

---

## FROM THE CHAIR...

---

Greetings SIGIR Members. Much has happened during the last six months....

**Three SIGIR members were named ACM Fellows** in December: Past SIGIR Chair **Susan Dumais**, “for research contributions to information retrieval and human-computer interaction”; **Usama Fayyad**, “for contributions to machine learning, data mining and knowledge discovery”; and **Thomas Henzinger**, “for contributions to formal verification and hybrid systems”. Two other members of the IR community were also named ACM Fellows: Lee Giles and Peter Norvig. Congratulations to you all!

The last few months have been filled with good and sad news about **Karen Spärck Jones**. The sad news is that Karen died of cancer on April 4. As you probably know, Karen was a pioneer in automatic language processing and information retrieval. Karen was a good friend to many within the IR community, and a leader in the best sense of the word. She was known for a commitment to excellence, support of junior researchers, and an influential and productive research career that spanned several decades.

Karen’s many contributions to computer science were recognized with three major awards prior to her death. Karen was named the **Athena Lecturer** for 2007-2008 by ACM’s Committee on Women in Computing (ACM-W), she won the **ACM-AAAI Allen Newell Award** “for seminal contributions to the field of information retrieval, for cross-disciplinary contributions bridging information retrieval and computational linguistics, and for her role in facilitating international cooperation in the field of computational linguistics”, and she received the British Computer Society’s **Lovelace Award**.

Athena Lecturers typically give their lecture as a **keynote talk** at a conference they select; Karen chose to give her talk at the SIGIR conference. She was pleased and honored to have an opportunity to speak to the SIGIR community one last time, but knew that she would be unable to give the talk in person. Karen suggested that she give her talk by videotape. We hope that the IR community will view this talk as an opportunity to celebrate Karen’s achievements and contributions to information retrieval, as well as to hear her thoughts on a topic of her choice. The talk title is **Natural Language and the Information Layer**.

In December the SIGIR Executive Committee submitted a set of proposed **new bylaws** to the ACM. The new bylaws would change the terms of elected officers from two years to three, with no automatic extension; eliminate archaic language and organizational structures; and revise the procedures for handling contested elections and removing officers and appointed Chairs. The Executive Committee expected that the members would need to vote to approve or reject the bylaws, but ACM recently instituted new procedures that allow it to approve “minor” bylaws revisions without a vote of the membership. ACM approved our new bylaws.

The Special Issue of SIGIR Forum, which is the SIGIR conference proceedings, is **moving to DVD** this year. This is a far more cost-effective solution than paper proceedings, and perhaps also more convenient; the proceedings this year will be approximately 1,000 pages.

Two years ago I reported on the distribution of SIGIR members across regions and countries. The table below summarizes the results as of April, 2007.

Region	2007		2004	
	Count	%	Count	%
N. America	978	60	784	61
Europe	326	20	294	23
Asia	229	14	164	13
AU/NZ	38	2	29	2
S. America	33	2	9	1
Middle East	17	1		
Africa	5	0	7	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,626</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,287</b>	<b>100</b>

Country	2007		2004	
	Count	%	Count	%
USA	918	57	738	57
Japan	91	6	85	7
United Kingdom	69	4	61	5
Canada	59	4	46	4
Germany	46	3	40	3
Australia	37	2	26	2
S. Korea	36	2	27	2
China	32	2	15	1
Netherlands	27	2	16	1
India	27	2	11	1
Brazil	23	1	4	0
Spain	21	1	13	1
Italy	18	1	17	1
France	17	1	11	1
Switzerland	17	1	16	1
Taiwan ROC	17	1	14	1
Finland	16	1	14	1
Ireland	13	1	9	1
Israel	13	1	11	1
Singapore	13	1	9	1
Sweden	13	1	11	1
Other	104	6	104	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,626</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,287</b>	<b>100</b>

The number of members grew by 26% during this period, due to the large influx of new members enrolled as a result of attending the SIGIR 2006 conference in Seattle; if you are one of those new members, welcome! There was large percentage growth from China, the Netherlands, India, and Brazil, but this growth was against low initial baselines. For the most part membership appears to be growing at about the same rate everywhere.

You may notice that the membership numbers are far higher than in the past. This is due to a large influx of new members who were enrolled automatically as a result of attending SIGIR 2005 and 2006. Although we hope that many of these people will choose to remain in SIGIR, I would not be surprised to see these numbers drop significantly next year.

As you probably know, the current officers' terms expire on June 30. An election is currently underway to select replacements. This is my last From the Chair column.

During the last four years **many volunteers** have helped the elected officers run SIGIR. I particularly want to acknowledge the people who took on tasks with recurring duties; in most cases they did as much work as the elected officers.

- Regional Representative to the EC (Asia): Noriko Kando
- Forum Editors: Peter Anick, Ian Ruthven, and Mark Sanderson (past)
- SIG-IRList Editor: Raman Chandrasekar and Mark Sanderson (past)
- Information Directors: Mounia Lalmas, and Eric Brown (past)

- 
- Awards Chairs: Alistair Moffat and Susan Dumais (past)
  - Digital Preservation Committee Chair: Donna Harman

In addition to people with titles, we have had help from a much larger community of people who stepped forward to provide advice or help with particular tasks when asked or needed. On behalf of the Executive Committee, I sincerely thank all of you. We simply could not have done it without you.

On behalf of the outgoing Executive Committee, thank you for allowing us to serve as SIGIR officers during the last four years. It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve.

Jamie Callan  
chair\_sigir@acm.org