

IEEE COMMUNICATIONS MAGAZINE

Policy for Proposing and Organizing a Feature Topic

Proposing a Feature Topic

The IEEE Communications Magazine (ComMag) is always soliciting Feature Topic (FT) proposals. A Feature topic (FT) is a group of papers organized around a timely narrow-scope topic of interest to the magazine readership. An FT may be composed of 3 to 6 papers. If more papers are accepted, a Special Issue (SI) can be organized of 7 to 12 papers. FTs and SIs give papers prominence and provide opportunities for the reader to explore new and emerging topics.

It is highly recommended that the lead Guest Editor (lead organizer) of a potential FT communicates his topic, initial plan, proposed list of Guest Editors (GEs) to the EiC to discuss them before taking the time to put together a proposal and/or to get GEs committed to this matter. Only after the concept and the GE list are agreed upon, a full proposal can be submitted to the EiC. The proposal should address the topic's background, motivation, scope, significance, timeliness, and relevance to the IEEE Communications Magazine. The proposal should also include:

- Tentative schedule
- A plan to advertise the Call for Papers (CFP)
- Short biographies of the GEs and their experience in the topic and in editorial work (not exceeding 250 words each), and
- Draft of the CFP (attached separately).

Factors that make an FT proposal successful include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Proposers should examine the scopes of ComMag Series, FTs published in the last 18 months, and FTs scheduled for publication (posted on ComMag website). We will consider new hot topics, not already covered by ComMag (currently or recently), and expect proposed FTs to have minimum overlap, if any, with our Series and other FTs. Topics of interest should have the potential to uniquely contribute to the magazine.
2. An FT must have a short and catchy title that attracts our broad and diverse readership.
3. An FT must have narrow and well-focused scope on a particular issue and should not be too broad. We are looking for new and creative ideas to complement our other publication tracks, not duplicating them.

4. For each FT, a maximum of 4 Guest Editors (GEs) are expected (including the lead GE), where:
 - a. Each GE should add a unique aspect to the team and each must have a particular role.
 - b. All GEs should contribute to the solicitation and review processes; and must fully respect ComMag policies. The proposal should explain how the GEs will work together.
 - c. The selection of GEs must strike a good geographical balance and a balance between academia and industry.
 - d. GEs must have prior experience with ComMag (as authors, reviewers, and/or editors); and the lead GE must have significant experience in this regard. We encourage proposals led by ComMag ATEs and TEs.
 - e. The team should mix experience with youth, and may not include GEs who were ComMag GEs within the last 18 months at least.

Organizing a Feature Topic

1. If a Feature Topic proposal is accepted, the EiC schedules the FT for publication in an issue of ComMag.
2. **Advertising the CFP is the responsibility of the GEs, who should not rely only on publishing the CFP in the Magazine and/or its website.** Guest Editors must advertise the CFP per their proposal plan, through the IEEE Communication Society's Technical Committees, mail lists, conference flyers, newsletters, and their own networks. They are responsible for informing potential authors about [Manuscript Submission Policy](#).
3. Guest Editors (GEs) should be aware of all ComMag policies/guidelines including [Manuscript Submission Policy](#), [Editors' Policy](#), [Reviewers' Guidelines](#) and [Manuscript Publishing Guidelines](#). They MUST observe all these policies/guidelines and make timely deliverables. **Failure to do so may result in cancellation of the FT at any time.**
4. **GEs are prohibited from publishing papers they (co-)authored in their own FT.** GEs are responsible, however, for authoring a guest editorial of the FT.
5. **Submissions to the FT should be based on an open call, not personal invitations. There shall be no invited papers in an FT. Authors can be encouraged to write a paper but with an understanding that all submissions must comply with [Manuscript Submission Policy](#) and must go through ComMag's peer review process without any assurance of acceptance.**
6. **Submission deadlines are firmly respected and are not subject to change. GEs shall not entertain any discussion with potential authors about changing/extending deadlines.** In the rare case where a short extension is allowed, this would be decided only by the EiC due to a special/unusual situation.
7. Paper submissions must be through [Manuscript Central](#) (MC). Manuscript management, review, and communications with authors/reviewers must all be done through MC. The FT will have an MC submission category/type and the GEs will have access to all the FT papers and to an associated email account. When a new paper is uploaded, an email notifies the GEs. GEs can create an MC account for new reviewer(s) who don't have one, provided that every new reviewer uses an institutional email address (as opposed to generic Gmail, Yahoo, etc).

addresses). GEs must check their MC and email accounts regularly until final decisions are made about all papers (including those continuing in the system after the FT is published).

8. An FT schedule will often not allow inclusion of manuscripts requiring major revisions because they need to go through a second (and more) round(s) of review before acceptance. Therefore, GEs may recommend that revisions be submitted within shorter times than the default revision intervals, provided that the remarks can be fixed properly without compromising the quality of the review process. This is to give these manuscripts a chance to catch the FT publication time. GEs remain responsible however for handling all delayed manuscripts until their final decisions, at which time they can be published under the open call or other tracks (if eventually accepted).
9. The EiC may divert a paper to SECT if its review process is not per ComMag policies and standards. He may also assign a technical editor to serve as a liaison to the GEs. The liaison editor will have access to the papers and reviews to help and advise the GEs, and oversee the progress toward a committed schedule. He/she is not intended to duplicate or replace the GEs and does not review papers. He may also scan accepted papers and their reviews to verify conformance with the ComMag policies and standards.

Manuscript Format/Style Guidelines Emphasized

GEs **MUST** observe the magazine's [Manuscript Submission Policy](#) carefully, and must understand that they are not optional, and that GEs are not at liberty to exempt any submission from them. Besides not complying with format guidelines, a manuscript may also be immediately rejected without review if it is out of scope of the FT, has been previously published or submitted elsewhere at the same time, or better suited as a journal or a conference paper. If a submission is judged to be outside the scope of the FT but otherwise has merit within the broader scope of ComMag, the EiC should be notified to redirect it to another publication track.

Guidelines to Writing FT Editorials

GEs are required to prepare an editorial for their papers. The editorial should introduce the papers in the order of their appearance and should address the significance, impact, practical usefulness, and future directions of the topic of the papers. Perhaps most important, it should convey the editors' enthusiasm to the readers. An editorial which does little more than describing each paper will not be acceptable. For an FT (3-4 papers), the editorial (roughly 800 words plus short editors' bios and editors' photographs) must not exceed one magazine page. For an SI (5-12 papers), the editorial (roughly 1600 words plus short editors' bios and editors' photographs) must not exceed two magazine pages. Editorials are emailed in plain text to the publications staff (pubsub@comsoc.org) or submitted otherwise as requested by the EiC and the production process. They are to be accompanied with the color photographs of each editor. Digital photographs in .tif format with at least 300-dpi resolution are preferable.

Using Manuscript Central

Any GE can [log in](#) using a user id and password. His/her designation will be "Guest Editor" on any paper for which he/she is the assigned editor. The GE may download any of his/her manuscripts, take administrative action, or start the review process. GEs who are not familiar with Manuscript Central should visit the [Clarivate's ScholarOne Manuscripts](#) support page for editors. [IEEE Support](#) may be contacted if manuscript central is not functioning according to the Editor Guide.

Timeline

Typically, an FT processing cycle (from submission deadline through publication) takes about 6-7 months. Final manuscript material is due for submission by the authors two months before the publication month.

Submission of Accepted-Papers Final Material

GEs should instruct authors to read their final decision letters carefully as well as the [Manuscript Publishing Guidelines](#) page in order to properly submit the final materials of accepted papers by email (to pubsub@comsoc.org) or as directed otherwise.

Version History of this Document:

Version Number and Date of Release	Description of the Version	Objective and Publication
v1.0, compiled through the period from 2010 to 2014	<i>Informal guidelines with emphasis on Feature Topics,</i> Authors: Steve Gorshe and Sean Moore	Recommendations for ComMag new EICs (unpublished). These have been shared regularly by Steve Gorshe
v2.0, September 2018	<i>First formal ComMag guidelines,</i> Author: Tarek S. El-Bawab	Part of ComMag comprehensive guidelines for authors, reviewers, editors, and FT proposers. Completed and released after the restructuring of the magazine in 2018, published on the magazine website
V3.0, October 2021	Completed IEEE Communications Magazine Policy, Author: Tarek S. El-Bawab	Current version, released after three years of using the 2018 guidelines, incorporating the remarks of authors, reviewers, and editors over this period

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