

Call for Papers

Information and Software Technology special issue on

Understanding the Social Side of Software Engineering Qualitative Software Engineering Research

Software engineering is a social activity. To better understand the social side of software development, the software engineering community has been discussing the use of qualitative methods from the social sciences to complement quantitative research approaches. However, adapting qualitative social science methods in an engineering discipline provides a number of challenges: How can software process improvement be combined with empirical methods that aim at understanding rather than measuring development practice? How does the expectation for improvement by both the research community as well as the research subject, i.e. the ones we study, influence the fieldwork and data collection as well as the results? What kind of research questions can be answered based on different kinds of qualitative fieldwork? What kind of answers can be expected? How do we evaluate the quality of both the empirical work and the findings based on it?

Though a number of workshops have been held, e.g., in conjunction with the International Conferences on Software Engineering (<http://bigfoot.uib.no/HSSE>, <http://www.cs.uvic.ca/icse2000/>), relevant research is scattered. Contributions are published in a number of research communities in addition to Software Engineering, e.g., Information Systems and Computer Supported Cooperative Work. Taking the number of publications in the different communities in consideration, it indicates a rich body of ongoing research in the area.

This special issue is meant to provide an overview of the state of the art of qualitative software engineering research. We especially invite articles presenting concrete case studies that can illustrate how the above-mentioned methodological challenges can be addressed. The choice of method and the concrete experience with the chosen approach should be reflected upon. We plan to provide an introduction into the existing research and the specific challenges of qualitative software engineering research.

Review Process

The authors are expected to review two other papers submitted to the special issue within 3 months of submission (before July 1st, 2006). These reviews will be combined with reviews from people who have not submitted any paper to the special issue. Each paper will be reviewed by at least three reviewers.

In case, more of the submissions qualify as journal publications than we can accommodate, the editors of the journal offered to take them over into the normal issues of the journal. In that case, the final selection of articles for the special issue will be decided by the guest editors with the aim to provide a good overview over the different qualitative approaches and their adaptation in software engineering.

Timeline

September 1 st , 2005	Call for Papers published.
March 1 st , 2006	<i>Deadline for submissions.</i>
July 1 st , 2006	The review results will be communicated to the authors.
September 1 st , 2006	The revised papers are due
November 1 st , 2007	Final versions of the manuscripts are due.
Spring 2007	Publication of the special issue

Submission information

Feel free to contact any of the guest editors for further information. Submissions will be accepted electronically at:

<http://witanweb.ca/qser>

The website will be open for submissions October 31, 2005.

Guest editors

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