

Editorial

Our journal arrives at its 13th issue, the tenth under this editorial board. During this time period, we have published close to 60 papers and rejected about 150. Although this is a rather small sample, it has led to some reflections I thought appropriate to share with our readers.

First of all, I believe that a good paper brings innovation and creativity to the forefront of the readers mind. After reading a good paper, the reader should be able to say either “well, this is a great solution to this problem” or “well, this is interesting – I never thought about that” or even “well, I don’t accept it – I must disprove this with my own research”. Good research should elicit an intellectual response – if the readers’ response falls flat, then the research is forgettable and probably will not contribute to improve the reader’s work and science as a whole.

These three possible responses imply that there are two major differences between the accepted (and useful) and the rejected papers: the former try to solve a real problem and demonstrate clearly how it has been done (or why it cannot be done), while the latter usually fails to achieve one of those goals. Let us dissect those two topics to make our point.

First, there is the issue of what it means to solve a problem. This could mean finding a practical application of an existing theory, the development of a new theory to fulfill an existing lacuna or even finding an efficient heuristic/algorithm.

Similarly, when embarking on a new research project, the researcher should have a clear idea of what potential benefits could result to what target audience on successful completion of the project. If the researcher's motivations are, for example, incremental improvements, or a redoing of a rival's work, using different techniques, the usual outcome is minimal impact or even rejection, being good neither for the researcher's reputation nor for his morale.

This leads us to our second issue – demonstrating that you made a significant contribution. Most papers arrive with statement like “we achieve 0,05 error” or “the average performance in literature is 80% and we achieve 81%”. The question that you should be asking yourself is: what do these facts mean? Is this estimate going to hold if there is a new sample? Does this 1% represent a meaningful gain in statistical terms or would it represent a major gain financially, socially or in whatever aspect the users of those algorithm would be interested?

Failing to address these two questions reduces the impact of a publication and ultimately leads to rejection. As a matter of fact, no matter which journal you are submitting your article to, these are the issues that should concern you the most. Convincing your reader that your work has actual relevance and effectively solve the issue at hand should always be your major goal.

This goal is not something you aim for only for yourself: put yourself in your readers’ shoes. Imagine what they will gain after spending their precious time reading your paper. Are you

sure that your contribution is really valuable? Do you think their knowledge was improved in any way? Do you believe that they are able to solve a specific problem is a more efficient way after reading your paper?

This is not a full set of guidelines on the required scientific methodology. If you speak Portuguese, I strongly recommend that you refer to Prof. Gilson Volpato’s body of work (<http://www.gilsonvolpato.com.br/>). He will teach anyone much more than I can on scientific methodology and on how to develop a research that will not only be published more easily but also will contribute more to the scientific world.

Having said all this, I hasten to add that I am very satisfied with the sixty odd published articles. I firmly believe that our reviewers have been able to provide a huge help in improving everything that has been submitted, offering good advice and pointers that have helped authors improve both their research and publication.

Although we all understand that most prospective authors are under "publish or perish" pressure aggravated by the current bibliometric fads that seem to have taken evaluation and funding agencies by storm, we would argue strongly that the larger perspective that we have reflected on in these editorial musings should not be lost sight of.

We, at the Salesian Journal of Information Systems, firmly believe that the goal of the scientific community should be using science to improve the world. Given this context, we state that our goal is to help you achieve this goal.

Hence, we invite all authors of the world to consider the issues pointed here with an open mind and to direct their efforts to providing new and important contributions that might improve even a little bit an area, be it theoretical or practical, large or small, local or global. We are here to help you help the world.