

Editorial

Eighteen years ago Richard Bird joined the editorial team of the *Journal of Functional Programming*. As Richard mentions in his recollections (Bird, 2006), the founding editors of the *Journal*, Simon Peyton Jones and Philip Wadler, had asked him to contribute a regular column to be called *Functional Pearls*, roughly modeled on the *Programming Pearls* that Jon Bentley had run for the *Communications of the ACM* in the 1980s. Richard agreed to the suggestion, but only under the proviso that he would seek other contributors to the column.

Today Richard’s “functional pearls” column is one of the most distinguishing features of the *Journal*. These short articles emphasize crisp exposition and reading pleasure: they often illuminate the power of functional programming like no others. Over the years nearly 70 pearls have appeared in the *Journal*, starting with Richard Bird’s own discussion of the *Minout* problem in the very first issue and peaking in an entire special issue of the *Journal* 14(6) in 2006 devoted to functional pearls. The topics range from exercises in program calculation to new functional data structures and algorithms. Some are now classics, e.g., Huet’s column on the Zipper data structure, Hutton and Meijer’s work on monadic parsing in Haskell, or Okasaki’s discourse on sixth-order functions.

Richard’s own contributions attracted others to think in terms of pearls. Indeed, his efforts to spread the word about them may have been his greatest success. Not only did he expand the circle of pearl authors, his work basically created an entire new genre of scientific papers. In addition to two additional pearl columns in the *Journal*—theoretical and educational pearls—the idea of pearls cropped up in the *International ACM Conference on Functional Programming*, the *ACM Symposium on Principles of Programming Languages*, and the *Journal of Automated Reasoning*. Nobody at that time could imagine how successful the idea would be but the numbers prove it all.

This month, after all this tireless work, Richard Bird is stepping down from his role as functional pearl editor. On behalf of the editorial team, we would like to thank Richard for his service to the *Journal* and the research community. In order to show Richard our appreciation of his own unconventional ways, we are publishing a farewell present to him in this issue: a functional pearl, entitled *The Bird Tree*. The author of the pearl, Ralf Hinze, has contributed five pearls already and, with this one, introduces a mathematical object named for Richard and best explored with functional programs. We hope that he and the *Journal* readers will enjoy this pearl as much as the reviewers and handling editor (X. Leroy) did.

Next we welcome Jeremy Gibbons to the editorial team. Jeremy, who has himself significant experience with writing functional pearls, including one with Richard, has agreed to take over as pearl editor. He, with the support of all the team, will endeavor to continue the success story of functional pearls, maintaining the high standards established by Richard Bird. Of course, as Richard already knew in 1991,

we can only do this with your help, dear readers, and therefore we call on you to study the pearls and to continue writing and submitting them.

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Reference

Bird, Richard S. (2006). Fifteen years of functional pearls. *Page 215 of: Proceedings of the 11th ACM SIGPLAN International Conference on Functional Programming, ICFP 2006*. ACM Press.