A short guide to reviewing PDC papers

Thanks for agreeing to be a reviewer for the Participatory Design Conference 2014 (PDC 2014). Reviews are very important to us. When doing a review you are helping the Program Committee (PC), the track chairs, the paper’s author(s), and the PDC community in general. The PDC review process for 2014 will continue with the structure of double-blind reviews (done by invited reviewers) that are complemented by a meta-review (done by a PC member), as introduced in 2012. Each paper will receive feedback from at least 3 reviewers. All reviewers and PC members will be acknowledged for their effort on the conference website (www.pdc2014.org) and in the proceedings.

This guide is intended to provide assistance to reviewers, especially those new to the craft. We hope it will also be helpful for prospective authors in preparing their papers.

What to look for:
PDC research papers and short papers should present original, unpublished ideas and research that advance the field of Participatory Design (PD) and reflect on its potential future development. Compared to Research (or Full) Papers, Short Papers may offer a more limited discussion of related work, or they may, for example, provide a novel design, method or theoretical concepts, without a full evaluation or with less detailed explanation. Both are reviewed within the same rigorous process and should be judged by how well the paper provides a strong contribution to the field.

The role of reviewing
The purpose of reviewing a paper is to assure quality. We need to both filter out low-quality submissions, in a way that helps their authors understand the basis for their rejection and provide some guidance for improvement, and we also need to encourage the author(s) of accepted submissions to deliver a better version of the paper, one worthy of becoming a part of the published record of the PD research community. We hope the PD community sees reviewing as a mutually rewarding form of collaboration, with PDC reviewers and PC members producing reviews of the quality that they wish others would produce for them as authors.

With this in mind a good review should:
1) provide the chairs and PC with a detailed assessment of the paper's qualities and limitations, as well as its acceptability for the conference, and
2) inform the prospective author(s) what needs to be done to improve the paper, irrespective of its acceptance to the conference. Authors deserve constructive feedback in a positive tone.

PDC reviewing forms consists of numeric ratings and a written review. The numeric ratings are presented as check boxes on a 5 point scale. 1 is the lowest rating and 5 the highest.
The Written Review
The written comments are an essential part of a review and should not be overlooked. Comments should clearly reflect the numeric scores. A review without an indication of the basis for the ratings loses credibility and is less helpful.

When writing comments, begin with a short statement expressing in your own terms the main argument of the paper and the contribution to the PD field today - both what the authors claim it to be and what you assess it to be. Give an indication of how significant the contribution is. Do this while identifying both positive and negative features of the paper. Give a clear indication of the basis of the score you assign in each of the rating categories, especially where you give a particularly high or low score, i.e. 5 or 1. See the next section for questions you might ask yourself in coming up with these scores and providing rationales.

Close your written comments by stating your overall recommendation and why. The numeric overall rating question asks whether you would argue (strongly) for or against acceptance. Highlight here for the PC the main arguments you’d make.

Do identify inadequacies and if possible offer authors additional perspectives and/or resources. If your opinion is that the paper isn’t appropriate for PDC, is there some other venue to consider? Are there steps that the authors could take to improve their chances next time?

The author will read your Written Review closely with interest. If there are remarks that are appropriate for the PC alone, use the later Comments to Committee box for these.

The Numeric Ratings
Here are some helpful questions to keep in mind when assigning scores and justifying them in the written comments.

Contribution to Participatory Design
Is the paper within the scope of PD? Does it truly deal with collaborative and participatory aspects of design?

Is the article sufficiently novel and interesting to warrant presentation and publication?

Does it contribute to the field? In which ways? What is special? What requires more elaboration? Have the authors identified relevant points? Is the context explained?

Literature review
While research papers can often benefit from an explicit Literature review section, more important is whether the author shows a good grasp of the prior work that is directly relevant to the topic of the paper. Are there significant works that the authors appear to have missed, or
would be helpful. Please give an indication of these.

Short papers will benefit from the citation of relevant and appropriate literature while the need for an explicit literature review section should be evaluated according to the aim of the paper (conceptual, experiential, etc…).

**Quality of writing, structure and presentation**
Is the writing clear and correct?

Would the writing benefit from a careful review by a native/experienced English speaker?

Is the paper a good read? Can you follow it well? How might it be better presented?

**Description of methodology and/or robustness of argument**
Are claims clearly stated, and supported with appropriate evidence and argumentation?

Are the research tools, techniques and methods adopted appropriately, well understood and properly applied? Could they be improved? Would other approaches likely be more fruitful?

Are you persuaded by the findings and conclusions?

**Capability to draw interest in the audience**
Stimulating and rewarding in person presentations and subsequent discussions are the lifeblood of the PD community. Is this paper likely to earn audience attention, or put them to sleep? Can you suggest aspects of the paper to highlight in the presentation?

**Overall Rating**
Considering all the factors relevant for a strong contribution to PD, is the paper worthy of presenting and publishing?

Few papers are perfect in every aspect. Are any shortcomings likely to be addressed adequately before the authors submit a final version, or are they too major to take the chance?

**Remember:**
- Respect the deadlines. The reviewing process is complex and time driven. Late or missing reviews throw off the schedule, and can lead to frustration and extra work for others.
- Treat the papers you receive for review as confidential documents.
- Authors are required to use a submission template and have certain page limits (10pp, full papers; 4pp, short papers), check that the submission complies with this.
- Check possible conflicts of interest (e.g. you have close personal or working relations with the presumed authors, you have a direct financial or other interest at stake). There are some special settings/features in the PDC conference management system that
assists reviewers, PC members and chairs to identify conflicts of interest; make sure to review those settings. If you are assigned a paper where your review would create a possible conflict of interest, please return the assignment. It would be helpful if you can suggest someone else who can offer an expert review.

Thank you.

PDC2014 Chairs