

SIGIR Annual Report: July 2004 – June 2005

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Introduction

July 2004 – June 2005 was another busy and productive year for SIGIR. Overall, SIGIR is healthy financially, membership is stable, the SIG has an active group of officers and volunteers, and it continues to develop new initiatives and services.

Executive Committee

The last several SIGIR Executive Committees had their terms extended from two to four years, in part because it seems silly to replace officers who have just learned their jobs, and in part to reduce the costs associated with holding elections. At the SIGIR Business Meeting the current EC announced its willingness to serve an extended term, and then turned the meeting over to Past Chair Susan Dumais to lead a discussion and informal vote. The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of an extended term, so the EC petitioned the SIG Governing Board for an extension of its term, which was granted. The current EC, and most of the volunteers, will serve until June 2007.

Membership Rates

SIGIR has been losing money on its members for years. The services the SIG provides cost more than the \$20 basic membership fee, and the Proceedings Package costs more than the \$30 fee. At one time the fees covered costs, but costs increase every year, while membership fees rarely change. The last increase was so long ago that nobody seems to know when it was; ACM records suggest that the rates haven't changed since at least 1993. SIGIR absorbed losses for years, covering them from conference profits. However, this year we reached the point where we must either cut services or increase fees. The new fees better represent the actual costs of services.

Category	Old Cost	New Cost
Basic membership	\$20	\$30
Student membership	\$10	\$15
Air Service option	\$3	\$14
Proceedings Package option	\$30	\$45
Digital Symposium Collection (DiSC) option	N/A	\$10

SIGIR is still losing money on the Proceedings Package. JCDL and CIKM proceedings have become very expensive in recent years. We are raising the price of this package, and we will also try to reduce the costs of the proceedings. If necessary, we will raise the price of this package again in two years to cover costs.

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 Seventh Annual ACM SIGIR International Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval, SIGIR'04 (<http://www.sigir.org/sigir2004/> /) was held in Sheffield, UK from July 25 – July 29, 2004. Mark Sanderson served as the General Conference Chair, and Kalervo Järvelin, James Allan, and Peter Bruza served as Program Co-Chairs. The meeting featured a strong technical program: 58 full papers, 65 posters, and 7 demonstrations were presented. The Best Paper Award went to Hui Fang, Tao Tao, and ChengXiang Zhai for their paper *A formal study of information retrieval heuristics*. When the best paper overall is a student paper, as it was this year, SIGIR does not make a separate Best Student Paper award. In addition, a keynote address was given by Gordon Bell, 8 tutorials preceded the meeting, and 11 workshops on emerging topics and trends followed the meeting. There were 347 paid attendees for the main conference, and more than 100 each for workshops and tutorials, making it by far our largest conference outside of the US. The conference was successful financially as well, returning more than \$30k to SIGIR.

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 Doug Oard, who chaired the mentoring program for SIGIR 2004, 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, and in 2004 by grants from the EU, IBM, and NSF. Fifty eight students from North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia received support to attend the 2004 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. The 2004 DC was viewed as a great success by both the senior researchers and the students. The program will be continued in 2005, and most likely become a regular part of SIGIR conferences.

In September SIGIR received bids from Singapore (led by Mun Kew Leong) and Beijing, China (led by Jian-Yun Nie) to host SIGIR 2008. Both bids were very strong, and either site would have been a good choice. The EC will select a site before the 2005 Business Meeting, but in either case, SIGIR 2008 will be held in Asia.

CIKM.

CIKM'04, the Thirteenth International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management, was held in Washington, DC, USA, Nov 8-13, 2004 (<http://ir.iit.edu/cikm2004/>). David Grossman served as General Conference Chair, and Luis Gravano, ChengXiang Zhai, Otthein Herzog and David Evans served as Program Co-Chairs. CIKM has a focus on problems at the intersection of information retrieval, databases and knowledge management techniques. Keynote addresses were provided by Raghu Ramakrishnan (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Isidore Rigoutsos (IBM TJ Watson Research Center) and Patrick Hayes (Florida Institute of Human and Machine Cognition). There were 60 papers and 22 posters, along with tutorials and workshops. The conference made a small profit (\$5,324).

CIKM continues to improve in quality, and provides an important bridge between the database

and information retrieval communities. One sign of its growing acceptance and maturity as an important conference is that in 2005 CIKM will be held in Bremen, Germany. This will be the first time that CIKM has been held outside the US.

SIGIR became the sole sponsor of CIKM 2004 when SIGMIS decided to drop its involvement with the conference. SIGIR was willing to be the sole sponsor for the short-term, but believes that an IR organization should not have sole long-term control of a conference that serves IR, DB, and related research communities. A long-term goal is to have SIGMOD and possibly SIGWEB join as co-sponsors of the conference.

JCDL

The Fourth Joint ACM/IEEE Conference on Digital Libraries (JCDL'04) was held in Tucson, Arizona, USA from June 7-11, 2004 (<http://www.jcdl2004.org/>). The conference was co-sponsored by ACM (SIGIR and SIGWEB) and IEEE (TCDL). The conference is the fourth merged DL conference, encompassing what had previously been two separate digital library conferences (ACM's DL conference and IEEE's ADL conference). Hsinchun Chen, Howard Wactlar, and Ching-chih Chen served as Conference Chairs, and EE-Peng Lim and Mike Christel served as Program Chairs. The program consisted of 34 full papers, along with 27 short papers, 4 panels, 15 demos, 35 posters, and tutorials. The Vannevar Bush Award for Best Paper was presented to Mor Naaman, Yee Jiun Song, Andreas Paepcke, and Hector Garcia-Molina for their paper *Automatic organization for digital photographs with geographic coordinates*. The Best Student Paper award was presented to Marcos André Gonçalves, Edward A. Fox, Aaron Krowne, Pável Calado, Alberto H. F. Laender, Altigran S. da Silva, Berthier Ribeiro-Neto for their paper *The Effectiveness of Automatically Structured Queries in Digital Libraries*. The Best International Paper award was presented to Yi-Chun Chu, David Bainbridge, Matt Jones, and Ian H. Witten for their paper *Realistic books: A bizarre homage to an obsolete medium?* This was a successful conference with 301 conference attendees. Profitability is still unknown.

The Fifth Joint ACM/IEEE Conference on Digital Libraries (JCDL'05) was recently held in Denver, Colorado, USA, June 7-11, 2005. Mary Marlino served as General Conference Chair, and Tamara Sumner and Frank Shipman were the Program Chairs. More details of this conference will be available in the next annual report.

In Cooperation

In addition to 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 2005 (CONFérence en Recherche Information et Applications), 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 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.

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, 1301 in June 2004, and 1259 in June 2005, 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.

Four 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 158 this year). SIGIR is losing money on this program, and will continue to do so even after the rate increases go into effect in July. The EC is working to reduce the program's costs, and encouraging members to transition to the new DiSC package (see below). If the program is not at breakeven in two years, we will increase costs again.

This year SIGIR introduced 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 last 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. The Awards Committee operated for two years under Sue's guidance; she has now stepped down. The EC

must now evaluate its initial awards efforts to determine whether it is worth continuing.

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.

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. Perhaps most importantly, we continue to have very strong participation in ACM SIGIR by the international IR community, especially in a willingness to serve as volunteers for conference and SIG-related activities. The Executive Committee thanks the IR community for its help during the last year.