

# ACM Technology Policy Council TechBriefs Committee

FY 2024 Annual Report

Stuart Shapiro, Chair (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)

## 1. **BASIC INFORMATION**

### 1.1 **Committee members** (all terms indeterminate)

- Stuart Shapiro, Chair
- Michel Beaudouin-Lafon
- Bran Knowles
- Andrew McGettrick
- Larry Medsker
- John Murray
- Kashyap Tumkur
- Moshe Vardi
- Adam Eisgrau (ex officio)
- Jim Hendler (ex officio)
- Bruce Shriver (ex officio)

### 1.2 **Purpose**

The ACM Technology Policy Council (TPC) TechBriefs Committee (TBC) is charged with producing on an ongoing basis (currently quarterly) a series of short technical bulletins that present perspectives on the impact of specific developments in or applications of computing technology. The primary goal of these documents is to inform, rather than advocate specific policy responses. Their primary audience is policymakers. Secondary audiences are the media, computing professionals, and the general public.

### 1.3 **Subcommittees**

N/A

### 1.4 **Committee meetings** (held as needed):

- September 28, 2023
- November 1, 2023
- February 9, 2024
- May 23, 2024
- June 20, 2024

## 2. **PROJECT SUMMARY**

While the Committee is one of three standing sub-units of the ACM Technology Policy Council, its work consists of sequential projects, each of which is designed to produce an individual TechBrief. Those produced in FY 2024 were:

- Issue 8 – Generative Artificial Intelligence (Summer 2023)
- Issue 9 – Trusted AI (Fall 2023)
- Issue 10 – Automated Vehicles (Winter 2024)
- Issue 11 – Data Privacy Protection (Spring 2024, published mid-July)

In FY24, the Committee continued to normalize and refine the production process. This included having its contract editor work with authors early in the drafting process to reduce the workload on the TBC and the ACM Policy Director, which proved beneficial.

## 3. **PLANS**

### 3.1 **Current Projects**

Potential TechBriefs projected for FY25 include:

- Website Accessibility
- Tech Abuse
- Software Development Practices

### 3.2 **Prospective Changes or Milestones**

Now that the TechBriefs production pipeline is firmly established and operating, the Committee anticipates the regularization of its membership via the establishment of formal terms for all members. This may include the appointment of new US Technology Policy Committee (USTPC) and Europe TPC representatives in addition to a new chair. The Committee also aims to increase the number of ad hoc members to enable better distribution of the workload and enhance productivity.

The Committee is actively considering changes to the TechBrief format based on feedback received from ACM's recent candidate public relations firms. Many of these suggestions involved changes to make TechBriefs and their ACM landing pages more dynamic and visually appealing. While the Committee was appreciative of these recommendations, a number of them run up against the fundamental brevity of a TechBrief, making it difficult to trade off already limited expository text for graphics and other features. However, even within the constraints of a TechBrief, the Committee believes there are some opportunities for improvement by, for example, substituting informative graphics for the By the Numbers section when appropriate. The Committee is also considering producing a graphically rich online "cover" for each TechBrief to better attract potential readers.

With respect to milestones, the Committee proudly notes that by the end of FY24 published TechBriefs had been downloaded over 61,000 times.

### 3.3 **New Projects or Programs**

At ACM's request, the Committee developed a high-level strategic plan. The plan emphasizes greater responsiveness to policymaker priorities while at the same time establishing a broader resource base of potential topic-author combinations and expert reviewers. As part of this, the Committee plans to engage in increased outreach in FY25 to improve awareness and communication channels among ACM members generally and members of the regional policy committees in particular. On the "consumer" side of the equation, the Committee will also seek ways of more effectively connecting with policymaker staff to increase interest in and consumption of TechBriefs. The Committee also plans in FY25 to undertake its now biennial topic survey.

## 4. **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION**

The Committee operates by consensus and therefore places a premium on active engagement from its members. Efforts are consistently made in meetings and other interactions to actively elicit the views of all participants and exchanges have been invariably civil and respectful. The Committee's composition, however, remains skewed; it trends older, Western, academic, male, and white. While greater diversity in all of these dimensions is desirable, owing to the aspirational goal of producing TechBriefs with a genuinely international orientation, a high priority needs to be increasing the Committee's geographic diversity. The anticipated membership refresh in FY25 should provide an opportunity to move in this direction. As a product of the TPC, TechBriefs are intended for a global audience. While efforts are consistently made to "internationalize" TechBrief content, their success has varied.

## 5. **COMMENTS**

TechBriefs are intended primarily to inform policymakers, the media (on which policymakers and their staffs rely), ACM professional and student members (through media and ACM channels), other computing professionals, and the public at large (likely through media). They also are intended to establish ACM, its policy units, and the organization's member experts as authoritative, objective, trustworthy, and reliable apolitical sources for technical information in accessible forms on critical technology policy issues.

Specifically, each TechBrief aims to illuminate key current and/or emerging issues related to the impacts, trade-offs, benefits, and risks associated with a specific computing technology. TechBriefs topics thus can include both issues under present consideration by policymakers (e.g., generative AI), as well as foreseeable issues raised by new

technologies with significant anticipated social, political, economic, and environmental impacts (e.g., automated vehicles). They also may address, in whole or in part, themes related to professional responsibility.

Unlike most ACM policy efforts, TechBriefs are an ongoing rather than a one-off product. Therefore, structural and stylistic consistency takes on an unusual primacy in their production. This is reflected in both the professional supports employed (contract editor and layout specialists) and the detailed guidance that has been developed for different contributors, especially authors.

**ACM TECHNOLOGY POLICY COUNCIL  
TECH BRIEFS COMMITTEE  
FY 2024 MEMBER ROLES AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

VOTING	EX OFFICIO
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