Last October we announced a program to put 20 out-of-print books into ACM's Digital Library and to make print copies of these books available at a low price via a print-on-demand service (CACM, Oct. 2005, 15–16). We were overwhelmed by the response to the call for nominations, so it took a bit longer than expected to determine the actual titles, to confirm they were out of print, and to create an interface to vote for 20 books from 402 choices. In fact, we’ve renamed the program to “ACM Members’ Favorite Books” since it reflects the process we followed.

To help you make an informed decision, we tried a 10-day campaign period where people could comment on books via a wiki set up for each title (see pd.acm.org/classics). You will find many testimonials about how a book changed a person’s life, or noting the timeless nature of a book despite the year it was written. Members made wiki-based comments on about 80% of the books. The entries certainly affected my vote and have suggested books that I now want to read.

The table here shows the top 25 books based on electronic ballots from thousands of members. More members voted electronically for favorite books than they did for candidates in the last ACM election! These finalists are certainly an impressive collection. ACM Fellows or ACM Turing Award laureates wrote the majority of the books; they cover many areas of computer science, and the publication dates range from 1958 to 1995. We are now in the process of contacting the holders of these copyrights. (If you know whom to contact, please send email to classicbooks@acm.org.) Once we’ve placed the books in the DL and make arrangements with a books-on-demand publisher, we’ll let you know the next step.

A few members have already written to say it’s obvious that we need to expand the list. (I agree, since only half of the books I voted for made the cut!) Let’s think of this round as a beta test. If the books prove to be popular, and members are happy with the process, I’m sure ACM will expand the offerings.

I’d like to thank everyone who participated in this inaugural project, especially ACM’s Wayne Graves and Mark Mandelbaum, who were handed a much larger task than any of us anticipated.

—David A. Patterson