President’s Letter | David A. Patterson

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:


The PDC model allows members to pick 10 books per month to put on your personal bookshelf.
How do we pick the first 20 computer science classics? You can help by commenting on the books and voting for your favorites.


Werner Buchholz’s *Planning a Computer System*, 1962.

John Cocke and Jacob T. Schwartz’s *Programming Languages and Their Compilers*, 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!

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