SIGIR Annual Report:
July 2003 – June 2004

Jamie Callan
Chair, SIGIR
http://www.acm.org/sigir

Introduction

July 2003 – June 2004 was a busy and productive year for SIGIR. The year included transition to a new set of officers and volunteers, the usual range of conferences and services, and some new initiatives, which are described below. SIGIR was evaluated by the ACM SIG Governing Board (SGB) in September, and deemed viable for another four years. Overall, SIGIR is healthy financially, membership is growing slowly, the SIG has an active group of offic ers and volunteers, and it continues to develop new initiatives and services.

Transitions

The year began with a transition to a new Executive Committee and a new set of volunteers. The new elected officers are Jamie Callan, Chair; Fabrizio Sebastiani, Vice-Chair; David Lewis, Secretary, and Justin Zobel, Treasurer. Recent SIGIR practice has been to appoint a Regional Representative to the Executive Committee for major regions that don't have an elected representative. Noriko Kando was appointed Asian Regional Representative, for a term that coincides with the elected members of the Executive Committee. Peter Anick continues as one of the two Forum Editors. Ian Ruthven replaces Mark Sanderson as the other Forum Editor. Eric Brown continues as SIGIR's Information Officer, primarily responsible for managing the SIGIR home page (http://www.acm.org/sigir) and mailing list. Raman Chandrasekar was appointed to edit the SIG-IRList electronic newsletter that serves the IR community, replacing Mark Sanderson and Stephen Levin. Past Chair Susan Dumais was appointed to Chair the newly created Awards Committee.

Conferences

SIGIR sponsors, co-sponsors and cooperates with other technical groups on several conferences and workshops during the year. The main conference is the annual SIGIR meeting. We also co-sponsor two other ACM conferences, CIKM and JCDL.

SIGIR.
The Twenty Sixth Annual ACM SIGIR International Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval, SIGIR'03 (http://www.sigir2003.org/) was held in Toronto, Canada from July 28 – August 1, 2003. Charlie Clarke and Gordon Cormack (University of Waterloo, Canada) served as the General Conference Chairs, and Jamie Callan, David Hawking, and Alan Smeaton served as Program Co-Chairs. The meeting featured a strong technical program: 46 full papers, 51 posters, and 8 demonstrations were presented. Bruce Croft won the triennial Salton Award; his invited talk was entitled *Information Retrieval and Computer Science: An Evolving Relationship*. The Best Paper Award went to Ian Ruthven for his paper *Re-examining the potential effectiveness of interactive query expansion*. The Best Student Paper Award went to Stefanie Tellex, Boris Katz, Jimmy Lin, Aaron Fernandes, and Gregory Marton for their paper *Quantitative evaluation of passage retrieval algorithms for question answering*. In addition, a keynote address was given during the conference, 9 tutoria ls preceded the meeting, and 8 workshops on emerging topics and trends followed the meeting. There were 312 attendees for the main conference, and more than 100 each for workshops and tutorials. The conference was

successful financially as well, returning more than $36k to SIGIR. Although the conference was smaller than most North American SIGIR conferences, due to the SARS outbreaks in Toronto earlier that year, it was a big success. Special thanks and recognition are due Charlie Clarke and Gord Cormack for their heroic efforts to keep the conference on-track.

SIGIR offers a Mentoring Program to assist authors who have not previously had a full length paper accepted to SIGIR. Demand for this service continues to increase, but the number of mentored papers that were accepted has stayed flat, at about two per year. This is not yet considered a problem, but it is something the Executive Committee and Mentoring Chairs are monitoring. We thank Edie Rasmussen, who chaired the mentoring program for SIGIR 2003, and all the mentors for their efforts in broadening the scope and quality of SIGIR papers.

A growing amount of student travel to the SIGIR conference is supported by SIGIR in its budget, by contributions from the 1998 SIGIR conference in Melbourne, and by an IBM student travel grant. Twenty four students from North America, Europe, Middle East, Australia, and Asia received support to attend the 2003 meeting. The submissions, attendance and awards all reflect a strong international and student participation in SIGIR.

To further encourage student participation and growth, SIGIR introduced a Doctoral Forum program at SIGIR 2004 in which students explore their research interests in a workshop under the guidance of a panel of distinguished researchers. This is a new service; details on how well it worked will be provided in next year's annual report.

In September SIGIR received bids from Amsterdam, the Netherlands (led by Wessel Kraaij and Arjen de Vries) and Toulouse, France (led by Josiane Mothe) to host SIGIR 2007. Both bids were very strong, and either site would have been a good choice. Amsterdam was selected.

CIKM.
CIKM'03, the Twelfth International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management, was co-sponsored by SIGIR and SIGMIS and held in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, Nov 2-8, 2003 (http://cikm.org/2003/). Don Kraft served as General Conference Chair, and Ophir Frieder, Joachim Hammer, Sajda Qureshi, and Len Seligman served as Program Co-Chairs. CIKM has a focus on problems at the intersection of information retrieval, databases and knowledge management techniques. This year there was good representation of new work on web databases and search over structured data. The keynote address was provided by Jaime Carbonell (CMU). There were 59 papers and 18 posters, along with tutorials and workshops. The conference continues to improve in quality (15% acceptance rate) and provides an important bridge between the database and information retrieval communities. The conference made a small profit ($1305), half of which was returned to SIGIR.

JCDL.
The Third Joint ACM/IEEE Conference on Digital Libraries (JCDL'03) was held in Houston, Texas, USA from May 27-32 2003 (http://www.rice.edu/jcdl03/). The conference was co-sponsored by ACM (SIGIR and SIGWEB) and IEEE (TCDL). The conference is the third merged DL conference, encompassing what had previously been two separate digital library conferences (ACM's DL conference and IEEE's ADL conference). We thank the ACM DL Steering Committee (in particular our SIGIR representative, Christine Borgman) for its very hard and careful work in creating a new, richer DL forum for discussions of research, practice, systems and policy issues surrounding digital libraries. Geneva Henry served as Conference Chair, and Catherine C. Marshall served as Program Chair. The program consisted of 23 full papers, along with short papers, panels, demos, posters, tutorials. In addition a diverse set of panels covered a

variety of topics including intellectual property, sustainability, accessibility, and integrating digital and physical collections. The Vannevar Bush Award for Best Paper was presented to: Barbara M. Wildemuth, Gary Marchionini, Meng Yang, Gary Geisler, Todd Wilkens, Anthony Hughes and Richard Gruss for *How fast is too fast? Evaluating fast forward surrogates for digital video.* This was a successful conference with more than 320 conference attendees. Profitability is still unknown, due to difficulty closing the books.

The Fourth Joint ACM/IEEE Conference on Digital Libraries (JCDL'04) was recently held in Tucson, Arizona, USA in early June, 2004. Hsinchun Chen, Howard Wactlar, and Ching-chih Chen served as General Conference Chairs, and Ee-Peng Lim and Mike Christel were the Program Chairs. More details of this conference will be available in the next annual report.

In Cooperation

In addition the three ACM conferences that SIGIR sponsors, we "cooperate" with several other IR-related conferences but have no financial stake in them. These conferences compliment the technical focus of our own conferences, and include work on hypertext, multimedia, adaptive systems, etc. As a cooperating society, SIGIR members obtained reduced registration fees and other member benefits at these conferences. This past year, SIGIR had "in cooperation" agreements with: CORIA 2004 (COnférence en Recherche Information et Applications), and HLT/NAACL 2004 (Human Language Technology and North American Applied Computational Linguistics conference). For the coming year, in cooperation agreements have been approved for AIRS 2004 (Asia Information Retrieval Symposium), AH 2004 (International Conference on Adaptive Hypermedia and Adaptive Web-based Systems), CIVR 2004 (International Conference on Image and Video Retrieval), ECIR 2005 (European Conference on Information Retrieval), and SPIRE 2005 (String Processing and Information Retrieval).

Publications

The SIGIR Web site is maintained by SIGIR's Information Officer, Eric Brown. It provides timely information about SIGIR-sponsored conferences, "in cooperation" conferences, and SIGIR activities, as well as Business Meeting slides, the annual report, and other information about how SIGIR operates. In addition to providing information about the organization, the SIGIR web site also hosts the SIGIR Forum and SIG-IRList sites.

The SIGIR Forum is co-edited by Peter Anick and Ian Ruthven. The Forum is published three times a year. The issues were renamed to *Special, December*, and *June* this year, to remove a hemispheric bias and to clarify when they are published. The Special issue is the SIGIR Proceedings; the December and June issues cover IR conferences, workshops and symposia, as well as in depth essays based on the Salton Award Lecture and keynote addresses, and current research trends. The Forum appears both online (http://www.acm.org/sigir/forum/) and in paper.

The SIG-IRList is a SIGIR-sponsored electronic newsletter, edited by Raman Chandrasekar (http://www.acm.org/sigir/sigirlist/). The SIG-IRList provides a regular newsletter of IR information and nicely compliments the archival publication SIGIR Forum. The SIG-IRList contains job announcements, notices of publications, conferences, workshops, calls for participation, and project announcements.

SIGIR has been active in digitizing content so member can easily access materials from the SIGIR Proceedings and Forum. The Proceedings of all SIGIR conference from 1978 to present are available electronically in the ACM Digital Library. The first 25 years of SIGIR Proceedings and Forum are also available in the 25th Anniversary SIGIR CD. In addition, all issues of the SIGIR Forum from 1974 to the present have been digitized. We are still missing some copies of

the Forum from 1965-1972. If you have copies, please contact us (sigir-ec@acm.org).

Membership and Membership Programs

Interest in information retrieval is increasing. SIGIR-sponsored conferences are seeing solid attendance, and SIGIR membership is slowly growing, from 950 in May 2001 to 1072 in May 2002, 1192 in May 2003, and 1301 in June 2004, all of which are good signs. Some new membership services have been developed to attract new members and to provide better service to our continuing members. We continue to look for other ways to enhance our membership benefits, including a more active publicity campaign, offering new online membership services, and developing stronger ties with related organizations including more joint meetings.

Three years ago SIGIR started a Member Value Plus (MVP) program called the Proceedings Package. The package offers the basic benefits of SIGIR membership, including the SIGIR Forum and SIGIR Proceedings. In addition the conference proceedings from the two co-sponsored meetings, three ACM conferences, CIKM and JCDL are included. It's a great value and an easy way to get all the SIGIR-sponsored conference proceedings. The number of members taking advantage of the MVP program has increased steadily from its inception (31 in the first year to 136 this year). An analysis at the end of the year indicates that SIGIR is losing money on this program, primarily because the CIKM conference proceedings are far more expensive than anticipated, so the cost of this program will increase next year.

Next year SIGIR will offer a new MVP program. This optional membership package adds the Digital Symposium Collection (DiSC) DVD ROM to the usual SIGIR membership benefits. The DiSC DVD includes the SIGIR, CIKM, and JCDL conference proceedings, as well as the proceedings and newsletters from a wide range of conferences and SIGs with IR- and DB-related interests. This package is cheaper and more comprehensive than the Proceedings Package, so we expect it to be popular, and perhaps eventually to replace the Proceedings Package.

Awards

An Awards Committee was created this year, chaired by Past SIGIR Chair Susan Dumais, to identify distinguished members of the IR community that are eligible for ACM awards. The IR community has not historically been award-oriented, and it is not our goal to change this tradition in a major way. However, the Executive Committee believes that some recognition of the intellectual leaders of the IR community is both deserved and healthy for the field. One happy result of this effort is that C.J. "Keith" van Rijsbergen was named an ACM Fellow this year, in recognition of significant service and leadership to the field of IR.

Note that to be eligible for an ACM award, one must be a member of ACM, usually for several (e.g., five) years. Some prominent members of the IR field don't meet this requirement, thus their contributions must be recognized in other ways.

The Awards Committee will operate for two years under Sue's guidance. After the second year the awards effort will be evaluated to determine whether it is worth continuing.

Summary

SIGIR had a productive and successful year, with important intellectual and social contributions. Our conferences have been successful in all senses (with strong technical content and good international participation), and our financial situation is quite healthy. We will continue to work on ways to improve membership benefits, student and international participation, and relevance to industrial members. We look forward with great anticipation to the next year, and hope to see many new faces, as well as many familiar ones, at upcoming meetings.