# ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting 2007: Secretary's Notes

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## I. Opening Matters

The 2007 ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting took place on Thursday, 26 July 2007, at the SIGIR 2007 conference in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.  The meeting was led by the new ACM SIGIR Chair, Liz Liddy.  The returning Secretary (Dave Lewis)  was also in attendance, as were the new Vice-Chair (Mounia Lalmas) and Treasurer (Alistair Moffat).  Under the recently approved ACM SIGIR bylaws (see below), these Executive Committee (EC) members will serve a single three year term (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2009) without option for renewal.

Also in attendance was Tetsuya Sakai, the new Asian Regional Representative to the EC.  The current EC has members from the Americas, Europe, and Australia, so there are no Regional Representatives from these areas.  (The current EC has an informal policy to have Regional Representatives from each region of significant SIGIR membership that is not represented by an EC officer.)

Liz thanked other outgoing and incoming SIGIR volunteers, including the outgoing Chair (Jamie Callan), outgoing Vice-Chair (Fabrizio Sebastiani), outgoing Treasurer (Justin Zobel), continuing SIG-IRList editor (Raman Chandrasekar), outgoing SIGIR Forum editor (Peter Anick), continuing SIGIR Forum editor (Ian Ruthven), incoming SIGIR Forum Editor (Diane Kelly), continuing SIGIR liaison to the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries (Edie Rasmussen), and continuing SIGIR Awards Chair (Alistair Moffat).

## II. Reports

Liz began by reviewing SIGIR membership, which showed a 25% increase from 2006 (1238 members) to 2007 (1547 members), due to the successful SIGIR 2006 conference in Seattle, as well as delayed memberships from SIGIR 2005.  The successful Amsterdam conference may result in a further increase, but work is necessary to increase retention of new members.   Participation in the SIGIR Proceedings Package and the DiSC package are roughly flat.  Liz emphasized the great value the DiSC package provides.

Liz then reviewed finances, showing the SIGIR bank balance had increased from US $431K to US $610K from 2006 to 2007, due to the successful Seattle conference,  as well as increased SIGIR-related downloads from the ACM Digital Library.  We are now receiving more income from the Digital Library than from membership dues.  Looking forward, the upcoming replacement of mailed printed proceedings by mailed DVDs (both for proceedings mailings to members, and for both SIGIR and CIKM in the Proceedings Package), last year's dues increase, and likely profits from the very successful SIGIR 2007 conferences will improve finances.

## III. SIGIR Services

Liz reviewed services SIGIR provides to its members:

- SIGIR Forum (paper and online): Your suggestions and, even more, your content are solicited. See *http://www.acm.org/sigs/sigir/forum*.

- Reduced Conference Registration: SIGIR members receive "member" rate registration (or whatever registration rate is cheapest) at all SIGIR-sponsored and "in cooperation" conferences.

- Access to IR-related content in ACM Digital Library.

- Optional SIGIR Proceedings and DiSC Packages. Liz again stressed the great value of the DiSC Package (US $10 for DVD proceedings of a range of database and IR-related conferences). The DiSC Package may not be mentioned on your ACM/SIGIR renewal materials, but you may write it in by name.

- Optional SIGIR CD: 25 Years of SIGIR Proceedings, 1978-2002.

- Student Travel Awards: The amount awarded in 2007 was approximately US $41,500. As in 2006, a total of 54 students were supported, of whom 29 came from North America, 12 from Australia/Asia, 11 from Europe, 1 from South America, and 1 from Africa. Liz expressed thanks for contributions to SIGIR student travel by Google, Microsoft Research (in honor of Karen Sparck Jones), and Amit Singhal (in honor of Don Crouch). *(Secretary's Note: Information on SIGIR Student Travel awards is made available to authors of accepted papers, posters, and demos for each SIGIR Conference.)*

- Best Paper and Best Student Paper Awards: ACM SIGIR (the organization, not the conference) presents awards for Best Paper and, if author of best paper is not a student, Best Student Paper at each SIGIR Conference. The 2007 Best Paper and Best Student Paper Awards was sponsored by IBM, whom Liz thanked.

- The SIG-IRList newsletter. *(Secretary's Note: And the SIGIR-ANNOUNCE email list for notifications from the SIGIR information officer.)*

- The SIGIR Doctoral Forum: Liz herself had run the SIGIR 2007 Doctoral Forum. The Forum took place on Monday, 23 July 2007 (the tutorial day) at SIGIR 2007. A group of PhD students was invited, based on their applications (36 applications this year, up from 18 in 2006), to present their dissertation ideas and get feedback from experienced IR researchers and other students. The forum will be run again next year. Comments on this program are encouraged and should be directed to next year's chairs, Sue Dumais and Andrew Trotman.

*(Secretary's Note: SIGIR also maintains the SIGIR website ([http://www.sigir.org/](http://www.sigir.org/)), which is available to everyone.)*

# IV. Initiatives, Issues, and Directions

## *IV.A. SIGIR Bylaws Update*

As mentioned above, the outgoing SIGIR EC in the past year updated the SIGIR bylaws, which had not been changed in 10-15 years, to more accurately reflect how SIGIR is actually run.  Besides cleaning up of obsolete items, major changes included increasing the EC term from 2 to 3 years (and removing the "automatic renewal" option), making the Past Chair an official member of the EC (*Secretary's Note: So there's no escape, Jamie!*), and streamlining the process for future bylaws changes.

## *IV.B. Preserving Our History*

Donna Harman has been leading an initiative, supported by the SIGIR EC, to identify, scan, and make available hard-to-find early IR papers, reports, and books.  Based on responses from SIGIR members, a committee of volunteers has identified the first wave of documents to be scanned and included.  The first batch of materials will be scanned in August 2007 in the form of TIFF files and PDF with OCR output, one file per page. Donna is interested in suggestions on how to make materials available, mentioning the ACL Anthology as one possible model.  She also asked for any advice on scanning, making the material available to search engines, and encouraging student experiments. *(Secretary's Note: Advice on dealing with copyright issues for particular materials is always welcome as well.)*  She indicates that the project will go slowly on scanning until we have a better idea how the materials can be used.

# V. Conferences

Liz reviewed upcoming conferences that ACM SIGIR is sponsoring, or has in-cooperation arrangements with.  There are financial differences for ACM SIGIR between the two arrangements, but in both cases ACM SIGIR members get to attend the conference at the lowest ("member") registration rate.

SIGIR sponsored conferences (past, present, and future) discussed included SIGIR 2005-2010, CIKM 2005-2007 (co-sponsored with SIGWEB in 2006), JCDL 2005-2007 (co-sponsored with SIGWEB and IEEE TCDL), and WSDM (co-sponsored with SIGMOD, SIGKDD, and SIGWEB).   Recent and upcoming "In cooperation" conferences included AIRS, CORIA, CIVR, and ECIR. See *www.sigir.org* for details on upcoming conferences.

## *V.A.  Past, Present, and Future SIGIR Conferences*

Efthimis Efthimiadis discussed SIGIR 2006, which was the largest SIGIR ever.  Final figures for SIGIR 2006 were 74 papers accepted from 399 submissions, 63 poster (152 submissions), 11 demos (17 submissions), 8 tutorials (15 submissions), 9 doctoral consortium participants (18 submissions), and 9 workshops (13 submissions).  There were 710 attendees (630 full conference registrations, 252 tutorial registrations, and 311 workshop registrations).  Thirty-four countries were represented, with the greatest number of attendees from the United States (478), and Canada (28), the UK (28), China (27), Germany (15), Australia 14), Japan (14), and the Netherlands (13) with more than 10 attendees.  A total of 324 new members of ACM SIGIR (192 regular, 132 student) were registered due to attending SIGIR 2006. Total profit was a record US $201,297.61, with 16% going to ACM and 84% to SIGIR.

Wessel Kraaij discussed the ongoing SIGIR 2007 conference, the first with an RSS feed, among other things.  The General Chairs were Arjen de Vries and Wessel Kraaij, while the Program Chairs were Charlie Clarke, Norbert Fuhr, and Noriko Kando.  There were 599 registrees for the main conference (a

new record for Europe), 363 for tutorials, 292 for workshops, and a cap (likely to be met) of 150 for the industry event. Thirty-eight countries were represented. In comparison with SIGIR 2002 in Tampere, attendance was proportionally up from Spain, Canada, and China, and proportionally down from Korea, Japan, and Israel.

Wessel plotted interesting statistics showing the number of SIGIR papers per million inhabitants for various countries in the period 1997-2007. Of the top 12 such countries all but Israel and Hong Kong (which became part of China during this interval) have hosted a SIGIR conference. On that basis he predicted proposals for SIGIR 2011 from Israel and China. See below for the accuracy of his predictions.

Mun-Kew Leong discussed plans for SIGIR 2008, to be held in Singapore, and reviewed recent round trip air fares, facts about Singapore (English speaking, very very near the Equator, very very air conditioned), and tourist information. The conference will be 20 July to 24 July, 2008 at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront hotel. There will be a barbeque banquet on the beach.

James Allan discussed plans for SIGIR 2009 (July 19-23, 2009) in Boston. It will be held at the Sheraton Boston Hotel in the Back Bay area of Boston. Workshops and tutorials will be held at Northeastern University, 0.75 miles away. The conference banquet is tentatively planned for the JFK Library.

SIGIR 2010 will be held in Geneva, Switzerland. The General Chairs are Stephane Marchand-Maillet and Fabio Crestani.

Aya Sofer presented a proposal to hold SIGIR 2011 in Haifa, Israel, while Jun-Yen Nie presented a proposal to hold it in Beijing, China, proving Wessel's predictions correct! Liz solicited additional bids from the floor (none were offered), and also reminded attendees that they could be directed to the SIGIR EC. There was a floor discussion about the relative ease of getting a visa to Israel versus China (as well as the United States) for nationals of various countries. A straw poll of business meeting attendees showed relatively equal support for Israel and China.

## V.B. Sponsored and Other Conferences

Liz reported that financial results were not yet in for CIKM 2006, which was held in Arlington, Virginia, USA. The General Chair was Philip Yu, and the Program Chairs Vassilis Tsotras, Edward Fox, Bing Liu, Kun-lung Wu, and Eric Brown.

There was a brief presentation by Mario Silva on CIKM 2007, which will be held in Lisbon, Portugal. The Conference Chair was Mario Silva, while the Program Chairs were Alberto Laender, Ricardo Baeza-Yates, Deborah McGuinness, Bjorn Olstad, and Oystein Haug Olsen.

There was a brief presentation on CIKM 2008 by Jimi Shanahan in late October or early November of 2008. It will be held in Napa Valley, California. May 21, 2008 is the paper deadline.

JCDL 2006 was held June 11-15, 2006 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA. There were 400 attendees and a profit of $105,000, of which 1/3rd comes to SIGIR. The General Chair was Gary Marchionini, and the Program Chairs were Michael Nelson and Cathy Marshall.

JCDL 2007 was held June 17-23, 2007 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. SIGIR, SIGWEB, and IEEE TCDL are 1/3$^{rd}$ sponsors. Attendance was down slightly from 2007, and the strong Canadian dollar caused problems, but the conference should at least break even. The General Chair was Edie Rasmussen, and the Program Chairs were Shigeo Sugimoto, Elaine Toms, and Ray Larson.

## VI. Other Issues

The meeting ended with some discussion of other issues.

### VI.A. Viability Review

Liz thanked Jamie Callan for successfully leading SIGIR through its "viability review" by ACM. The next one will be in four years.

### VI.B. ACM Grades

Liz reminded attendees of the new ACM Member Grades: Senior Members, Distinguished Engineer/Scientist/Member, and Fellow. Details are available at *http://awards.acm.org/html/amg_call.cfm*. The SIGIR EC is happy to help members in preparing packages, and takes an active role in nominating Fellows, with the Awards Chair leading the effort.

### VI.C. Planning for Future Conferences

The geographic rotation of SIGIR conferences encouraged by the EC has nominally been a 5 year cycle, but in recent practice has actually been a 3 year cycle (Europe / US / Other). Liz indicated the new EC has expressed a preference for a 3 year cycle by time zones/longitude ranges (essentially corresponding to Africa/Europe, Asia/Australia, and the Americas), but encouraged attendees to contact the EC with comments.

### VI.D. Industry Day

SIGIR 2007 featured the first Industry Day, with presentations describing industrial applications of IR. The cap of 150 attendees was reached. The SIGIR EC is interested in hearing feedback from attendees on strengths and weaknesses of the event. A similar event is being considered for SIGIR 2008.

### VI.E. Mentoring Program

Mark Sanderson briefly discussed the mentoring program that has been run for the past several SIGIR conferences. For 2007 there were 30 mentors paired with prospective SIGIR submitters. Thirteen of these people submitted papers, and 1 of these papers was accepted. A survey showed mentors were ambivalent about the usefulness of the program, while mentees were very positive. Some support from the floor was expressed for the usefulness of the process in overcoming SIGIR's "cliquey" image. Liz raised the question of whether the mentoring program reduces the willingness of mentors to participate in other reviewing or volunteer activities. The EC will re-evaluate the program.