

Guest editorial for the Special Section with the extensions to the best papers from APSEC'13 and APSEC'14¹

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Keywords: Software development, requirements, requirement ambiguities, processes, Scrum, Scrum anti-patterns, distributed software development, Git, reviewing, pull-requests, pull-request assignment

Introduction

It is now a platitude to say that software systems run our lives. Yet, software development remains a difficult endeavour. Among many studies of failed software projects, a recent study of 5,400 large software projects, by McKinsey & Company in conjunction with the University of Oxford [1], reports that (1) 17% of the projects run into problems that threaten the very existence of the company and (2) 45% run over budget and 7% percent over time, while delivering 56% less value than predicted. These figures are worrisome and prompted both academia and the industry to study the software development process in details to understand the causes of these failures. Among many studies, both academia, e.g., [2,3] and industry, e.g., [4], recognise the importance of the *requirements* and of the *process* used to transform requirements into software artifacts.

Requirements are the basis on which customers and project members form a partnership to develop software systems. Consequently, requirements are both a contract between stakeholders and a blueprint for the software systems. They must have several qualities if the projects are to succeed. They must be correct, complete, clear, unambiguous, understandable, consistent, necessary, verifiable, traceable, feasible, independent of one another, of the design, and of the implementation [5,6]. However, achieving these qualities mostly remain difficult and

¹ This special section contains five papers published at APSEC'13 and APSEC'14. The 20th Asia-Pacific Software Engineering Conference (APSEC'13, <http://apsec2013.eng.chula.ac.th/>) took place on 2-5 December 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand. The 21st Asia-Pacific Software Engineering Conference (APSEC'14, <http://www.apsec2014.org/main/>) took place on 1-4 December 2014 in Jeju, Korea.

dependent upon the abilities and expertises of stakeholders. In particular, building and maintaining unambiguous requirements are challenging tasks due to the very nature of natural languages, which for Janardan Misra proposes a tool based on syntactic and semantic aliasing of terms to help identifying and resolving ambiguous terms.

But, even with quality requirements, software projects are very much at the mercy of the software development process chosen by the stakeholders because software development is a non-linear process and, therefore, adaptation to changing requirements is more important than optimising the software development process *per se*. The Agile Manifesto [7] embraced changing requirements and asserted that stakeholders and their interactions are more important than the chosen process. It gave birth to different processes from the well-known Extreme Programming (XP), which made it popular, to Scrum, which is nowadays largely adopted by small and big companies likewise [8]. But agile processes such as Scrum are not without controversies [9] and their own sets of problems [10,11], which Veli-Pekka Eloranta, Kai Koskimies, and Tommi Mikkonen explore and codify in the form of 14 anti-patterns.

Agile processes became prominent coincidentally at the time of the raise of the open-source movement and of on-line version control systems, issue tracking systems, and source-code hosting Web sites. After CVS (SourceForge) and SVN (SourceForge again), Git is now a de facto standard for many open and closed source software projects and (was) made popular (by) source-code hosting services like BitBucket and GitHub. These services integrate and make accessible in one place various tools supporting software projects, including but not limited to issue tracking, source code versioning, reviewing and commenting, quality assessment. These services foster collaboration around the code but, consequently, tend to be more taxing on core members of the projects for management [12], in particular reviews. Therefore, GitHub and other services promote a collaborative reviewing and Yue Yu, Huaimin Wang, Gang Yin, and Tao Wang propose a novel approach to support this collaborative effort by helping identifying the most appropriate reviewers.

Although software development remains a difficult endeavour, software systems now run our lives and they are nowadays very different from those systems of 10 or even 5 years ago. Mobile computing took over desktops computers and changed forever the ways that users interact with their systems [13]. Users now expect connectivity and services tailored to their particular needs and place. Tailoring services based on the users' contexts is therefore required to provide a quality user experience with relevant and timely information. It is so important that dedicated workshops and conferences sprung to existence in the past years, in particular the International Conference on Context-Aware Systems and Applications² supported by the European Alliance for Innovation and endorsed by major research centers and enterprises, such as Fraunhofer, Technion, IBM, and Microsoft³. However, contextual information is often noisy and partial and it must be checked against contextual rules to ensure its relevance and

² <http://iccasa.org>

³ <http://eai.eu>

timeliness. We acknowledge the importance of contextual information with two articles verifying contextual information fast, using GPU by Jun Suia, Chang Xua, S.C. Cheung, Wang Xia, Yanyan Jianga, Chun Caoa, Xiaoxing Maa, and Jian Lu, while taking into account patterns of ephemeral and harmless inconsistencies by Wang Xi, Chang Xu, Wenhua Yang, Xiaoxing Ma, Ping Yu, and Jian Lu.

Thus, the articles in this Special Section covers a breadth and depth of relevant and timely topics related to software development, from processes to behaviour. They showcase the state of the art on these topics and we are sure that they will provide the sound basis for new, future work that will further change the face of software development and of our daily uses of software systems.

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