

# Time for Our Field to Grow Up

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## ABSTRACT

Compared to centuries of physics and millennia of mathematics, the 50-year-history of computer science and information management research makes us the toddlers of the scientific community. Yet during our brief existence, we've revolutionized the world and, not content with that, gone on to build and study virtual worlds. We have justly taken pride in our accomplishments, and developed our own unique way of conducting research, unlike other scientific and engineering fields.

But cracks have appeared in this edifice we have built. The conference system that served us so well for our first 50 years is falling apart. Our ever-increasing population competes ever more energetically for a finite set of resources. Other scientific and engineering disciplines still think that our field equates to programming, and look down on us. While we may also look down on them, it is undeniably true that high-energy physicists get many more research dollars per capita than we do, and our computer science colleagues wonder whether all the data management problems haven't already been solved. Other departments have started to teach courses that overlap our turf. Are we our own worst enemies? Why doesn't everyone understand how important our research is? Do we have to abandon the conference system? Must we become more like the stodgy old fields of science and engineering? Or can we find our own way?