

SIGAPL Dechartering Report & Recommendation

Robert A. Walker
SGB Past Chair

Vicki Hanson
SGB Vice Chair for Operations



Background (Slide 1 of 2)

- Over the last decade, SIGAPL has been placed into transition three times:
 - 1/97 Chair and Vice Chair resigned, SIG could not put together an election slate, and SGB was concerned about volunteer development and lack of program plans
 - 6/01 lateness of newsletters (removed from transition in 3/03 as conference-only SIG)
 - 2/06 placed into transition (lapse in newsletter, conference activity, and postponed viability reviews)



Background (Slide 2 of 2)

- Due to lack of progress during transition, the process to decharter SIGAPL was started at the February 2007 SGB Meeting
- 76 SIGAPL members challenged the motion to dissolve and the SIGAPL leaders were asked to develop a plan to make the SIG viable
- In December 2007, SIGAPL submitted an update to their Status and Strategic Plan report
 - The SGB EC asked Robert Walker and Vicki Hanson to review their report and materials, talk to the SIGAPL leaders, and prepare a report and recommendation for the February 2008 SGB meeting



Membership, Fund Balance, Awards

- SIGAPL membership appears to be reasonably strong, currently in the 250-300 range
 - In both 2004 and 2007 membership was automatically renewed
- SIGAPL has a healthy fund balance of \$60k, well above the required fund balance of \$11k
- Kenneth E. Iverson Award
 - Established in 1983 and awarded annually with only one lapse until 2001
 - Since that time, awarded only once, in 2007
 - As yet, no discussions appear to have begun on selecting an award recipient for 2008



Newsletter(s)

- A major concern that led to SIGAPL being placed into transition was a lapse in newsletter production
- The SIGAPL newsletter (**Quote Quad**), usually 32 pages, is scheduled for 4 issues per year
 - Large gap from 9/2002 until 3/2004, and until 8/2005
 - Since that time issues have appeared in March and August each year. 3 issues were published in 2007, APL'07 conference proceedings will complete 2007
 - SIGAPL leadership believes members want the newsletter to continue and will contribute material
- A bi-monthly letter to members was published in 2007 on a regular basis (6 issues were sent)



Conference (Slide 1 of 2)

- Another major concern that led to transition was a lapse in conference activity
 - SIGAPL used to hold an annual conference (APL'0x) in mid-summer, but the last one was in 2003
 - Attendance in early 2000's was around 150 per event, with each conference returning a surplus of \$5-13k
 - The 2003 conference had an attendance of only 47 (but surplus of \$3k)
 - SIGAPL has a significant vendor presence at this conference, with the four major vendors in this area consistently participating



Conference (Slide 2 of 2)

- APL'07 was held in Montreal to co-locate with OOPSLA 2007, where it drew an attendance of 46
 - 100% acceptance rate, mostly invited papers
 - SIGAPL leadership felt it was a success and OOPSLA was happy to co-locate with them
 - Feedback through SIGPLAN: APL'07 was too vendor-oriented & did not fit with OOPSLA's academic focus, concerns about limited space at OOPSLA in coming years & low attendance at APL'07
 - APL'xx might need to co-locate with other events in the future, or hold a separate event as in the past
- Date, location, & committee not yet chosen for APL'08



Volunteer Development

- The most crucial concern that led to transition was a lack of volunteer development
- It is clear from talking to members of the current SIGAPL leadership (Larocque, Korn, and Rogers) that they were unable to be very involved in SIGAPL previously, but are eager to help turn the SIG around
- It is not clear that SIGAPL's volunteer development extends beyond these few people
 - There is no "pipeline" in place for volunteer development, e.g. bringing volunteers up through conference PCs to OCs to SIG leadership
- The concern about volunteer development remains



Summary Analysis (Slide 1 of 2)

- **SIGAPL membership stable for the past few years**
 - Membership extended at no charge to members for 2 of the last 4 years
- **The fund balance is healthy**
 - Few member services have been provided
- **The newsletter is back on track and the SIG leaders are soliciting articles to build a publication pipeline**
- **Viability of the conference is still in question**
 - Last event was 1/3 the size of past events, with 100% acceptance rate and mostly invited papers
 - No firm plans are yet in place for 2008



Summary Analysis (Slide 2 of 2)

- **Current SIG leaders are enthusiastic**
 - No clear pipeline in place to develop future leaders
- **Finally, there is a strong sense that activities have been undertaken in 2007 to address ACM concerns, but that there is no long-term plan for sustaining SIG activities**



Recommendation (Slide 1 of 2)

- **SIGAPL be dechartered**
- **The SIGAPL leadership work with the SIGPLAN leadership to hold the APL'xx conference under SIGPLAN sponsorship, with conference leadership represented on SIGPLAN's Steering Committee along with the leadership of other SIGPLAN conferences**
- **The SIGAPL leadership work with the SIGPLAN leadership to continue SIGAPL's newsletter activities**



Recommendation (Slide 2 of 2)

- **SIGAPL's fund balance be transferred to SIGPLAN, but earmarked for activities in support of the APL'xx conference and Kenneth E. Iverson Award (with some funds possibly being used to endow that award to ensure its longevity)**
- **The current SIGAPL leadership, in particular SIGAPL's Chair (Guy R. Larocque), Secretary / Treasurer (Steven H. Rogers), and Member-at-Large (James Korn), be commended on their efforts to re-engage the ACM community interested in array programming languages**



Reactions (Slide 1 of 3)

- **We discussed moving the APL'xx conference to SIGPLAN sponsorship with SIGPLAN's Chair (Kathleen S. Fisher) and Past Chair (Jack W. Davidson)**
 - Both felt that this plan would work
 - They were not certain that OOPSLA was necessarily the best conference for APL'xx to co-locate with, but were optimistic that it would find a good "home" within SIGPLAN
 - They were also supportive of continuing an APL newsletter in some form



Reactions (Slide 2 of 3)

- **We also discussed folding the SIGAPL activities under SIGPLAN sponsorship with SIGAPL's Chair (Guy R. Larocque), Secretary / Treasurer (Steven H. Rogers), and one Member-at-Large (James Korn)**
 - They did not feel that the SIGAPL members and leaders would be supportive of this move
 - They felt that SIGAPL members would get "lost" as part of SIGPLAN and lose their sense of community and disengage from the formerly-SIGAPL activities
 - Further, they felt that SIGAPL was more than "just a conference" and that members wanted to continue other SIGAPL activities such as the newsletter



Reactions (Slide 3 of 3)

- **We still feel that the recommendation above is in the best interests of SIGAPL**
 - This recommendation allows APL'xx conference to continue, on an annual or biennial basis
 - Newsletter content could fold into the conference, with a larger and likely stronger set of papers yielding a stronger conference
 - A stronger conference should enable the sense of community to continue
 - Continuing (and possibly endowing) the Kenneth E. Iverson Award would also help continue the sense of community, and under the SIGPLAN umbrella would get additional publicity