

## **From the Chair....**

Most SIGIR members don't think much about the day-to-day operation of ACM SIGIR, the organization that publishes Forum and oversees the operation of SIGIR conferences. ACM SIGIR is an organization of about 1,200 members, and for the most part it runs smoothly. However, I was reminded recently that in some ways we are fortunate indeed.

In September the ACM SIG Governing Board conducted its quadrennial (every four years) review of SIGIR Viability. I attended the meeting and gave an abbreviated version of the presentation I made at the SIGIR Business Meeting (see David Lewis' minutes elsewhere in this issue, or see the presentation on the SIGIR Web site). After a very brief discussion, SIGIR was found viable for another four years.

Our smooth evaluation was based on our consistent record of profitable and high-quality conferences, an active membership, and a broad set of services to ACM SIGIR members and the IR community at large. Some SIGs have difficulty finding people to run for office or to serve as volunteers; some SIGs have difficulty running profitable conferences, especially in the recent economic downturn. SIGIR has managed to avoid those problems. Your active involvement is what makes SIGIR a success.

During the last four years SIGIR was lead by Sue Dumais (Chair), Susan Gauch (Vice Chair), Liz Liddy (Secretary), me (Treasurer), Ross Wilkinson (Regional Representative, Australia/Asia), and David Harper (Regional Representative, Europe). You probably know that SIGIR elected a new set of officers last Spring. The elected officers were me (Chair), Fabrizio Sebastiani (Vice Chair), David Lewis (Secretary), and Justin Zobel (Treasurer). Noriko Kando was appointed Regional Representative for Asia, continuing a SIGIR tradition of having regional representatives from core regions that don't have elected representation on the Executive Committee.

Mark Sanderson, who served as an Editor for SIGIR Forum stepped down after the Spring issue was completed. We thank Mark for helping improve Forum quality over the last two years; his efforts are much appreciated. Ian Ruthven is the new Editor for the Spring issue. Ian has prior publishing experience from the Computer Journal, so look for the Forum to continue improving. *Send us your content!*

Mark Sanderson and Stephen Levy served as editors for the SIG-IRList electronic newsletter after it was adopted by SIGIR. They stepped down in August, and have been replaced by Raman Chandrasekar. Thanks Mark and Stephen for your work managing the transition of IRList to SIG-IRList.

Charlie Clarke and Gord Cormack were General Chairs for the SIGIR conference this year. SIGIR is always deeply indebted to the SIGIR, JCDL, and CIKM conference chairs, but a special thanks is due Charlie and Gord this year. Attendance was down 25% due to concerns about SARS in Toronto. Charlie and Gord did an excellent job of financial management in a very uncertain situation. As I write this, it looks like the conference will either make or lose a very small amount. Amazing work guys!

## News From the SIG Governing Board

SIGIR is one of about 35 ACM SIGs. The ACM SIG Governing Board meets twice a year, to manage the SIGs, to provide a forum for exchanging information about what has and hasn't worked for other SIGs. The September 19-20 SGB meeting made some decisions that will affect SIGIR to varying degrees.

For the last ten years there have been four types of SIGs: Multi-service (like SIGIR), conference-only, newsletter-only, and eForum. Originally the different types of SIGs paid different "taxes" to ACM, but no longer, so the SGB has now eliminated these classes. All SIGs are now considered multi-service, and each November will be required to publish a list of services it will offer for the coming year. The SIGIR EC was already planning to do this, so this new requirement won't have much effect on SIGIR.

ACM's "taxes" on SIGIR will increase by about 10% next year. This increase comes at a bad time for SIGIR, because we are launching the new Doctoral Forum at the SIGIR 2004 conference, and because SIGIR 2003 did not make money. The EC will address this new revenue gap, but it is likely that SIGIR will run a small deficit this year and next.

## New Initiatives

The SIGIR EC is working on several new initiatives to improve services to members. Right now we're working on a variety of issues, some of which are listed below.

- **Guiding the Toulouse and Amsterdam groups** through the final stages of bidding for SIGIR 2007: Watch <http://www.sigir.org/> for an announcement in December about where SIGIR 2007 will be held.
- **Mentoring Asian groups** that might want to bid next summer to host SIGIR 2008.
- **Developing a more coherent electronic mailing list policy**, to resolve confusion over the identities of SIG-IRList and SIGIR-ANNOUNCE, and to better deal with spam laws in different countries.
- **Finding funding for the SIGIR 2004 Doctoral Forum.** Our goal is to fund travel for all student participants. Contact me if your organization might like to sponsor it.
- **Evaluating "in cooperation" agreements** with other conferences. When a conference is "in cooperation" with SIGIR, you get the lowest registration rate. As I write this it seems likely that HLT/NAACL 2004 and CIVR 2004 will both be held "in cooperation" with SIGIR. Check the <http://www.sigir.org/> Web site before you register for an IR-related conference. If it is "in cooperation" with SIGIR, be sure to mention your SIGIR membership when you register for the conference.
- **And more....**

Active and opinionated members are one of SIGIR's strengths. If you think of ways that SIGIR can be improved, please let me know by email. SIGIR is run by volunteers, so there is a limit to what we can accomplish by ourselves. However, with your help, we can continue to improve SIGIR.

- *Jamie Callan*