly considered. During the ensuing discussion, Paul Spirakis suggested that perhaps Track C could be solely devoted to Algorithmic Game Theory. Summing up, the EATCS Council will examine the future of Track C of ICALP in its coming meetings.

Mikkel Thorup also suggested that the submitted versions of the accepted ICALP papers should be posted on the conference web page as soon as they are accepted. This suggestion led to further interesting discussions. To my mind, it would certainly be beneficial to post the final versions of the accepted papers on the conference web site as soon as they arrive.

Thore Husfeldt suggested that the EATCS establish an SC for the conference, possibly independent of the council, and that the EATCS consider establishing a “fast track” for the publication of journal versions of the best ICALP papers. Regarding the first point, I informed the audience that the EATCS already has an ICALP Liaison Committee, but that it would be a good idea to give more power and responsibilities to it. That committee should also revise the current version of

the guidelines for ICALP organizers, which are definitely out of date in the light of the new publication outlet for the proceedings and the new awards sponsored by the EATCS. I also informed the audience that the EATCS Council has been discussing the possible establishment of an open-access journal of the association for some time.

Regarding awards, the audience suggested that the EATCS consider establishing an ICALP Test-of-Time Award. A young researcher even suggested that ICALP should have a best reviewer award.

I thank the attendees for their many suggestions and invite any reader of this post to send theirs to the president of the EATCS or as comments to this post. You are the life and blood of the association. Your input is always most welcome and the EATCS listens to you. We are here to serve.

Next the secretary⁷ and the treasurer⁸ of the EATCS delivered their annual reports. We also thanked Dirk Janssens who left his post as treasurer of the EATCS after 27 years of sterling service to the association. We welcomed Jean-Francois Raskin as the new treasurer of the EATCS.

The rest of the general assembly was devoted to a report from the outgoing president (viz. me). I refer you to the slides for my presentation and to the EATCS Annual Report⁹ for the details. Here I will limit myself to saying that at the general assembly I announced the new leadership of our association for the coming two-year term. The new president of the EATCS will be Paul Spirakis (University of Liverpool and U. Patras). He will be supported by Leslie Ann Goldberg (University of Oxford), Antonin Kucera (Masaryk University) and Giuseppe Persiano (University of Salerno) as vice-presidents.

During the general assembly, Paul gave a short speech describing some of his objectives as president of the EATCS for the coming two years. The EATCS is in very good hands and I look forward to seeing its influence grow under its new leadership.

Let me close this report by asking my readers and the members of the TCS community at large the questions I posed to the colleagues who attended the general assembly:

- What should the EATCS do for the TCS community?
- What activities should the EATCS support (financially or otherwise)?
- How can we make EATCS membership more attractive (especially among the younger generations)?

⁷<http://icetcs.ru.is/luca/files/FinancialReport16.pdf>

⁸<http://icetcs.ru.is/luca/files/2016-secretary-report-GA.pdf>

⁹<http://icetcs.ru.is/luca/files/EATCS-report-2016.pdf>

Any input you might have will be useful for the new leadership of the EATCS. Make your voice heard, so that the EATCS can serve the TCS community even better than it is already doing.

I thank all of you for the support I have received over the last four years in my role of president of the EATCS. It was a lot of work (to achieve probably very little), but I learned much from many of you. Thank you! You are the life and blood of the EATCS.