
ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting 2003: Secretary's Notes

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1 Opening Matters

The 2003 ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting took place on Wednesday, 30 July 2003, at the SIGIR '03 conference in Toronto, CA. Jamie Callan opened the meeting at approximately 12:30 PM, Eastern Daylight Time. All ACM SIGIR Executive Committee members were in attendance: Jamie Callan (Chair), Fabrizio Sebastiani (Vice-Chair), Justin Zobel (Treasurer), and David Lewis (Secretary). These members are beginning their two-year terms.

Jamie introduced Noriko Kando as the new Asian Regional Representative to the EC. The current EC has members from Europe and Australia, so no new Regional Representatives from these areas were chosen by the EC. (The current EC has an informal policy to have Regional Representatives from each region of significant SIGIR membership which is not represented by an EC officer.)

Jamie Callan expressed his thanks for the hard work of the outgoing Executive Committee members now finishing up four years of service: Susan Dumais (Chair), Susan Gauch (Vice-Chair), Liz Liddy (Secretary), and himself (Treasurer). He also thanked David Harper and Ross Wilkinson as outgoing Regional Representatives.

Jamie also thanked Eric Brown (the SIGIR webmaster and information officer), Mark Sanderson & Peter Anick (editors of SIGIR Forum), and Christine Borgman (SIGIR liason to the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries) for their past and/or ongoing service.

2 Reports

2.1 Annual Report

Jamie announced that the 2002 Annual Report is available at <http://www.acm.org/sigir/>. The report discussed the strong quality and good international participation in SIGIR conferences and publications. The organization will continue to work on increasing benefits to members, getting students involved, and increasing appeal to the broad international IR community and to industrial organizations. SIGIR membership has been growing for the past two years, reversing many years of decline. Automatic registering of SIGIR Conference attendees in SIGIR has been a major factor, and encouragingly many of these people have stayed members for more than the year they attended the conference.

2.2 Financial Report

Jamie reviewed SIGIR's financial status. Positives are our recent membership increase, generally profitable conferences, and a strong bank balance. Negatives are declining interest income, increasing ACM costs, increasing cost of supporting student travel, and the inevitable unpredictability of conference income (e.g. SIGIR 2003, as discussed below). A mixed factor is the SIGIR *Member Plus* memberships (<http://www.acm.org/sigir/forum/S2000/Member-Plus.pdf>), also known as the SIGIR Proceedings Package. These have had good sales, but may currently be underpriced and undercutting higher profit solo sales of the SIGIR Proceedings.

On balance, SIGIR is financially healthy. Given our reliance on unpredictable conference income (dues cover less than half of expenses), the EC has and will continue to monitor conference finances closely.

2.3 Viability Review

Jamie reported that the ACM SIG Governing Board conducts a Viability Review of SIGIR every 4 years. Next one is in September, 2003. It is not expected to be a problem, given growing membership, successful conferences, and financial stability.

3 SIGIR Services

Jamie reviewed services SIGIR provides to its members.

3.1 Student Travel

Student travel awards for SIGIR 2003 totalled US \$18,550 to 24 students (14 from North America, 5 from Europe/Middle East, and 5 from Australia/Asia). The number of students funded dropped from 2002 to 2003 (from 26 to 24), as did the total amount spent on awards (dropping from \$20,400), but the award levels increased.

Secretary's Note: Information on SIGIR Student Travel awards is made available to authors of accepted papers, posters, and demos for each SIGIR Conference.

3.2 Awards

SIGIR (the organization, not the conference) presents awards for Best Paper and Best Student Paper (which may be the same paper) at each SIGIR Conference. The EC has decided to revise the awards from US \$100/author to US \$1000/paper (split evenly among the authors). The 2003 award was sponsored by IBM Corporation. Sponsorship of future awards is under discussion.

3.3 Publications

As mentioned above, the SIGIR Member Plus program aka SIGIR Proceedings Package is an excellent deal for members. We're losing money on it right now, but it will still be an excellent deal even if a small price increase is necessary.

A major project of the EC in recent years has been organizing the scanning of all Annual SIGIR Conference proceedings from the 1st (1978) through the 25th (2002), and all SIGIR Forum issues from 1975 to the present. Jamie expressed special thanks to Stephen Robertson, Donna Harman, Bruce Croft, Dagobert Soergel, Ernst Schuegraf, and Jack Minker for loaning materials for this project.

The scanned proceedings are included in the two-disc CD ROM collection "25 Years of SIGIR Proceedings, 1978-2002". This collection was distributed to everyone who was a member of SIGIR in 2002 or attended SIGIR 2002. (Questions about missing CD ROMs should be directed to acmhelp@acm.org. The collection can also be purchased at <http://store.acm.org/acmstore/>, search on SIGIR.)

The proceedings and Forum issues are also available on the SIGMOD Anthology Silver Edition DVD set or on selected of the individual SIGMOD CD-ROMs (<http://store.acm.org/acmstore/>, search on SIGMOD). All the SIGIR proceedings, and the Forum issues since 1986, are also available through the ACM Digital Library, to both full Digital Library subscribers and to any SIGIR member (as SIGIR "sponsored materials").

Secretary's Note: The definition of "all SIGIR proceedings" is actually trickier than it sounds. The "25 Years of SIGIR Proceedings, 1978-2002" disks contain proceedings of all the ACM SIGIR annual conferences. However, ACM SIGIR sponsored at least three earlier IR meetings:

1. A 1961 ACM conference organized by Jack Minker, Mandalay Grens and Herbert Koller called the "National ACM Conferernce on Design, Implementation and Application of IR-Oriented Languages". Several of these papers appeared in CACM in 1961 and 1962.

2. A 1971 conference organized by Jack Minker and Sam Rosenfeld with proceedings called "ACM SIGIR Information Storage and Retrieval Symposium Proceedings".

3. A similar 1973 conference.

The proceedings of the 1971 conference are included in the ACM Digital Library and the SIGMOD CD-ROMs. ACM SIGIR would be very interested in getting access to proceedings of the 1961 or 1973 meetings to scan and include in a future CD ROM. Please contact Jamie Callan or sigir-ec@acm.org if you know of a copy of these. Similarly, please contact us if you have access to Volumes 1-8 of SIGIR Forum, from 1965-1972(?).

SIGIR produces two serial publications, the print and web-based (<http://www.acm.org/sigs/sigir/forum>) SIGIR Forum , and the web-based (<http://www.acm.org/sigir/sigirlist>) (with email alerts) newsletter SIG-IRList . Mark Sanderson is retiring as an editor of SIGIR Forum and will be replaced by Ian Ruthven. Contributions to both SIGIR Forum and SIG-IRList are encouraged. *Secretary's Note: The SIGIR Information Officer also occasionally sends out SIGIR-ANNOUNCE mailings by email.*

SIGIR also has a loose affiliations with the journal *ACM Transactions on Information Systems*, where Gary Marchionini recently took over as editor.

4 New Initiatives and Directions

4.1 SIGIR Doctoral Forum

David Harper discussed the SIGIR Doctoral Forum, which will have a trial run at the SIGIR 2004 Conference. It will provide a forum for Ph.D. students to discuss their projects with senior IR researchers and with other students. There were some questions from the floor about travel support, about how students will be selected (DH says on the basis of applications), and about whether the students who are most in need of such help will be the ones who actually make it in (DH indicates there will be attempt to choose a diverse group of students). Details will be posted at <http://www.sigir.org/sigir2004/>, or contact David Harper (djh@scms.rgu.ac.uk) with questions or comments.

Secretary's Note: SIGIR will attempt to arrange partial financial support for travel to the Doctoral Forum.

4.2 ACM Awards

The SIGIR EC is establishing a Nominating Committee, currently chaired by Sue Dumais, to put forward members from the IR community as candidates for ACM Awards (ACM Fellow, Turing Award, etc.). The goal is to recognize outstanding accomplishments by IR researchers and improve their visibility in the larger community.

4.3 Membership Coordinator

SIGIR has had, off and on, a Membership Chair or Membership Coordinator, and we would like to fill this post more consistently from now on. Among other reasons, legal changes in some countries require more formality in gather lists of email addresses used for mass mailings. Volunteers are encouraged to write sigir-ec@acm.org, or contact any of the EC members.

5 Conferences

5.1 SIGIR Annual Meetings: 2002-2006

Jamie Callan briefly reviewed SIGIR 2002 (Tampere, Finland), thanking Kalervo Jarvelin as General Chair of a successful SIGIR that turned a US \$30,000 profit for ACM SIGIR.

Charlie Clarke, co-chair of SIGIR 2003 (Toronto, Ontario, Canada) with Gord Cormack, gave an amusing and heartily applauded presentation on overcoming the trials and tribulations of hosting SIGIR 2003 in

Toronto (SARS, concurrent Rolling Stone concert, unfavorable exchange rates with US dollar). The hotel and other partners in Toronto showed flexibility in the aftermath of the SARS epidemic, and the conference is likely to be near breakeven financial. Charlie observed that the number of paper submissions continues to climb, with the acceptance rate for SIGIR 2003 falling to 17%.

Mark Sanderson discussed preparations for SIGIR 2004 (<http://www.sigir.org/sigir2004/>), which will be held July 25 - July 29, 2004 in Sheffield, United Kingdom. Mark indicates there are direct trains from Manchester to Sheffield, and urges booking early for Manchester. Sheffield is also just 2.5 hours from London. Currently there's very cheap flights from Europe to the UK. Doug Oard is the mentoring chair for SIGIR 2004 and took the opportunity to review the history of the mentoring program and encourage volunteering as a mentor.

Nivio Ziviani reviewed preparations for SIGIR 2005 (<http://www.sigir.org/sigir2005/>), which will take place in September, 2005 in Salvador, Brazil. Efthimis Efthimiadis reviewed preparations for SIGIR 2006 (<http://www.sigir.org/sigir2006/>), which will take place in Seattle, WA, USA.

5.2 SIGIR Annual Meetings: 2007 and Beyond

Jamie introduced the topic of upcoming SIGIR Annual Meetings. Traditionally, SIGIR Annual Meetings alternated between Europe and North America (NA). In recent years, there has been increasing interest in holding SIGIR in other locations. ACM SIGIR now receives at least some profits from (or takes some losses from) SIGIR Annual Meetings wherever they are held, not just when they are held in North America. This opens up more flexibility in siting the conference.

Jamie indicated that the previous EC adopted a 5-year cycle of NA/Europe/NA/Europe/Other, which matches the already scheduled conferences in Europe (Sheffield, UK, 2004), Other (Salvador, Brazil, 2005), and NA (Seattle, US, 2006). This cycle would indicate a European site in 2007, and the past EC encouraged proposals from European groups. However, Jamie also mentioned that objections had been raised at the 2002 SIGIR Business Meeting that a 5-year cycle would delay the first Asian SIGIR until 2010 at the earliest.

Proposals were then presented by three groups interested in hosting SIGIR 2007. Arjen DeVries presented a proposal from Arjen deVries, Djoerd Hiemstra, and Wessel Kraaij to hold SIGIR 2007 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Joasiane Mothe presented a proposal from a group of researchers to hold SIGIR 2007 in Toulouse, France. And Jamie Callan, on behalf of Noriko Kando presented a proposal on behalf of NTCIR (Japan), National University of Singapore, and A-Star (Singapore) to hold SIGIR 2007 in Singapore.

There was vigorous discussion of the proposals and of the larger issues of what the appropriate cycle should be, and whether a formal cycle was needed at all. Financial issues discussed included cost of travel between various locations, and likelihood of financial success of the conference in various regions.

Another set of issues revolved around what the best strategy was for the overall health of an international organization. The experience of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL) was mentioned, which originally had one conference, then added a European conference (the EACL Conference) held in those years in which no other ACL conference was held in Europe, and now has added a North American conference (the NAACL conference) to be held in years when no other ACL conference is held in North America. An Asian ACL Conference is being contemplated. *Secretary's Note: And then there's the COLING conference, and now the Human Language Technology Conference, both of which have had close relationships with some version of the ACL conference. But I'm not going to get into that.* There was some vigorous debate from ACL members present about whether this strategy has been good for ACL, and debate about whether it would be good for SIGIR.

Straw votes of the attendees at the Business Meeting were taken, which showed a roughly 20-to-1 preference for Asia in 2008 or later vs. Asia in 2007, a roughly 2-to-1 preference for Netherlands over France in 2007, and a roughly 3-to-1 preference for a 3-year cycle NA/Europe/Other over a 5-year cycle NA/Europe/NA/Europe/Other.

Jamie indicated the EC would be taking all of this under advisement.

5.3 Associated Conferences

Jamie then reviewed issues related to non-SIGIR conferences with which SIGIR has associations.

SIGIR is a sponsor of the yearly CIKM (Conference on Information and Knowledge Management). CIKM 2002 was held in McLean, Virginia, USA. It was profitable and returned US \$7,500 to ACM SIGIR. Jamie thanked the General Chair, Charles Nicholas, on behalf of SIGIR.

CIKM 2003 will occur November 3-8, 2003 in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. Don Kraft is General Chair. CIKM 2003 (<http://bit.csc.lsu.edu/cikm2003/>) had 386 submissions and 15% acceptance rate (20% counting papers demoted to posters), again reflecting the huge interest in IR and related areas.

SIGIR is also a sponsor of the yearly JCDL (ACM/IEEE-CS Joint Conference on Digital Libraries). JCDL 2002, held in Portland, Oregon, USA, was profitable and returned US \$8,000 to ACM SIGIR. Jamie thanked Bill Hersh, the General Chair of JCDL 2002.

JCDL 2003 was held in Houston, Texas, USA on May 27-31, 2003. The General Chair was Geneva Henry, and final financial results on that conference were not available as of the Business Meeting.

JCDL 2004 (<http://www.jcdl2004.org/>) will be held June 7-11, 2004 in Tucson, Arizona, USA. Gary Marchionini mentioned from the floor that JCDL 2005 will be in Boulder or Denver.

Secretary's Historical Note: ACM SIGIR has been a sponsor of the CIKM Conferences since 1994, splitting sponsorship variously with SIGART, SIGLINK, SIGGROUP, and SIGMIS. SIGIR was a sponsor of the original ACM Digital Libraries Conferences between 1996 and 2000, splitting sponsorship variously with SIGLINK and SIGWEB. In 2001, the ACM Digital Libraries Conference merged with the IEEE Advances in Digital Libraries Conference to form JCDL. Since then ACM SIGIR has been a co-sponsor of JCDL with ACM SIGWEB and the IEEE Computer Society.

ACM SIGIR is exploring whether to have "in cooperation with" status with HLT-NAACL 2004. HLT has expressed an interest in becoming a major IR conference. Donna Harman mentioned from the floor that HLT is particularly interested in work that combines different fields of language processing, and in having their conference be a place for people from the various language processing fields to make connections.

6 Other Issues

Lucian Russell suggested there's a need for a database and taxonomy of good IR papers. Lucian thinks it would be possible to get NSF funding to support this. Jamie has encouraged him to pull together a committee of people to work on this. *Secretary's Note: The need for such a database has been a recurring theme at SIGIR Business meetings.*

David Harper encouraged the EC to set up some mechanism to communicate among organizers of IR-related conferences, to avoid overlapping or very close together conference dates. *Secretary's Note: Another recurring theme over the years.*

Jamie encouraged anyone with comments or suggestions for the EC to write sigir-ec@acm.org, or contact any of the individual members.

The meeting closed at approximately 2:30PM EDT.