ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting 2009: Secretary's Notes
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I. Opening Matters

The 2009 ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting took place on Wednesday, 22 July 2009, at the SIGIR 2009 conference in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. The meeting opened at 12:14PM was led by ACM SIGIR Chair, Liz Liddy. Liz introduced the EC members — Vice-Chair (Mounia Lalmas), Treasurer (Alistair Moffat), Secretary (Dave Lewis), and Past Chair (Jamie Callan) — and reviewed the role of the EC. Under the current ACM SIGIR bylaws, these Executive Committee (EC) members will serve a single three year term (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2010) without option for renewal.

Also in attendance was Tetsuya Sakai, the 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 also thanked other outgoing and incoming SIGIR volunteers. SIG-IRList editor Raman Chandrasekar is leaving after five years(!), to be replaced by Mark Smucker. Alistair Moffat is leaving after three years as SIGIR Awards Chair, and a replacement is being sought. Ian Ruthven and Diane Kelly are continuing as SIGIR Forum Editors, and Edie Rasmussen is continuing as SIGIR liaison to the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries (JCDL).

Liz reviewed the duties of the EC, reminded attendees that elections for new EC members will occur in spring of 2010, and urged attendees to consider running for an EC position. You may nominate yourself for any office, or suggest others you feel would do a good job, by contacting any current EC member or the Chair of the Nominating Committee, Mark Sanderson. *Secretary's Note: Voting will be over the web. The URL will be announced in April or May 2010 on the email lists SIG-IRLIST and SIGIR-ANNOUNCE, as well as at www.sigir.org. We strongly encourage all SIGIR members to join at least the SIGIR-ANNOUNCE list (see next item) to receive important SIGIR-related announcements.*

Liz reviewed the 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 ACM Digital Library.
- Optional Proceedings and DiSC Packages.
- The SIG-IRList email newsletter. *Secretary's Note: SIGIR also maintains the SIGIR website (http://www.sigir.org/), as well as the SIGIR-ANNOUNCE email list for infrequent but*

important notifications from the SIGIR information officer. Subscription information for SIG-IRList and SIGIR-ANNOUNCE can be found at http://www.sigir.org/sigirlist/index.html.

- Salton Award: This is awarded triennially at the SIGIR Conference to a person who has made "...*significant, sustained and continuing contributions to research in information retrieval*". Liz again congratulated 2009 Salton Award winner, Sue Dumais, and thanked the selection committee, which consisted of the available past Salton Award winners: Bill Cooper, Steve Robertson, Bruce Croft, Tefko Saracevic, and Keith van Rijsbergen.
- Best Paper and Best Student Paper Awards, and Student Travel 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. ACM SIGIR also presents numerous travel awards for students to attend the SIGIR Conference.   Liz thanked the SIGIR 2009 conference sponsors for their support of these awards and the conference in general. They were: Microsoft Research, Information Retrieval Facility, Yahoo, Google, IBM Research, Sun Microsystems, Northeastern Univ., and U Mass Amherst. The Best Paper Award was sponsored by IBM Research, student travel was supported by Microsoft Research, and additional student travel awards for female students were supported by Google.

Liz mentioned the SIGIR dues are not going up this year. She also reminded the audience that all attendees of a SIGIR conference automatically become members of ACM and ACM SIGIR. Liz encourages attendees to remain members of SIGIR in the future, and mentions that some people in the past have renewed their ACM membership and accidentally forgotten to renew their SIGIR membership on the same form.

II. Treasurer's Report

Alistair began by reviewing SIGIR membership, which showed a decrease from 2007 (1547 members) to 2008 (1138 members), but will likely show an increase in 2009. He explained that the peak in 2007 was largely the result of a delay by ACM in processing of 2005 registrations, along with a large attendance at SIGIR 2006 in Seattle. We have a stable base of about 850 Professional Memberships.

Alistair then reviewed finances, showing the SIGIR bank balance was roughly stable from 2008 (US $802K) to 2009 (projected at roughly US $827K). SIGIR lost approximately $52K on the SIGIR 2008 conference due to lower registrations and higher catering and other costs than expected. However, SIGIR made money on the CIKM 2008 ($34K, 50% participation), WSDM 2008 ($13K, 25% participation), and JCDL 2008 ($9K, one-third participation) conferences.   Alistair points out that the total remittance by SIGIR back to ACM for these four conferences was US $96K. As in recent years, SIGIR received more income in this reporting period from the Digital Library ($75K) than from membership dues ($42K).

Our reserves continue to be greater than the total budget for the yearly conference. SIGIR 2009 will probably make money.   SIGIR's biggest expense is student travel, which was $75K for SIGIR 2008, $50K (plus $5K from a sponsor) for SIGIR 2009, and will probably increase for SIGIR 2010. Alistair asked attendees to let the EC know what they feel SIGIR should be spending money on.

This phase of the meeting saw presentations on conferences that ACM SIGIR has sponsored, is sponsoring, or will sponsor.   These included SIGIR 2008-2013, CIKM 2009, JCDL 2010, and WSDM 2010.

Secretary's Note: See www.sigir.org for details on other upcoming conferences which are sponsored by SIGIR, in-cooperation with SIGIR, or are just related to IR. Note that for both sponsored and in-cooperation conferences, ACM SIGIR members get to attend the conference at the lowest ("member") registration rate.

III.A. SIGIR 2008

Tat-Seng Chua discussed SIGIR 2008. Our first SIGIR conference in Asia was quite successful, with 576 unique registrants (543 full conference registrations, 465 tutorial registrations, and 289 workshop registrations). Registrants came from 35 countries, with the greatest number of attendees from the United States (155), Singapore (76), China (53), South Korea (43), United Kingdom (30), Germany (25), Australia (21), India (21), The Netherlands (21), Japan (16), Spain (16), Hong Kong (12), Canada (11), France (10), and Taiwan (10).

(Secretary's Note: The unusually high number of tutorial registrations for SIGIR 2008 likely resulted from two factors. First, 45% of SIGIR 2008 registrants took advantage of bundled options which included up to two tutorials along with the conference registration, at a discounted rate. Second, even full price tutorials were comparatively inexpensive compared to recent SIGIRs, at Singapore $175 =~ US $128 in July 2008.)

III.B. SIGIR 2009

James Allan discussed the ongoing SIGIR 2009 conference. The General Chairs were James Allan and Javed Aslam, while the Program Chairs were Mark Sanderson, ChengXiang Zhai, and Justin Zobel. Preliminary figures as of Wednesday morning were a total of 598 unique registrants, with 535 registrants for the main conference, 231 for tutorials, 290 for workshops, and 40 who registered for the industry track only. There were 286 first time attendees. Registrations broke down as 228 who were already ACM members, 152 non-ACM registrations (these attendees became ACM and SIGIR members by their attendance), 186 student registrations (these attendees became student members of ACM and SIGIR if they were not already), and 39 industry registrations.

Registrants came from 32 countries, with the largest numbers of registrations coming from the United States (337), the United Kingdom (38), China (31), Canada (29), Korea (21), Germany (17), the Netherlands (16), Spain (13), Japan (13), and Italy (10).

SIGIR 2009 had surveyed registrants as to how they would like to receive proceedings in the future. Despite multiple responses being allowed, the totals added to 100%: 50% on USB key, 26% printed, and 24% CD-ROM.   James also presented several humorous slides, including data on banquet meal choices, t-shirt size, and their correlation. He promised popsicles for the final post-closing coffee break, and so there were.

III.C. SIGIR 2010

The SIGIR 2010 General Chairs, Stephane Marchand-Maillet and Fabio Crestani, discussed plans for SIGIR 2010, to be held in Geneva, Switzerland. They reviewed the organizers, transportation options to and within Geneva, facts about Geneva, and tourist information. The program chairs will be Hsin-Hsin Chen, Efthimis Efthimiadis, and Jacques Savoy. They assured attendees that despite Geneva's being an expensive city in general, affordable lodging will be available. The conference will be held 18 to 23 July, 2010 on the University of Geneva campus. See www.sigir2010.org for more details. Doug Oard asked whether the conference will really be six days, and the Chairs indicated that this depends on whether the industry event will be on a separate day.

III.D. SIGIR 2011

Jian-Yun Nie and Wei-Ying Ma gave a brief presentation on SIGIR 2011, which will be held in Beijing, China. They are still evaluating hotel options, with an emphasis on ones near the center and major sightseeing landmarks. They extolled the dining and cultural attractions of Beijing.

III.E. SIGIR 2012

Liz announced that the EC had chosen Portland, Oregon, USA as the site for SIGIR 2012. Bill Hersh, the General Chair for SIGIR 2012, spoke briefly. Relatively little has been planned so far, but the conference will probably be in a hotel. Dates will likely be in mid to late July.   Bill welcomes suggestions, and will be working with ACM closely on planning.

III.F. Proposals for SIGIR 2013 Conference

SIGIR alternates among three regions for its conferences, and 2013 is the turn of the Europe, Middle East, and Africa region. Liz introduced the five (!) cities which have been proposed as possible locations for SIGIR 2013.

Vanessa Murdock made a presentation in favor of Barcelona, Spain. Ricardo Baeza-Yates would be one of the General Chairs. Vanessa emphasized the beauty of the city, many good locales for conferences, and the late closing hours of the bars.

Paraic Sheridan, Gareth Jones, Cathal Gurrin, and Seamus Lawless made a presentation in favor of Dublin, Ireland.   Conference events would be at Trinity College and at a new convention center which is currently under construction. The presenters mentioned good transportation and promised a reception at the Guinness brewery.

Mounia Lalmas (stepping out of her EC role), Victor Lavrenko, and Dawei Song made a presentation in favor of Edinburgh, Scotland on behalf of the Scottish IR Alliance, with backing of the Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance. They discussed the overlap with the Edinburgh Arts festival and related cultural events. Two conference locations are under consideration. Whisky was mentioned.

David Carmel made a presentation in favor of Haifa, Israel. The organizing committee includes members from IBM Research, Yahoo, Google, and The Technion. He stressed the good climate, cultural attractions, many local high tech organizations, and low prices. Israeli wine was mentioned.

John Tait made a presentation in support of Vienna, Austria. The organizing committee includes members from the IRF, Rudolph Mayer TU Wien, Universitat Wien, and MODUL University. He stressed its benefits as a major international conference location, with good food and major artistic and tourist attractions. *Secretary's Note: As far as my notes show, John did not mention ethanol, but they presumably have that in Vienna as well. :-)*

A straw poll asking business meeting attendees to vote for all locations which they supported, and the EC will take the results into account in evaluating the alternatives. *Secretary's Note: Due to the large number of interested cities, the EC will be asking for a short pre-proposal from each city, and will use that to choose a smaller set of groups from which to solicit full proposals.*

III.G. Other Sponsored Conferences

Jimmy Lin discussed the large number of submissions to CIKM 2009 (1158 abstracts and 923 full papers!), as well as a bit on the cost, locale, and character of the conference. CIKM 2009 will be held Nov 2-6, 2009, at the Asia World Expo Center in Hong Kong. Sponsorship of CIKM 2009 is split 50/50 between ACM SIGIR and ACM SIGWEB.

Edie Rasmussen, the ACM SIGIR representative to the JCDL conferences, discussed JCDL 2010, which will be co-located with ICADL (International Conference on Asian Digital Libraries). It will be held in what Edie referred to as "Surfers Paradise, Australia" and which the JCDL web page refers to as "Brisbane".   Surf's up from June 21-25, 2010. This will be the first JCDL conference located outside North America. Sponsorship of the joint conference is split 50/50 between JCDL and ICADL, with the JCDL sponsorship breaking down as one-third each among ACM SIGIR, ACM SIGWEB, and IEEE-CSDLTC.

Finally as a last minute item just before the conference closed at 1:47 PM, Liz was reminded about WSDM. Brian Davison spoke briefly, and said the Third ACM International Conference on Web Search and Data Mining (WSDM 2010) will be held 4-6 February 2010 on the campus of Polytechnic Institute of NYU in the Brooklyn area of New York, NY.   While financials are still tentative at this writing, the plan is for sponsorship to be split evenly among SIGIR, SIGKDD, SIGWEB, and SIGMOD.

IV. Other Issues

Before the business meeting, Liz and the EC had solicited topics for discussion via the SIG-IRLIST mailing list. Continuing the change in meeting format introduced last year, a portion of the business meeting was reserved for discussing these issues.

IV.A. Reviewing of SIGIR Conference Submissions

Mark Sanderson, one of the SIGIR 2009 Program Chairs, reported on the changes made in reviewing of SIGIR conference submissions for 2009, in response to the increasing load of submissions and the perception that the reviewing system had been overwhelmed in 2008. Changes included:

1) Assigning two Senior Program Committee (SPC) members to each paper, and giving more authority to the SPC members
   a) SPC members choose reviewers for papers, not the Program Chairs.

b) The assigned SPCs for the paper could choose whether or not to read the paper themselves.
c) If the two SPC members assigned to a paper agreed on accepting or rejecting it, their decision was not further reviewed.
2) Reviewers were allowed to bid for papers (though final decision was up to SPC members).
3) Review form was changed to ask about comprehensiveness of literature review.

Physical SPC meeting was replaced by a week of targeted, asynchronous, online discussion of disputed papers. This was viewed as a way to save money (travel costs for physical PC meeting has been a substantial budget item for past SIGIR conferences), encourage discussion, and reduce the carbon footprint of the conference. The discussion for each disputed paper was done using the ConfMaster web-based system, and took place largely among the two SPC members and three reviewers assigned to the paper, though other SPC members could also participate as suggested by the PC chairs or through their own inclination.

A survey of 20 SPC members showed substantial support for changes 1a, 2, and 3, with more debate about 1b, 1c, and 4. Most surveyed SPC members (11) felt the reviewing decisions were of comparable quality with 2008, with a few (5) feeling decisions were slightly or significantly better, and a few (4) feeling they were slightly or significantly worse.

Liz mentioned that the EC has decided that an online program committee will be used for SIGIR 2010 as well, after which the relative merits of online and physical PC meetings will again be evaluated based on our two years of experience with the system.

Mark solicited comments from the audience about reviewing.

Raman Chandrasekar said that his submission was rejected, but he got useful comments on it. He said other people had told him they got one line reviews. Mark said that specific complaints about review quality were checked against the record of online discussions, and the online discussions were found to be of high quality in those cases. He said that Cheng (Program Chair ChengXiang Zhai) had made strong efforts to get PC members to write high quality reviews. Justin Zobel (the third Program Chair) added that they had attempted to audit all reviews and get reviewers to improve them where necessary, but that some reviewers were not cooperative.

Mark encouraged attendees to send additional comments to the Program Chairs or Conference Chairs for either SIGIR 2009 or SIGIR 2010.

IV.B. Workshop Papers, Publication, and the ACM Digital Library

The EC received some requests that papers from workshops held at SIGIR conferences be included in the ACM Digital Library. The difficulty with that is that they are then publications, which would make them ineligible for later submission to the SIGIR conference. Liz solicited comments from the floor, and said that the EC would try to make sure our policy was clearer in the future.

Mark Sanderson mentioned that he'd noticed the quality of metadata in the ACM Digital Library is quite low, and this affects searches of papers in, for instance, Google Scholar. Mark Smucker mentioned that people need to be careful when filling out the ACM copyright form to specify the metadata correctly.

Ian Soboroff said that he always tries to put workshop papers on the workshop website when he's involved with organizing a workshop. He said it would be nice if the papers were in the Digital Library to preserve them better.

Raman Chandrasekar said he liked it when workshop papers were in the ACM Digital Library, but mentioned something about ACM restrictions on access. He would like to see workshop papers in the DL.

Dennis Federly said that for workshops he's run, he was able to negotiate putting workshop papers on the web and in the DL.

David Karger said he would not submit a paper to a workshop where it was treated as a publication. He'd like workshop papers to be in the DL without being treated as publications. Steve Robertson agreed.

Doug Oard said you can't have a single policy for all workshops. They will vary in the amount of access they want to give to publications. Bill Hersh agreed with David and Steve, and also urged people to expand more workshop and conference papers into journal papers.

IV.C. TREC Survey

NIST (the US National Institute of Standards) has contracted with RTI, a nonprofit research institute, to conduct an analysis of the impact of the TREC evaluations and conferences. RTI is currently designing a web-based survey for IR researchers on the impact of TREC on their research. Liz urged attendees to help out by pre-testing the survey and giving feedback to RTI, as well as taking the finalized survey when it is announced on IR-LIST this fall. Ian Soboroff mentioned that RTI is also particularly interested in information on the economic impact of TREC. [Secretary's Note: To take the pre-test or give other feedback on this project, contact the Data Collection Lead, Dallas Wood (dwood@rti.org or ph. 919 541-8743).]

IV.D. Conference Structure

Liz mentioned a number of comments and suggestions that have been made about the structure of SIGIR conferences. These included:

- Multiple poster sessions.
- Making proceedings purely electronic, possibly in combination with making poster papers and talk papers the same length.
- Scheduling the many auxiliary meetings (editorial boards, group projects, program committees for other conferences) on a separate day to keep senior people around the main conference more. (Liz mentioned she would be soliciting feedback from journal editors and conference organizers about this possibility.)

Liz solicited other comments:

- Vanessa Murdock thought the conference was well-structured this year, but that the need to get your own lunch leads to more hanging out with people you know than is desirable.

- David Karger mentioned that at NIPS (Neural Information Processing Systems) people who give talks also have posters.

- Raman Chandrasekar likes the printed proceedings, and liked the clustering of posters by topic this year. He suggested breaking the poster session into multiple groups. He also mentioned that the KDD (Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining) conference has a different pricing structure we might look at.

- Mark Sanderson mentioned that ECIR (European Conference on Information Retrieval) has poster papers which are 2/3rds the length of full papers, and have a 5 minute talk associated with them.

- David Harper proposed a cruise among all the proposing cities for SIGIR 2013. *(Secretary's Note: Hey, I just report this stuff...)*

- Doug Oard asked how we can capture posters to share with the rest of the world.

- Ian Soboroff mentioned the CIKM put some sort of video of talks on the web.

- Tetsuya Sakai said that he felt the oral presentations at SIGIR 2009 were not as good as the papers. He proposed some sort of review/award for talks.

- David Karger asked where additional suggestions could be sent. Liz said they could be sent to Liz or other EC members.

Liz thanked everyone associated with SIGIR 2009, and the meeting closed at 1:47 PM.