Letters

Editor

The article "IJCAI Policy on Multiple Publication of Papers," by Alan Bundy in the Spring 1989 issue, misses one of the most important functions of IJCAI (or any other conference for that matter): The opportunity to present research to a wide audience of one's peers in person. No journal article can wholly replace the valuable give-and-take discussions that occur after a paper session. The proposed policy would deny this opportunity to researchers who have successfully published their results in a journal. Should AI researchers delay journal submissions until portions of their papers have been accepted by IJCAI or other major AI conferences? Given the vicissitudes of peer review in a methodologically-divided field, the proposed policy seems like an excellent way to prevent dissemination of recent results

Also, as much as the AI community might regard the IJCAI proceedings as an archival publication, the same thing can hardly be said of university tenure and promotion review committees, which in general prefer refereed journal articles over conference papers of whatever kind. I do not think that any person in my position would think it wise to implement a policy that makes promotion more difficult

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these circumstances, it is unfair not to allow authors to look simultaneously for several possible outlets for their work. The suggested policy could delay the publication of work by six months to a year or more Those who organize conferences are performing a valuable service for the field and ought to be helped in any reasonable way we can. But the inconvenience to them caused by withdrawn papers has to yield to our concerns for the free flow of scientific results

In short, the problems the policy changes are intended to solve are less serious than what is being threatened—the free, full, and timely flow of scientific information.

Sincerely,

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Editor:

There are serious problems with Alan Bundy's suggested IJCAI publications policy (*AI Magazine* 10(1): 73–76) It does not seem appropriate to consider IJCAI proceedings archival as long as there is a page limit on the papers. Would publication of a four-page conference paper preclude publishing a fifty-page journal article? What about a ten-page journal article? We have all cut from IJCAI papers material we considered essential, and generally we end up thinking of the IJCAI paper as no more than a pointer to the real presentation of our results. Over the years, the IJCAI proceedings have been an excellent record of where the field has been, but the papers are inadequate for serious study of someone's work

The "problem" of people using IJCAI to build up their publications list does not strike me as terribly serious. The practice wastes no more time than it takes to read an abstract, and the only real damage is to the author's own reputation. We all know who not to read more than once a year

I am also disturbed by the suggestion that simultaneous submissions of a paper to more than one conference be prohibited. Conferences like IJCAI and AAAI can have a rejection rate of 80 percent or more; space in conference proceedings is evidently a seller's market. Moreover, refereeing procedures are often haphazard; a paper might be rejected because of epigrammatic comments based on hasty readings by graduate students. Under

Editor:

I just read the "IJCAI Policy on Multiple Publication of Papers" by Alan Bundy in the Spring 1989 issue of the *AI Magazine*, and I have several comments on it. Having been involved in the last three National Conferences on Artifical Intelligence (NCAI), I have seen several occurrences of multiple printing of papers I agree that this is a significant problem that needs to be addressed on a broader level than by the program chairs of various conferences. However, I take issue with some of the reasoning and conclusions in Bundy's statement

(1) I don't think that "multiple printings of one paper are commonplace," at least not the sort of multiple printings that the statement prohibits.

(2) It is not true that "few people have seriously thought about the issue" of multiple printing. The problem of multiple printings has been considered by the program chairs of the last three NCAIs, and has been extensively discussed at at least two of the last three program committee meetings of the NCAIs.

(3) The problem has little to do with the archival status of the proceedings. Even if the proceedings are not considered archival, concerns about padding publication lists, having researchers read multiple versions of the same paper, and conserving the bandwidth of conferences indicate that a policy on multiple acceptances and printing is required.

(4) I don't think that IJCAI Proceedings are truly archival. IJCAI papers are often not complete—papers routinely lack proofs, code, data, etc.; IJCAI papers are often not final—some are labeled "Preliminary Report" and some are later expanded into journal papers or other "archival" forms of publication.

I would argue that a policy of the following sort should be adopted by conferences:

Conferences will not accept submitted papers that have already been presented, or are about to be presented, at an equivalent or broader forum, either verbatim or in essence.

This policy depends neither on the organizers of a conference declaring themselves "archival" nor on them branding other conference proceedings "archival" or "non-archival" (throwaway?). It also retains considerable room for interpretation that, I feel, can only be determined by future discussion, as it is too early to produce a more definitive policy.

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