The *New* Professional Development Centre Boasts 1,000 Courses, O'Reilly Books, and CS Classics

ACM is expanding the PDC along three axes: Doubling the number of online courses, adding 500 books from Safari (including O'Reilly's library), and classic computer science books that you can help select.

The Professional Development Centre is one of ACM's hidden jewels: A valuable service (of which many may not be aware) that comes with ACM membership. It was seeded in 2002 when we launched the online service offering 250 Web-based courses from Sun Educational Services and later 400 online books from Books24x7. Those who use it once come back repeatedly, as the average number of courses taken is five. Alas, only about 10,000 of ACM's 80,500 professional and student members have tried the PDC so far.

If you weren't sure whether it was worth your time to peruse the PDC offerings in the past, it certainly is now. ACM just switched to NetG and we now offer an impressive 1,000 Web-based courses.

Personally, I'm even more excited by the switch to Safari online books, for it means that you now have access to a vast selection of O'Reilly publications. For those unfamiliar with O'Reilly, it is the premier publisher of technical software books. In addition to

these 500 books, we have another 400 from popular publishers to practitioners, including books from Addison-Wesley, Cisco Press, and Microsoft Press. To give you an idea of the outstanding list of options, here's a sample of the top Safari books in August:

1. *JavaScript: The Definitive Guide* (4th Edition), by David Flanagan. O'Reilly, 2001.
2. *Code Complete (2nd Edition),* by Steve McConnell. Microsoft Press, 2004.
3. *Agile Java Crafting Code with Test-Driven Development,* by Jeff Langr. Prentice Hall PTR, 2005.
4. *Database in Depth,* by C.J. Date. O'Reilly, 2005.
5. *.NET Gotchas,* by Venkat Subramaniam. O'Reilly, 2005.
6. *Killer Game Programming in Java,* by Andrew Davison. O'Reilly, 2005.

The PDC model allows members to pick 10 books per month to put on your personal bookshelf

President's Letter

How do we pick the first 20 computer science classics? You can help by commenting on the books and voting for your favorites.

to read, and you can change them once a month. (Think of it as techie version of Netflix.) Unlike a real library, there is no limit to the number of copies checked out by ACM members; we can all read the same book at the same time.

As ACM's motto is to support the science and practice of computing, scientists are also beneficiaries of the new PDC.

By way of background, I'm personally thrilled that ACM's Digital Library downloads 50,000 papers every day. Older papers are quite popular, which suggests that today's computer scientists are better read than prior generations. Alas, classic computer science books are generally not online. Moreover, many are out of print, so even if this online generation was willing to read a real book, they might not be able to find it.

Hence, ACM is starting an effort to bring back classic, out-of-print, CS books. Since standard publishing contracts allow authors to regain their copyright once a book goes out of print, the first step would be for the authors of classic texts to retrieve their copyright. They would then transfer the copyright to ACM, allowing us to scan the book and make it available to members via the PDC and the DL. We plan to revive about 20 books a year.

If you would prefer a physical copy of a classic CS book, we can help. We will contract a book-on-demand publisher to make copies as needed. We think the cost will be about $75, depending on the demand. Presumably, authors would receive a small royalty for the physical books.

What is a classic? I polled some friends, and here are 10 suggestions:

- C. Gordon Bell and Allen Newell's *Computer Structures: Readings and Examples,* 1971.
- Philip A. Bernstein, Vassos Hadzilacos, and Nathan Goodman's *Concurrency Control and Recovery in Database Systems,* 1987.
- Werner Buchholz's *Planning a Computer System,* 1962.
- John Cocke and Jacob T. Schwartz's *Programming Languages and Their Compilers,* 1970.
- Edward G. Coffman and Peter J. Denning's *Operating Systems Theory,* 1973.
- Gordon B. Davis's *Management Information Systems: Conceptual Foundations, Structure, and Development,* 1985.
- Per Brinch-Hansen's *Operating System Principles,* 1973.
- Kenneth E. Iverson's *A Programming Language,* 1962.
- Michael Stonebraker's *The Ingres Papers,* 1986.
- James Thornton's *Design of a Computer —The Control Data 6600,* 1970.

Besides having an advocate, the book must be out-of-print to qualify. (As a point of clarification, a book is considered still in print if its fourth edition is selling despite the first edition being no longer available). In fact, I received several suggestions for classics that are still in print.

How do we pick the first 20 classics? You can help by commenting on the books and voting for your favorites. Go to www.acm.org/csclassicspoll to vote for your favorite classic CS book. There you will find instructions for making nominations, adding comments, and casting your vote. We'll announce the winners in a few months along with more detailed plans.

In the meantime, enjoy the new PDC! **C**

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