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This conference was flagged as needing review, and Chairs and the community were requested to make a submission to provide data for this effort. Unfortunately no submission was received, and data from a comparator report was used for an initial consideration. The steering committee have subsequently indicated that they were not aware of this request, and provided a more full report during the consultation process. The number of full papers is 35-43 with acceptance rates of 27-32. Its h5 is 17 and although this is affected by its somewhat small size, this was still considered to be low. The median h-index of PC members was 14, with 27/89 being established researchers. However only 9 of these published in 1 year with only 5 in 2+ years, which was considered weak engagement. This, combined with a low Aminer ranking of 28 led to an initial assessment of rank B.

Following the consultation period a submission with extra information was provided. FM does not fit well in 4612 (Software Engineering), nor in 4613 (Theory of Computation), but is somewhat relevant to both. FM takes place about every 18 months, rather than annually. Its h5 of 17 would be very low in SE, but if considered as compared to TCS it is not as low. It is also affected by running every 18 months in addition to being quite small.

The new submission provided a list of 10 top people involved. 4 of these attend often or always and there is a good description of why they are leaders in the area. The other 6 people are strong but less involved (attend sometimes or occasionally).

A top people WPP report was provided, using the label "formal methods" to choose the relevant 20 people. This showed 16 of the 20 people publishing in FM over a period of 22 years. However we generally look at the last 5-6 years to establish reasonably current practice. Rerunning the list from 2015 shows FM as being 5th in the list published at "12 times by 6 of 20 individuals". This is a result generally supportive of A when the list is genuinely top people chosen by a repeatable independent method.

Regarding the PC h-index and publishing they point out that they

deliberately have many industry people on the PC who do not have high h-index but definitely contribute to the value of the conference. Regarding what we noted as weak engagement of the 27 established researchers, they have possibly misinterpreted our summary of the data as covering only 2 editions of the conference. In fact the 5 year period used covered 4 editions, so our statement should have been that only 9 of the 27 published in at least 1 of 4 editions of the conference, with only 5 publishing in 2 or more of 4 editions.

The rather low position of 28th in Aminer is potentially a result of it being in a rather large and diverse group covering SE, System SW and Programming Languages.

When viewed in the context of 4613, rather than 4612, citation data is strong (above A/A*). After considerable discussion the decision was made to retain this at A, with some hesitation. There was still a concern from some committee members that engagement of senior PC members appeared to be low.