

How to Write a Successful Paper for IEEE Communications Magazine

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During several months of my service as the Editor-in-Chief I have read numerous articles submitted to our magazine. Most of them were excellent and will soon be published. However, some of the articles, although interesting and technically sound, were not acceptable for publication. The authors simply missed the style and format requirements of IEEE Communications Magazine. To help them I have decided to write these notes. I hope that this will also be a response to frequent queries of many potential authors concerning content and style of papers accepted for publication in our magazine.

The first requirement, as in any engineering or scientific journal, is that the paper should address a current topic interesting to our readers. Even a very technically sound paper covering outdated issues or past problems has no chance for publication (this does not concern, of course, some articles related to the history of communications that we publish from time to time). The scope of the published articles includes all aspects of communications: technology, systems, services, market trends, development methods, regulatory and policy issues, as well as significant events. The style requirements are specific to IEEE Communications Magazine. Articles we publish should be tutorials or surveys, and should be written in a style comprehensible to readers outside the specialty of the article. If you have a paper of archival value that reports specialized research results in the communications area, it would be better to submit it to either IEEE Transactions on Communications, IEEE/ACM Transactions on Networking, IEEE Communications Letters, or IEEE Journal on Selected Areas in Communications. The aim of our magazine is to disseminate knowledge about communications; therefore, we invite top-quality papers of tutorial and survey types. Since our readership is very wide and includes engineers, researchers, professors, students, executives, and others, we prefer articles with no mathematical formulas at all. If the authors and reviewers feel that one or two simple formulas are essential to the clarity of presentation, we can tolerate them. For similar reasons, we recommend a limit of 10 references. They should only guide a reader to more information on the topic. Do not include too many figures and tables! Their number should be limited to a combined total of six. An excessive number of illustrations can only blur your presentation and jeopardize its clarity. Your point could be missed if the article is too long. It should not contain more than 4500 words. If a submitted paper exceeds the limits described above it risks immediate rejection, even before the formal reviewing process begins.

Each submitted paper is carefully reviewed by at least three experts in the field under the guidance of a Liaison Editor (selected by me from the Technical and Associate Technical Editors). The reviews, along with an aggregate recommendation from the Liaison Editor, are sent to the Editor-in-Chief, who makes the final decision whether to accept, reject, or revise the paper. As you have surely noted, standalone articles, discussed above, form a small minority of all papers published in IEEE Communications Magazine. Most articles appear in Feature Topics, Special Issues, or specialized Series. A Feature Topic provides four to seven high-quality tutorial papers on a particular subject along with a Guest Editorial. A Special Issue is similar to a Feature Topic, but it usually contains more articles, filling the entire issue. In fact, I personally prefer Feature Topics because they are more compact and usually more focused than Special Issues. Potential Guest Editors should submit to me a proposal that describes the significance, direction, and anticipated feature article content of the Feature Topic or Special Issue. The proposal should contain the following sections:

Subject

Guest Editors and their short biographies

Purpose, significance, and a general description of the Feature Topic

Proposed articles (provisional titles, potential authors, scope of articles)

Tentative schedule (manuscripts due, acceptance notification, final revised manuscripts due, manuscripts to publisher). The proposal can also contain some additional information, for example, a list of potential reviewers.

The proposal is reviewed by the Senior Technical Editors, and the final decision to accept or reject is made by the Editor-in-Chief.

Each Series specializes in one important topic and usually contains one to three articles solicited and processed by appropriate Series Editors. You can directly contact them if you feel that your article could appear in one of the Series. Some unsolicited articles may also be forwarded by the Editor-in-Chief for consideration for publication to Series Editors. Currently, we have the following Series: Broadband Access Series, Internet Technology Series, Lightwave Series, and Personal Communications Series. We also publish short articles in our various columns.

IEEE Communications Magazine's online counterpart, IEEE Communications Interactive, is edited by Ed Schloemer. CI contains essentially the same articles as the magazine, supplemented by the "Technology Convergence" column. However, the main added value is formed by links to related Web sites as well as, in some cases, animated illustrations, with audio supplements and other extensions planned for upcoming issues. This is an excellent opportunity for authors to present their work in an attractive and explanatory form. So please think about potential online enhancements while writing your article. Authors are not required to generate their own extensions, but may request support from CI Technical Editors.

You can find more information about publishing in Communications under the link to Author Guidelines above.