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# How to Improve Your Chances of Getting a Paper Accepted

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# Context: It's Getting Harder

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- ◆ Conference submission rates are rising
- ◆ Some effects
  - more work for PCs, lower acceptance rates, lower author satisfaction, ...
- ◆ Some community responses
  - increasing PC size, culling early, adjusting publication styles (e.g., first-class posters), coordinating events, adding new events, ...

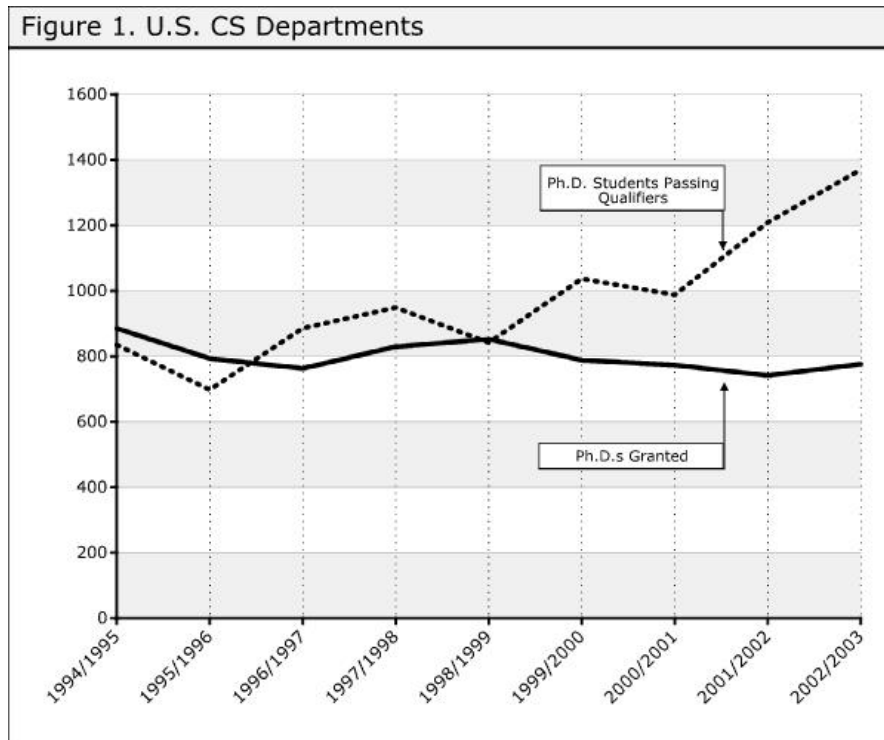
# Why are Submissions Increasing?

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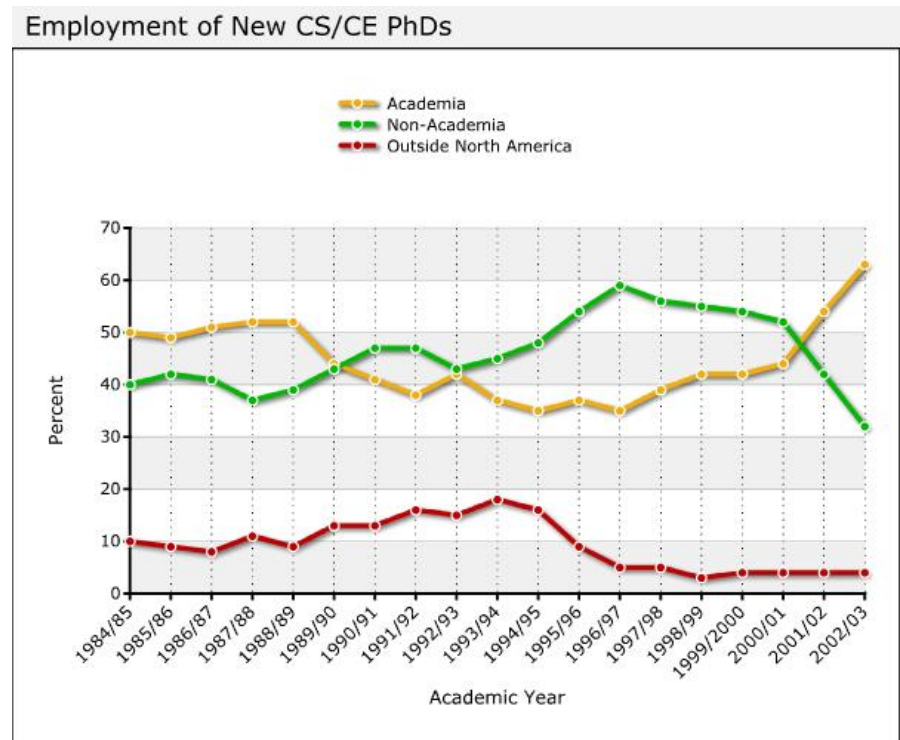
- ◆ We only have conjectures
  - increasing numbers of faculty
  - increasing numbers of grad students
  - increasing pressure to publish
  - increasing numbers of rejections
  - increasing numbers of double submissions
  
- lowering of Iron Curtin
- opening of China
- industrialization of Asia and Middle East

# Why are Submissions Increasing?

Number of new US PhDs is growing...



Number of new US academics is growing...



Source: Computing Research Association

# Observations/Perceptions: Quality

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- ◆ Growth mainly at or below traditional acceptance cutoff
- ◆ Placement of acceptance bar somewhat arbitrary
  - hard to find natural “knees”
  - example: SODA
    - » linear increase in scores in top 90%

# Observations/Perceptions: Innovation

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- ◆ Conferences adopting risk reduction strategy
  - maintaining or even lowering acceptance rates
  - papers in established areas/themes have better chance of being accepted
    - » but maybe that is okay?
- ◆ Conferences with lowering acceptance rates receiving more polished papers on narrower topics

# Observations/Perceptions: Stature

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- ◆ Pressure to publish in top venues
  - CS argued that conferences more important than journals; now we are suffering for it
  - grad students expected to publish in top places
- ◆ Premier events being diluted by growth in number of events (ACM: 145 events)
  - how does one tell them apart? is acceptance rate a reasonable criterion?
  - people leaving ACM to start events, but eventually returning for coop or sponsorship



# A Radical Idea

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- ◆ Rethink the role of conferences
  - reduce importance w.r.t. journals
  - reduce number and increase acceptance rates
  - conference presentations derived from “best” journal submissions (rather than vice versa)
  - tenure evaluation based on quality of top  $N$  papers, not number of papers
- ◆ Journals have better scale properties
  - larger reviewer pool
  - less time pressure on authors and reviewers



# Improving Your Chances

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- ◆ Do good work
- ◆ Chose your problems carefully
- ◆ Avoid “idea” papers
- ◆ Work vertically, not horizontally
- ◆ Write defensively
- ◆ Polish, polish, polish
- ◆ Find a role model
- ◆ Know the literature
- ◆ Know your audience
- ◆ Develop your community
- ◆ Avoid the LPU temptation
- ◆ Don't submit just for the feedback (the “throwaway” is your credibility)

# What to do Before Submission

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- ◆ Maturity is measured by evaluation, not effort
  - A prototype is *not* an evaluation
  - An example is *not* an evaluation
  - A case study is *not* an experiment
- ◆ Writing is part of the research
- ◆ Don't trust your students to do the writing
- ◆ Get early feedback

# What to do After Submission

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- ◆ Assume rejection
- ◆ Improve the work
- ◆ Improve the paper

# What to do with a Rejection

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- ◆ Stay calm
- ◆ Ignore the tone
- ◆ Concentrate on substance
- ◆ If reviewer did not get it, it is *your* fault
- ◆ Resist temptation to play roulette with PCs
  
- ◆ Don't give up