FROM THE CHAIR …

As your newly elected Chair, I first want to applaud the membership of SIGIR for their active participation in our election and governing processes. SIGIR is a remarkably vital organization and had enough interested and involved members to stand three nominees for each office – a very healthy sign. Thanks to all who stood for office, and those who voted.

I am honored to be your chair, and as a long-time, active member, I am very mindful of the responsibility that each chair assumes, and will work with the officers, regional reps, volunteers, and all our membership to bring SIGIR to ever greater heights, while maintaining our strong links to a vibrant history.

Please review Dave's notes from the Annual Meeting for all the details on membership, conferences, and budget for what has been an active year and a VERY successful conference in Amsterdam in July. The venues, the city, our Dutch hosts, the social activities (as well as the tutorials, doctoral consortium, workshops, posters, and papers of course) were all terrific. With a record 599 folks in attendance, SIGIR set a new record for attendees at a SIGIR Conference held in Europe. Co-chairs Wessel Kraaij and Arjen de Vries are to be congratulated for a truly memorable conference. And I am sure they would thank all the hard-working volunteers who contributed to the conference's success.

A few particulars that were discussed briefly at the Annual Meeting on which I want to again elicit your thoughts.

> 1) How might we retain as SIGIR members those who received membership as part of their registration for an Annual Conference? While our membership is always boosted by new members when they register for a conference, these members tend to fall off if they don't attend the next year's conference – and this is highly likely as the conference moves in such geographically dramatic bounds.

> 2) What are the pros and cons of an Industry Event, as was held in Amsterdam? Presenters at the event included SAP, IBM, Orcatec, Baidu, Fredhopper, Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Scirus, Endeca, and Linguit. There was also a Practitioners Panel from the Royal Dutch National Library, the Royal Dutch National Police, the RTL Group, and TNO. While we definitely want to welcome all corporate members, is a separate event and invitation-only attendance the best model?

> 3) Should we continue the mentorship program whose goal is to support researchers who want to submit to the SIGIR Conference, but are new to SIGIR? Mark Sanderson reported that in an earlier survey, opinions were split, with mentees valuing it, while the mentor-reviewers were ambivalent, find it very time-consuming, with very few papers (this year only 1) being accepted. While there was support from some in the audience, the concern was also expressed that if the limited resource of knowledgeable reviewers is expended on this effort, will it become even more challenging to find sufficient reviewers for papers and posters? Of course, there is the opposing need to expand the group of researchers who are successful in their submission to the conference.

Please send me your thoughts and ideas on these questions at liddy@syr.edu and I will share them with the Executive Committee so that we can include your views when we consider these issues.

In closing, let me say what I so frequently share with the doctoral students in our school – what a truly opportune time for each of us to have chosen the information field. We are indeed either fortunate or brilliant to have chosen to work in this field at a time when the importance of access to information is recognized by virtually everyone as being so vital in every domain.

But as we relish the current accomplishments of our field and look with anticipation to an even more exciting future, it is important for us to remember and build upon what we learn from the work of the past. And the vitality and still-impressive importance of prior research was made very evident during a special session in Amsterdam, where we all listened to the video-taped acceptance speech of Karen Spärck Jones for the ACM Athena Award – that was made before Karen's death in April, 2007. As we viewed the video, we all were again reminded of both the creative insight and practicality that characterized Karen's outstanding contributions to our field.

Looking forward, I hope there will be many SIGIR members at our co-sponsored and in-cooperation conferences – CIKM, JCDL, AIRS, CORIA, CIVR, ECIR, and WSDM – and of course next summer at the ACM SIGIR Conference in Singapore on July 20th to 24th. Stay tuned to the conference website www.sigir2008.org for details and deadlines.

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