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NEW HOPE FOR SYSTEMS PAPERS

The upcoming VLDB 2014 event in Hangzhou, China will mark the 40th (!) occurrence of the VLDB Conference. For the past four decades, VLDB has been the premier internationally held conference on database management research. Since the beginning, VLDB has made a point of embracing systems-oriented research and papers. Over the past decade, our field has become increasingly focused on paper publishing, perhaps to an unhealthy extreme (at least in the opinions of some of us who've been involved with the field for several decades). Since building complete systems involves a significant time investment, often including architectural and engineering work for which individual algorithmic novelty can sometimes be hard to pinpoint, this cultural shift has had also the effect of discouraging some of the sorts of systems research that was more widely undertaken "back in the good old days."

Despite being a "old" conference, the VLDB Conference has always made a point of trying to track structural changes in our field and trying to innovate in terms of the conference's tracks and its approach to publishing (e.g., PVLDB). I am both excited and encouraged by the appearance of a new PVLDB track – the Innovative Systems track – as of this year. The call for papers for this new track describes it as follows:

> *The new Innovative Systems track seeks papers describing innovative systems, platforms, or novel applications of database technology, with an emphasis on creative approaches to systems architecture, and non-obvious lessons learned in the process.*
>
> *This is a new category of papers that make a major contribution to the field but do not meet typical criteria for a research paper. In particular, this is the right category for an overview paper of a significant system, particular aspects of which may have been explored in greater detail in standard research papers. While papers in this category are particularly encouraged, the novelty and significance bar here will be higher than for standard research papers to compensate for the decreased technical depth: most small systems research projects may not qualify.*

Kudos to the VLDB planners for introducing this track! My group certainly sees this as an exciting new outlet for our work, and we are planning to take advantage of its existence going forward. I would like to strongly encourage others to do the same, as this strikes me as a terrific response to the cultural shift of recent years. I view this track as affirming that systems research doesn't have to be a thing of the past. Let's make this new outlet a success by continuing to build innovative systems, as opposed to just studying pieces of systems in isolation, and let's publish the results here – there is a surprising amount to be learned and gained by doing so. Long live systems research!

Michael Carey, University of California, Irvine
Trustee, VLDB Endowment