Editorial

As *Machine Learning* goes into its sixth year of publication, it has witnessed a steady and sustained growth in the number of submissions and in the number of actual and pending special issues. Rather than limiting publications by defining machine learning more strictly to exclude papers on related topics, the editorial board decided to expand the journal from four to six issues per year. In 1991 we plan to publish volume 6 and volume 7, each consisting of three issues. Of the six annual issues we expect two, on average, to be special-topic issues, and the other four to be regular issues drawn from the mainstream submission process.

For readers interested in journal-related statistics, we finally have a large enough sample to draw upon: Less than 10% of all submissions are deemed inappropriate and returned promptly to the authors without in-depth review, usually because they consist of a description for a research plan upon which the author has yet to embark. Of the remaining ones, almost half are accepted for publication, the majority with some degree of revision and re-review. Of the rejected ones, some are encouraged to resubmit when the research is more mature, and surprisingly many do resubmit, with the same just under 50% acceptance rates as for new submissions. The total number of submissions has increased about 50% over the past four years (reflected in the 50% increase in number of issues per year, starting in 1991). The relative distribution of papers per topic area (inductive, EBL, ML theory, connectionist, genetic algorithms, etc.) has changed little since the journal started, except for an increase in the theoretical papers, and possibly a decrease in overview papers.

Two new sections have been added to the journal: technical and methodological notes for rapid publication of short topical papers, and book reviews for evaluation of recent books pertinent to Machine Learning. Responses to the notes are encouraged from the community at large, especially those notes expressing a critique or making a methodological point. Authors of books under review will be invited to respond in print to their reviews.

We are targeting a two-month review cycle for the technical and methodological notes, with publication in the earliest possible issue. In contrast, the review cycle for regular papers averages five months, including revisions to conditionally-accepted papers. The average, however, is no consolation to authors whose papers remain in the review process longer than most. We are instituting procedures to expedite reviewing, so far as it is possible to do so without sacrificing the high quality of our peer-review cycle.

I would like to use this opportunity to express my thanks in print to our reviewers, editors, editorial-board members, and of course our authors. Everyone has worked diligently to help make *Machine Learning* a success, and thereby contributed to the firm establishment of Machine Learning as a challenging field of scientific inquiry.

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