The SIGIR 2008 Workshop Program

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With the ever-expanding scope of the field of Information Retrieval, the SIGIR workshops program has grown into a vital component of the annual SIGIR conference. It provides an informal but structured setting for extended dialog and brainstorming. It allows scholars in budding areas to share ideas and set research agendas. It supports cross fertilization between existing communities and the development of new ones, often bringing together practitioners from industry and academia.

This year, we received fifteen proposals from which ten were approved and nine actually held:

> Focused Retrieval: Question Answering, Passage Retrieval, Element Retrieval
> Learning to Rank for Information Retrieval
> Searching Spontaneous Conversational Speech
> Analytics for Noisy Unstructured Text Data
> Future Challenges in Expertise Retrieval
> Aggregated Search
> Beyond Binary Relevance: Preferences, Diversity, and Set-Level Judgments
> Mobile Information Retrieval
> Information Retrieval in Advertising

Attendance was high, with 289 registrants overall. Of these, 255 (88%) also registered for the main conference, comprising 47% of conference attendees. 181 workshop attendees (63%) registered for the "full conference package" including tutorials, workshops and the main conference. Individual workshop sizes ranged from 18 to 46, with a median size of 31. These numbers are consistent with attendance at previous years' workshop programs.

This year we experimented with using a groupware solution (Yahoo Groups) to manage communications within the program committee and this greatly simplified the reviewing process by making all instructions, proposals, reviews and further discussion available in one place. We found that having two co-chairs worked well as it guaranteed that one of us was always available to respond to the many queries from the workshop organizers and SIGIR staff. The only issue was the length of time allocated in the schedule between acceptance of a proposal and the deadline for papers for a workshop. In order to allow more time for people to submit papers, it may be reasonable to set a date for workshop proposal acceptance earlier than the date of the SIGIR program committee meeting.

We wish to extend our thanks to the workshops program committee, to all those who submitted proposals and participated in the workshops, to the publication chair Ee-Peng Lim and his team who took care of publishing the workshop proceedings, and to the excellent staff of SIGIR 2008 who ensured that everything ran smoothly throughout the day.