# First International Symposium on Information Interaction in Context

| **Peter Ingwersen** | **Ian Ruthven** | **Nick Belkin** |
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| Royal School of LIS, Denmark | University of Strathclyde, Scotland | Rutgers University, USA |
| *pi@db.dk* | *Ian.Ruthven@cis.strath.ac.uk* | *nick@belkin.rutgers.edu* |

## 1   The *IIiX* Organization and Idea

The first International Symposium on Information Interaction in Context – *IIiX* - was held at The Royal School of Library and Information Science (RSLIS), Denmark on 18 - 20 October 2006. It was organized by Associate Professor and Head of Department of Information Studies, Pia Borlund and Professor Peter Ingwersen. Associate Professor Ian Ruthven of Strathclyde University in Glasgow, Scotland headed the global programme committee that consisted of more than 50 of the top researchers in IR, IR interaction and information seeking. A 'master class' was held before the symposium, that is, a Doctoral Forum, where research students obtained dedicated feedback on their research programmes from a team of senior researchers. The Doctoral Forum was organised by Associate Professor Birger Larsen and Assistant Professor Jesper W. Schneider from RSLIS and provided an excellent networking event for new researchers.

### 1.1   A Spin-Off from ACM-SIGIR conferences

The idea for the symposium arose among the new generation of Information Retrieval researchers, who now agree that the retrieval of information involves several different media, genres and user groups – across languages and in the form of various search methods – all framed by some kinds of *context*. An actual search depends on time, place, previous searches (carried out by the same or other people), the relevant task, and a set of other factors and phenomena that more or less explicitly occur during the current interaction process and in the surrounding environment. In spite of this observation, there is a high level of inertia within the traditional research areas such as experimental IR and information seeking behaviour. They seem to continue with their respective research traditions, all things considered without seriously involving elements of context. A specific aim for *IIiX* was thus to investigate how the concept of context can be understood and exploited to make information systems truly interactive.

Along these lines of thought, a number of people from both laboratory and interactive IR already in 2004 proposed and got accepted the first Information Retrieval in Context (IRiX) Workshop held in association with the ACM-SIGIR Conference in Sheffield, UK. A second IRiX Workshop followed at the Brazil ACM-SIGIR Conference, held in San Salvador, Bahia, 2005 – preparing the ground for *IIiX*.

The First *IIiX* Symposium is thus a spin-off from the SIGIR framework into a new series of conferences, bringing together researchers who share views of the *convergence in context* of information behaviors, those being knowledge generation, information seeking, laboratory and interactive IR, knowledge sharing, and information use.

## 1.2   The IIiX Themes

*IIiX* perceives context from several viewpoints. The purpose of the symposium on *Information Interaction in Context* was to create a platform for investigations and discussion, irrespective of whether the basis was algorithmic and laboratory experiments or behavioural field studies based on everyday information requirements.

Central issues are which elements or parameters of context can be isolated, used and are best able to improve the total search result. Such elements can originate from:

- The searchers' sphere of interest, work assignments or unsolved problems
- The searcher or a group's characteristics
- Properties of the actual systems and the communication infrastructure
- Characteristics and patterns observed during the interaction process
- Document data and properties of information content
- The surroundings and their physical characteristics
- Temporal properties, e.g. frequency and length of searches

The symposium had the following overall themes:

- *Case studies, field experiments, simulations, etc. of context-sensitive Information Seeking & Retrieval;*
- *Contextual Information Interaction theory – modelling context;*
- *Evaluation and research methodologies for IIiX*
- *Platforms and frameworks for doing research on IIiX*

The themes were chaired by three thematic chairs: Professor Nick Belkin (USA) on Interactive IR; Associate Professor Anastasios Tombros (UK) on Laboratory IR; and Professor Pertti Vakkari (Finland) on Information Behavior.

## 1.3   Contents – Key-notes – Panel

The symposium achieved its goal by inviting research contributions that approached contexts from many perspectives, such as the context surrounding documents, the context influencing actors and tasks, the contexts affecting interaction and its instances of implicit and explicit relevance feedback. *IIiX* received paper submissions from 19 countries in five continents and accepted 22 full contributions and research-in-progress papers. The acceptance rate was 45%. 13 students participated in the Doctoral Forum and *IIiX* attracted almost 90 participants from 13 countries. The final programme and other information including photos are available at: http://www.db.dk/iiix/index.htm

Professor Micheline Beaulieu of Sheffield University gave an invited key-note entitled *"Interaction in Context in Information Research: Shifting the Paradigm"* and Professor Barry Smyth of University College Dublin gave an invited lecture on *"Social and Personal: Communities and Collaboration in Adaptive Web Search"*.

A central panel discussion had the following title: *"What is not Context?"*, and participants in this included Professors Keith van Rijsbergen (Scotland), Mounia Lalmas (UK), Elaine Toms (Canada), Arjen de Vries (Holland), and Nick Belkin (USA).

The panel was initiated, organized and moderated by Nick Belkin and became the apex of the Symposium. For preparation the panellists had received a set of questions, progressively moving as follows:

1. For the purposes of understanding and supporting human interaction with information, is the concept of context actually useful?
2. What do you understand the concept of context, in this context, to mean, if anything?
3. What aspects of your concept of context are:
   - essential;
   - important;
   - interesting;
   - unnecessary;

   for understanding and supporting human interaction with information?
4. If you believe that every aspect of your concept of context is essential, then how are we ever going to get any effective research done?

For each question – displayed on screen to the audience – each panellist had several minutes to produce a statement, after which the floor took over the discussion, with panellists responding to the floor, and to one another. It became a highly interactive, productive and entertaining event, generating discussion that will certainly continue until and during IIiX 2008.

An important innovation during the symposium were the contributions on the use of knowledge from field studies of interactive information behaviour, including implicit relevance feedback, in new search algorithms that are then tested in realistic environments. Such field studies necessitate the development of better integrated research designs and methods which currently are under development and became discussed at the symposium and will, without doubt, contribute to future IIiX conferences.

*IIiX* was kindly sponsored by Thomson Scientific, Denmark's Electronic Research Library, and CEPIS. The *IIiX Proceedings* were published in hard copy format for the conference attendees and are available from the ACM Digital Library: http://tinyurl.com/2gnr6q under their International Conference Proceedings Series

## 1.4   The Second IIiX Conference in London 2008

The *Second IIiX Conference* will be organized by Professor Mounia Lalmas and Associate Professor Anastasios Tombros, Queen Mary, University of London, UK, in cooperation with BCS IRSG, to be held in London in 2008 (probably Tuesday 14th - Friday 17th of October). So prepare yourself for contributing research papers to this event.