

From the Chair....

Greetings SIGIR Members. My notes this month are a summary of information presented at the SIGIR 2006 Business Meeting. See David Lewis' column for additional information.

Record Attendance at SIGIR 2006

If you didn't attend the SIGIR 2006 conference, it seemed like you were the only one. Strong attendance from the "core" IR community combined with strong attendance from the Seattle IR community, Boeing, and Microsoft made this by far the largest SIGIR ever.

Salton Award Winner

The Salton Award, SIGIR's highest award for contribution to the field of Information Retrieval, is awarded every three years. The selection committee consists of past award winners and the SIGIR Chair. The selection process first considers a broad set of about a dozen candidates, and then narrows down to a smaller list from which the winner is selected. Candidates are evaluated based upon a variety of contributions to the field, including research, teaching, service, and leadership. Past winners include Gerry Salton, Karen Spärck Jones, Cyril Cleverdon, William Cooper, Tefko Saracevic, Stephen Robertson, and Bruce Croft.

I am pleased to report that the 2006 Salton Award went to **Keith van Rijsbergen**. Most SIGIR members already know Keith and his many accomplishments; many of us are "research descendants" of Keith. The plaque presented to Keith at the opening of the SIGIR 2006 conference reads as follows.

For more than thirty years of significant, sustained, and continuing leadership and research contributions in the field of information retrieval, and for unmatched excellence as a mentor of students and younger researchers.

Keith's keynote address, entitled "Quantum Haystacks", described the evolution of his research on retrieval models over the years, and paid homage to colleagues and others who particularly influenced his work. See <http://www.sigir.org/awards/awards.html> for the talk abstract.

Congratulations Keith!

Membership

Membership in SIGIR dropped last year from 1,363 in June 2005 to 1,238 in June 2006. This 9% drop was due mostly to a miscommunication between the SIGIR EC, the SIGIR 2005 conference organizers, and ACM. SIGIR usually gives a free one-year membership to non-members who attend the SIGIR conference. This did not happen after the 2005

conference, so the drop is due to attrition from free 2004 memberships that did not renew, and the lack of free 2005 memberships. This problem was corrected after the close of the fiscal year. That, and the record attendance at SIGIR 2006, mean that next year's membership numbers will be considerably higher than usual.

Growth in subscriptions to the optional SIGIR Proceedings Package (CIKM and JCDL conference proceedings) slowed dramatically this year, presumably in response to the higher price. SIGIR still loses money on this package, so the price may increase again in a year or two.

The new optional SIGIR DiSC Package (a DVD containing many conference proceedings and SIG newsletters) attracted 57 members during its first year of availability.

Budget

SIGIR had income of US\$ 477K and expenses of US\$ 515K, for a loss of US\$ 38K last year. Although we don't like to lose money, this loss is easily explained.

- The EC chose to spend an additional US\$ 10K last year on student travel awards to the SIGIR 2005 conference in Brazil. Student travel was much more expensive than usual last year because few students were "within region".
- We had a US\$ 27K drop in conference income. JCDL 2005 was barely profitable, SIGIR 2005 profits were adversely affected by unfavorable currency exchange rates, and CIKM 2005 profits were not credited to our account before the close of the fiscal year.
- The increase in membership dues had not yet taken effect.

The prospects for next year are much brighter. CIKM 2005 did make a profit, and is credited to the current fiscal year. The dues increases will be fully implemented this year. Final figures are not yet available, but it appears that both JCDL 2006 and SIGIR 2006 did very well; those profits will also be credited to the current fiscal year.

New Elections on the Horizon

The terms of the current SIGIR officers end on June 30, 2007. At the SIGIR conference the Executive Committee announced that Ellen Voorhees would serve as Nominations Chair. As in recent elections, our goal was a choice of three strong candidates for each position. Ellen presented a set of candidates to SIGIR in late September. SIGIR presented the list to ACM, and is now awaiting approval. The election will occur sometime in the March-May 2007 timeframe. Watch the SIGIR web site or your mail box for additional details and your ballot.

New ACM Member Grades

FYI, ACM recently created two new advanced membership categories: *Senior*, and *Distinguished*. A member may self-nominate for these new categories, although they may require additional recommendations from peers. There is no additional cost. See http://www.acm.org/awards/amg_call.html for details. The Executive Committee encourages senior members of the IR community to apply, if appropriate; over time these may become informal prerequisites for more advanced awards, such as ACM Fellow.

As always, we value your opinion. If you have ideas about how SIGIR can be improved, please let me know by email.

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