

TCS ON THE WEB

BY

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The TCS Blog Aggregator¹ is a community-maintained hub for researchers in complexity theory and algorithms. It collects posts from roughly 50 theory blogs and community sites, plus recent open-access papers from arXiv (cs.CC, cs.CG, cs.DS) and the ECCC, and presents them in a single chronological feed.

Today I am more than happy to talk to the current maintainers of the TCS Blog Aggregator, Nima Anari² (Stanford University), Arnab Bhattacharyya³ (University of Warwick) and Gautam Kamath⁴ (University of Waterloo).

¹<https://theory.report>

²<https://nimaanari.com>

³<https://www.dcs.warwick.ac.uk/~u2470130/>

⁴<http://www.gautamkamath.com>

THE TCS BLOG AGGREGATOR

A Conversation with Arnab Bhattacharyya and Gautam Kamath

Arnab and Gautam, thank you for taking time for this interview. Can you give our readers a short overview of the TCS Blog Aggregator and its history?

Arnab: The TCS blog aggregator was originally the brainchild of Arvind Narayanan¹ who created it back in 2007. At the time, the TCS blogosphere was rapidly expanding, and Arvind's simple setup at feedworld.net/toc became hugely popular. It periodically polled a set of TCS blogs and displayed the posts in reverse chronological order.

In November 2018, the original domain name expired, and Arvind could no longer maintain it in his own personal capacity. Suresh Venkatasubramanian² took the lead in reviving the aggregator, and I (Arnab) joined his effort. I set it up at a new domain (cstheory-feed.org), to mirror the location of the jobs website at cstheory-jobs.org³. We wanted to make the setup more transparent, and if someone wanted to add a new blog to the roll, they would contact one of us who would make the change. Soon after, Gautam also joined the team to help maintain the blog roll.

Things continued this way till 2022 when there was a period of time the site was down due to a technical issue. Over this period, Nima Anari⁴ independently experimented with creating his own site using Github Actions, which obviated the need for having a private server to host the code for polling. His codebase was also more streamlined, modern, and easier to maintain. Nima replaced Suresh as a maintainer, and the aggregator now uses Nima's implementation hosted at theory.report⁵.

How would you say the TCS blog landscape has changed over the last, say, ten years?

Gautam: My recollection only goes back to the early 2010's, when I started grad school. It felt like a vibrant ecosystem: there would be some news in the

¹<https://www.cs.princeton.edu/~arvindn/>

²<https://vivo.brown.edu/display/suresh>

³<https://cstheory-jobs.org>

⁴<https://nimaanari.com/>

⁵<https://theory.report>

community (e.g., a major result is proven, someone wins a big award, etc.), and all the blogs would discuss it, adding their own perspectives and going back and forth with their opinions. Many grad students in my program followed the blog aggregator, and the latest news and gossip were the topic of many a hallway conversation.

I fear that some of that sense of community has since dissipated. Most of the content of the blog aggregator currently is the arxiv feed from cs.CC, cs.CG, and cs.DS. While a few of the longest running blogs are still going strong (e.g., Computational Complexity⁶, Shtetl-Optimized⁷), several have become less frequent or gone dormant. It doesn't feel like people are so plugged into the "TCS blogosphere," instead focusing more on individual blogs and bloggers. I suspect that people now find community in other places, for example "microblogging" (e.g., Twitter/X, Bluesky, Mastodon). This has pros and cons: on the "pro" side, these sites enable more voices to enter the conversation, since they have a much lower barrier to entry.

Are there any blog posts you'd like to highlight from over the years?

Gautam: I really like posts that share more about the humans behind the research. Omer Reingold ran a series on "research-life stories,"⁸ a great representative one is Bobby Kleinberg's⁹. Luca Trevisan had a series of posts from gay and lesbian computer scientists in commemoration of Turing's 100th birthday¹⁰, you can read his own account here¹¹.

Arnab: Completely agreed with Gautam. I'd also like to highlight Gil Kalai's¹² valiant effort at "Combinatorics and More."¹³ Gil's blog has been actively maintained since 2008! It's still often the first place to break news about advances in combinatorics.

When our readers start their own blogs, how can they get them added to the TCS Blog Aggregator?

Gautam: It's easy to submit a pull request to the Github repo at <https://github.com/nimaanari/theory.report>. If this is unfamiliar to you, just email the maintainers a link to your blog.

⁶<https://blog.computationalcomplexity.org>

⁷<https://scottaaronson.blog>

⁸<https://windowsontheory.org/tag/research-life-stories/>

⁹<https://windowsontheory.org/2013/03/21/research-life-stories-bobby-kleinberg/>

¹⁰<https://lucatrevisan.wordpress.com/tag/turing-centennial/>

¹¹<https://lucatrevisan.wordpress.com/2012/07/02/turing-centennial-post-4-luca-trevisan/>

¹²<http://www.ma.huji.ac.il/~kalai/>

¹³<https://gilkalai.wordpress.com/>

Before we conclude the interview, could you please let us know what your current research is about?

Gautam: My research right now is on algorithmic statistics and machine learning, particularly with a focus on considerations such as data privacy and robustness. I find it enjoyable because even fairly basic problems are fun to think about, the topics can get theoretically deep, and it's possible to say something interesting about practical settings that people care about.

Arnab: My current research area is also algorithmic statistics, with a focus on learning and testing high-dimensional distributions.

Finally, is there anything else you want our readers to know?

Arnab: Thanks for this opportunity to look back at the history of the feed aggregator and reflect on how the TCS community has evolved over the past two decades. Another example of a website that was much more active in the 2010s is `cstheory.stackexchange.com`¹⁴. While it still hosts many interesting questions and answers, activity has slowed considerably (for example, the backlog of unanswered questions has grown). With the rise of AI chatbots, its role is likely to diminish further.

As a community, we need to think seriously about how we share news, celebrate achievements, coordinate initiatives, and, more broadly, how we communicate with one another. The current situation is far from ideal. The fragmented nature of today's microblogging platforms makes it difficult to distinguish genuine news (e.g., research breakthroughs or funding opportunities) from a constant stream of useless jibber jabber. Just as the TCS aggregator once brought coherence to a scattered blogosphere in the 2010s, we now need to develop new tools in 2025 that can restore clarity and strengthen how our research community connects and collaborates.

Thank you for this nice interview!

¹⁴<https://cstheory.stackexchange.com>