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HIGHLIGHTS

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Landon Cox

BLAINE ROTHROCK FROM Northwestern University, and Eric Greenlee and Josiah Hester from Georgia Tech open this month's issue with an article entitled "Community-Driven Mobile and Ubiquitous Computing." The authors make the case for refocusing the research community on aiding marginalized communities rather than building for the average user. While the SIGMOBILE community has been assisting marginalized communities for many years, I took their call to action as an opportunity to rethink how we evaluate the impact of our work, especially in the short term.

I have sensed in recent years a subtle narrowing of how research impact is evaluated and targeted. In particular, for many systems and network communities, integration with a big-tech company has become the gold standard for research impact. One can see this most clearly in the pressure that people on the job market feel to highlight their project's integration with a big-tech product. I can't recall the last job talk that didn't have such a slide.

Of course, industry adoption is great, and it is nice to see when a new idea is created by or taken up by practitioners. Product teams at Amazon, Google, and Meta have published numerous research papers describing how their production system advances the state of the art. However, these teams would have, even if their designs were not publishable, whereas academics pay an opportunity cost to spend more time pursuing nearer-term ideas. The majority of research work will not be adopted immediately, and that is not only acceptable but should be expected.

I like that Rothrock, Greenlee, and Hester's article shows us another way to consider a work's impact. Their article highlights the substantial and meaningful change that can be achieved by directing research effort towards the needs and challenges of marginalized communities. It is a reminder that the near-term needs of a big-tech company are not

the only way to test whether a research idea is practical. Having said that, experimental computing work in marginalized communities has its own challenges; marginalized communities must not be exploited for research opportunities by ambitious academics, and creating sustainable projects in these communities is extremely difficult since grants end and students graduate.

Interestingly, the FarmBeats project from Microsoft Research demonstrates how mobile-computing researchers can have the best of both worlds (or at least split the difference). FarmBeats uses sensing, wireless networking, and other techniques of interest to SIGMOBILE to help farmers around the world, and has become a Microsoft product. Perhaps there are other projects that can explore longer-term research agendas while broadening who benefits from the technologies we create.

Jeremy Gummeson

Editorial Board Changes

It is my pleasure to welcome Jeremy Gummeson as the editor of the Past➜Future column. Jeremy is an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department. He leads the SMELT lab (Sensing and Mobility Engineering Laboratory), which designs hardware/software systems for mobile health sensing and energy efficient systems. He completed his BS, MS, and PhD degrees at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Previously, he had research appointments at Disney Research and Hewlett Packard Laboratories.

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