# The BAMMF Series in Silicon Valley

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Silicon Valley is home to many of the world's largest technology corporations, as well as thousands of small startups. Despite the development of other high-tech economic centers throughout the US and around the world, Silicon Valley continues to be a leading hub for high-tech innovation and development, in part because most of its companies and universities are within 20 miles of each other. Given the high concentration of multimedia researchers in Silicon Valley, and the high demand for information exchange, I was able to work with a team of researchers from various companies and organizations to start the Bay Area Multimedia Forum (BAMMF) series back in November 2013.

## Uniting the Community

Fifteen years ago, I came to Silicon Valley to join the Fuji-Xerox Palo Alto Laboratory (FXPAL), located in the Stanford Research Park. Before starting BAMMF, I enjoyed focusing on my own research in the lab. Then, in September 2013, FXPAL's chief technology officer, Lynn Wilcox, suggested that I focus less on my own research and start spending more time helping other researchers in FXPAL and the community. Given the many research directions of those at FXPAL and, more generally, in the multimedia community, I had a hard time knowing where to start.

Around the same time, Henry Tang of Apple, Tong Zhang of Intel, Shangchan Wu and Jian Fan of HP, and Bee Liew of FXPAL asked me if I wanted to organize a conference. I thought it was a good idea, because it would encourage researchers in the community to share their talent and expertise—and trust me, there are many multimedia researchers in the San Francisco Bay Area. Yet at the time, many of these researchers had joined startups or product teams at large companies, so they didn't have time to travel to academic conferences. However, they wanted to meet with peers to exchange ideas, and they wanted to attend frequent but short local meetings for technology updates.

In addition, university professors wanted a forum for exposing their ideas to industrial researchers. They also wanted to learn about real problems in industry that needed solving to guide their future research. To fit these professors' tight schedules, again, short but frequent meetings were preferable. I started thinking about how I missed the old PARC Forum (Palo Alto Research Center) series, and how I didn't like traveling to a different country to hear local researchers' talks.

So, I worked with Tang, Zhang, Wu, Fan, and Liew to develop a forum series. We discussed the idea with the ACM Special Interest Group on Multimedia (SIGMM), IEEE Technical Committee on Multimedia Computing (TCMC), IEEE Technical Committee on Semantic Computing (TCSEM), and IEEE International Conference on Multimedia and Expo (ICME) steering committee. Leaders of these societies liked the idea and wanted to support the series.

Encouraged by the academic and industrial support, Tang, Wu, Fan, and I worked with Tong Zhang of Intel and Bee Liew of FXPAL to start the BAMMF series in collaboration with ACM SIGMM, IEEE TCMC, IEEE TCSEM, and FXPAL.

## BAMMF 2013

For the first BAMMF, we borrowed the FXPAL conference room and invited four speakers: Bernd Girod of Stanford University, Junfeng He of Facebook, Haohong Wang of TCL Research America, and Scott Carter of FXPAL. Tang, Zhang, Wu, and Fan helped me with food preparation, signs, table arrangements, and more. Liew created the website and taught us many social network tricks for publicizing the event, and my colleague Tony Dunnigan designed a BAMMF logo for us.

The weekend before this first BAMMF, my colleagues John Boreczky and John Doherty worked long hours to prepare the FXPAL conference room. Doherty also volunteered to record the video series for the BAMMF series. When we tried to figure out gifts for those first BAMMF keynote speakers, FXPAL chairman Larry Rowe donated two bottles of Greyscale wine from his winery. With help from colleagues and peers in the community, the first BAMMF started with 60 registered attendees from many different companies and universities (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1. Professor Bernd Girod from Stanford University, giving a talk during the first Bay Area Multimedia Forum Series (BAMMF) in 2013.*

## The Series Grows

Starting from the second BAMMF, the number of registrations grew beyond our conference room capacity. So, we contacted PARC, which offered us its auditorium, free of charge. The second and third BAMMF events took place at the PARC George E. Pake Auditorium. To attract more high-quality speakers, attendees, and supporting funds, we started the San Francisco Bay Area SIGMM Chapter, which I currently chair.

From November 2013 to March 2016, we hosted nine BAMMF events, with 45 speakers and over 1,300 registered attendees. All 45 talks have been recorded (by Doherty and staff at the Stanford Center for Professional Development) and posted on the BAMMF website. Talks in our BAMMF events have covered a wide range of topics, from augmented reality to user experience analytics; from social media to Google StreetView; from immersive conferencing to IoT; and from data mining to deep learning (see Figure 2a), the Deep Speech system (see Figure 2b), and intelligent agents.

*Figure 2. Talks at the 5th and 9th BAMMF events: Yangqing Jia from Google giving a talk on the Caffe deep learning framework during the 5th BAMMF, and (b) Adam Coats from Baidu giving a talk on Deep Speech during the 9th BAMMF.*

To facilitate discussions among speakers, we organize dinners after the BAMMF events. Because we have a rough theme for each event, and speakers for each event work on related research topics, many speakers enjoy the after-event dinner (see Figure 3).

*Figure 3. Dinner with some speakers after the 7th BAMMF. From left to right: Yan-Ying Chen, Bo Begole, Zhengyou Zhang, Susie Wee, Mia, John Apostolopoulos, Qiong Liu (myself), and Oliver Brdiczka. (Max Mühlhäuser left the dinner a little earlier and missed the photo.)*

Also, to make our events more interesting, we started periodically changing the BAMMF venue. In addition to the FXPAL conference room and PARC auditorium, we've used the Stanford Gates Building, HP Executive Briefing Center, Prysm Theater, and Huawei Silicon Valley Auditorium. Furthermore, to ensure the content isn't limited by the forum organizers, we invite six guest organizers to help us invite speakers, prepare questions and panels, and so on.

**W**ith great connections to nearby companies, universities, and ACM/IEEE societies, the BAMMF community plans to host the 25th ACM Multimedia conference in Silicon Valley (see www.acmmm.org/2017). For this quarter-century celebration, we invited the first ACM Multimedia General Chair J.J. Garcia-Luna-Aceves from PARC to be our honorary chair. This upcoming international conference will be an even larger platform to connect researchers in academia and industry. If people in the multimedia community would like to give talks at our forums or help us organize more events, please contact us by visiting www.bammf.org.

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**Learn how the Bay Area Multimedia Forum Series (BAMMF) got started, how it has grown since its first event back in November 2013, and how it is helping Silicon Valley researchers in both industry and academia share and collaborate to address challenges and guide future research.**

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