

Ethics of the UIST Paper Review Process*

1 Protect Ideas

As a reviewer for UIST you have the responsibility to protect the confidentiality of the ideas represented in the papers you review. UIST submissions are by their very nature not published documents. The work is considered new or proprietary by the authors; otherwise they would not have submitted it.

Of course, their intent is to ultimately publish to the world, but most of the submitted papers will not appear in the UIST proceedings. Thus, it is likely that the paper you have in your hands will be refined further and submitted to some other journal or conference, or even to UIST next year. Sometimes the work is still considered confidential by the author's employers. These organizations do not consider sending a paper to UIST for review to constitute a public disclosure.

Protection of the ideas in the papers you receive means:

- Do not show the paper to anyone else, including colleagues or students, unless you have asked them to write a review, or to help with your review.
- Do not show videotapes to non-reviewers.
- Do not use ideas from papers you review to develop new ones.

After the review process, destroy all copies of papers and videos that are not returned to the senior reviewer, and erase any implementations you have written to evaluate the ideas in the papers, as well as any results of those implementations.

2 Avoid Conflict of Interest

As a reviewer of a UIST paper you have a certain power over the reviewing process. It is important for you to avoid any conflict of interest. Even though you would, of course, act impartially on any paper, there should be absolutely no question about the impartiality of review. Thus, if you are assigned a paper where your review would create a possible conflict of interest, you should return the paper and not submit a review. Conflicts of interest include (but are not limited to) papers to which you contributed directly, or which were written by a current student or close collaborator. If you feel a paper you have been assigned could present a conflict of interest, send the paper back to the UIST PC member who assigned you the review as soon as possible so he or she can find someone else to review it.

3 Be Serious

The paper publishing business in UIST is very serious indeed: careers and reputations hinge on publishing in the proceedings, academic tenure decisions are based on the proceedings, and patent infringement cases have discussed whether something was considered novel enough to publish in the proceedings.

This does not mean that we cannot have any fun in the paper sessions. But it does mean that we have a responsibility to be serious in the reviewing process. You should make an effort to do a good review. This is obvious. But one of the complaints we have heard about the UIST review process is that some reviews can be so sketchy that it looks like the reviewer did not even seem to take the time to read the paper carefully. A casual or flippant review of a paper that the author has seriously submitted is not appropriate. In the long run, casual reviewing is a most damaging attack on the UIST conference. There is no dishonor in being too busy to do a good review, or to realize that you have over-committed yourself and cannot review all the papers you agreed to

* Note this document is based on the "Ethics of the SIGGRAPH Paper Review Process" as downloaded from <http://www.siggraph.org/s2004/review/ethics.php> on 4/16/2004.

review. But it is a big mistake to take on too much, and then not back out early enough to allow recovery. If you cannot do a decent job, give the paper back and say so. But please, do it early so that the PC member has time to select another reviewer before the deadline.

4 Be Professional

Be professional! Belittling or sarcastic comments may help display one's wit, but they are unnecessary in the reviewing process. The most valuable comments in a review are those that help the authors understand the shortcomings of their work and how they might improve it. If you intensely dislike a paper, give it a low score. That makes a sufficient statement.

5 In Summary

Adherence to ethics makes the whole reviewing process more complicated and sometimes less efficient. But convenience, efficiency, and expediency are not good reasons to contravene ethics. It is precisely at those times when it would be easier or more efficient to bend the rules that it is most important to do the right thing. Ultimately, spending that energy and time is an investment into the long-term health of the technical-paper sessions, the conference, and the community of UI researchers.