

Editorial

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Another Step into the Digital Age

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As I take over editing *South African Computer Journal*, it has become evident that running it on the basis of volunteers to do administration and relying on a ready team of students to handle typesetting is unsustainable. Large academic departments can absorb the costs, but that limits the number of possible candidates for the job of editor-in-chief. For this reason, as new editor-in-chief I am introducing some changes. The journal will be run with the assistance of a part-time administrator, and we will fund a bursary for a student who will be required to work on production and managing the web site.

I am carrying on the good work of my predecessors who took the journal into the digital age, first by publishing via Sabinet and more recently on an open web site. Having published in bioinformatics where some journals operate on the open access model, I cannot see why anyone publishing in *SACJ* would want to hide their work behind a pay wall. We do not have the massive member base of the ACM or the IEEE to ensure readership, nor do we have the market presence of a major commercial publisher.

In addition, as an African journal, we should aim to publish for an African readership, for whom paying to read research publications is problematic. I am positioning *SACJ* as the premier academic computing journal of and for Africa – a position dependent on future quality contributions by authors, the editorial team and reviewers, but one I am confident we can sustain – and aim for a wider readership in developing countries. That implies a special focus on information and communications technologies for development (ICT4D), though all good academic contributions are welcome, as always. Historically this journal has mainly covered computer science and information system papers; I also see room for computer systems papers.

Africa has long been on the wrong side of the digital divide but with rapid penetration of cell phone technology and related network infrastructure in previously unserved countries and the development of ultra-cheap computers like the \$35 Raspberry Pi launched in February 2012 (<http://www.raspberrypi.org/>

[archives/716](#)), Africa need not be the dark continent of computer technology any more. We in the academic and research communities have an exciting time ahead of us, and I hope *SACJ* can play a major role in opening up research opportunities in Africa.

I plan the following improvements to increase visibility:

- *indexing* – *SACJ* should be indexed on the major commercial indices, as well as any society digital libraries that list external publications
- *permanence* – *SACJ* papers in future should each have a DOI, making it possible to find them if we need to change the web server
- *special issues* – *SACJ* should have special issues on topical areas as well as inviting authors of the best papers at conferences to submit extended papers

SACJ can in general consider previously published conference papers *containing at least 30% new material* for submission provided the covering letter with the submission points to the original paper, and explains why the added material makes the paper suitable for journal publication.

This issue is shorter than average. *SACJ* has historically aimed for two issues per year, and only one appeared in 2011. I aim to speed up the publication cycle, and with the aid of special issues and extended conference papers increase the number of papers published per year.

To fund changes including paying for support staff, the journal introduces an open access charge as of July 2012. For authors at South African universities with a strong cash flow from government subsidy payments for paper publications, funding this payment should not be difficult. Your research office should be able to help. For others, if you have a research grant that covers this sort of cost, you will find that the charge we levy is low by international standards. If you cannot fund the charge, apply to have it waived when your paper is accepted.
