# SIGIR 2009 Workshop Program Overview

**Diane Kelly, Workshop Chair**
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
*dianek@email.unc.edu*

SIGIR workshops provide a platform for presenting novel ideas in a less formal and more focused way than the main conference. The SIGIR Workshop Program is a venue where discussion, collaboration and the sharing of ideas can take place. In the 2009 call for workshop proposals, workshops that fostered collaboration, discussion, and group problem-solving were encouraged.

SIGIR Workshops have spanned a range of topics over the years and this year was no exception. Topics of past workshops include those that represent novel IR research areas and areas from allied fields that have drifted into the IR community. Past workshops have also addressed new (or ongoing) challenges and research problems in the community. Many workshops have developed into successful series and have appeared at consecutive SIGIR Conferences or rotated among various related conferences to draw more diverse participation. This year's program covered a range of topics including evaluation, multilingual retrieval, search in social media, ranking, and advertising. The program contained a mix of new workshops, as well as follow-ups from successful past workshops. Organizers were from academia, industry and government and a range of geographic locations.

We received many excellent submissions and had a difficult decision of selecting a smaller set for the program. Fourteen workshops proposals were submitted and eight were selected for inclusion in the program. (For comparison, 15 were submitted last year and 9 were held.) Table 1 displays the titles and organizers of the workshops. Workshops are described in more detail by the organizers in the pages that follow this overview. In total, 290 people registered for a workshop. Individual workshop sizes ranged from 16 to 56, with an average size of 36.

Table 1.  2009 SIGIR Workshops (ordered alphabetically by title)

| Title | Organizers |
|---|---|
| Future of IR Evaluation | Jaap Kamps, Shlomo Geva, Carol Peters, Tetsuya Sakai, Andrew Trotman, Ellen Voorhees |
| Information Access in a Multilingual World: Transitioning from Research to Real-World Applications | Fredric Gey, Noriko Kando, Jussi Karlgren |
| Information Retrieval and Advertising | Misha Bilenko, Evgeniy Gabrilovich, Matthew Richardson, Yi Zhang |
| Large-Scale Distributed Systems for Information Retrieval (LSDS-IR) | Claudio Lucchese, Gleb Skobeltsyn, Wai Gen Yee |
| Learning to Rank for Information Retrieval | Hang Li, Tie-Yan Liu, ChengXiang Zhai |
| Redundancy, Diversity and Interdependent Document Relevance | Filip Radlinski, Paul N. Bennett, Ben Carterette, Thorsten Joachims |
| Search in Social Media | Eugene Agichtein, Marti Hearst, Ian Soboroff |
| Understanding the User:  Logging and Interpreting User Interactions in Information Search and Retrieval | Nicholas J. Belkin, Ralf Bierig, Georg Buscher, Ludger van Elst, Jacek Gwizdka, Joemon Jose, Jaime Teevan |

**Schedule**

One important difference in the way things were conducted this year was that the submission deadline for workshops was moved forward and notifications for workshops were circulated before notifications for papers and posters for the main conference. The primary reason for this was to allow workshop organizers a longer period of time to solicit and review submissions. The schedule was as follows (all dates in 2009 unless otherwise specified):

| | |
|---|---|
| December 22, 2008 | Initial call for workshop proposals |
| February 02 | Workshop proposals due |
| February 03-22 | Workshop review period |
| February 23-25 | Discussion with workshop reviewers |
| February 27 | Report and recommendations sent to conference and program chairs |
| March 01 | Report and recommendations sent to senior program committee |
| March 05 | Notifications sent to workshop organizers |
| July 23 | SIGIR Workshops |

**Program Committee**

The workshop Program Committee (PC) is listed below. The goal in assembling the PC was to include a mix of expertise, as well as senior and junior researchers. Efforts were also made to include people from a broad geographic range and from industry and academia.

Peter Anick, Yahoo! Labs, USA (Last Year's SIGIR Workshop Co-Chair)
Pia Borlund, Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark
Charlie Clarke, University of Waterloo, Canada
David A. Evans, JustSystems Evans Research, USA
Jaana Kekäläinen, University of Tampere, Finland
Falk Scholer, RMIT University, Australia
Alan Smeaton, Dublin City University, Ireland
John Tait, Information Retrieval Facility, Austria
Ryen W. White, Microsoft Research, USA

**Feedback from Participants**

An online workshop feedback questionnaire was created and made available to organizers and participants on the day of the workshop. Workshop organizers were asked to post the URL of the form at the end of the workshop. Workshop attendees were also emailed several days following the workshop with another invitation to provide feedback.

In total, 92 people provided feedback about the workshops. Overall, there was a 32% response rate and for most individual workshops the response rate was around 31%. The specific results are not presented in this paper, as they were primarily used for internal purposes. However, a brief, qualitative summary of the feedback is provided.

In general, most respondents indicated that the content of the workshop was what they expected and that they enjoyed the workshops. Many respondents indicated that they would attend a workshop on the same topic next year. Respondents were generally satisfied with the amount of discussion that took

place in the workshop and about 65% of them indicated that they would pursue the research themes discussed in the workshop during the upcoming year. Most respondents stated that they enjoyed the interactivity of the workshops and the amount of discussion that took place. Many respondents also commented on the high quality keynotes and presentations. Many others indicated that they liked the mix of people from academia and industry, and the opportunity to chat informally with others. These comments were observed for almost all of the workshops, so it seems that all the organizers did a great job designing a workshop format that supported interaction and discussion amongst participants.

Respondents were asked what they liked least about the workshops. About half of the respondents provided a response to this question. One set of comments was about the general environment of the workshops. Comments about the content of the workshops were mostly about the formation and facilitation of discussion groups. Some felt that these groups could have been better formed in order to provide some balance in their composition and content. Others noted topic drift. Some observed that a lot of people left throughout the day which they believed impacted the quality of discussions that occurred during latter portions of the workshops.

**Summary**

Overall, the SIGIR 2009 Workshop Program was a success. We received many excellent submissions and the workshops that were selected were well-attended and received positive reviews from attendees. A change in schedule gave organizers a greater length of time to solicit and review submissions and the individual workshop programs, which will be discussed in detail in the following pages, were varied and of high quality.

We look forward to receiving your workshop proposal next year and seeing you at a 2010 SIGIR workshop!

**Acknowledgment**

I wish to thank the conference and workshops program committee, to all those who submitted proposals and organized workshops, to those who participated in the workshops, and to the staff of SIGIR 2009.