
SYMPOSIUM REPORT

Information Retrieval Facility Symposium in Vienna

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Vienna

On November 8-9, 2007 the new Information Retrieval Facility (www.ir-facility.org) held its first annual Symposium in Vienna. The focus of the symposium was patent retrieval, and it was attended by 125 experts in Information Retrieval, Intellectual Property Management and related areas. Delegates came from Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, Canada, the US and 10 European Countries. In terms of organisations, delegates came from Universities, Patent Offices (EPO, WIPO) and from commercial organisations ranging from majors like Shell and GlaxoSmithKline to one and two person consultancies.

The Information Retrieval Facility (IRF) is a not for profit foundation (an Austrian Verein) which aims to promote and facilitate research in large-scale information retrieval, especially in patent retrieval and related areas. The Chair of the Scientific Board is Keith van Rijsbergen. Its formation has been supported since 2006 by Matrixware Information Services GmbH, but the aim is to attract support from a wide variety of industrial organisations and government sources to guarantee the sustainability of the foundation in due course. The IRF is currently (December 2007) providing free access to an SGI Altix supercomputer to users who have followed a simple registration process, and to a large collection of patent data. Work is currently underway to improve the software available, and to provide access to a wider variety of test collections.

The symposium was opened by Dr. Johannes Hahn, the Austrian Federal Minister of Science, Francisco Webber, Chairman of the IRF Executive Board and CEO of Matrixware, and Keith van Rijsbergen. This session was followed by a series of short talks from Intellectual Property (IP) professionals on a specific problem in IP each followed by a response from an IR expert on what is known in the research literature relevant to the problem. Well known figures from the IR world who took part included Manmatha, Jie-Yun Nie, Mounia Lalmas, Peter Willett, Peter Bruza, Greg Grefenstette, Kal Jarvelin, Ian Ruthven, and Mark Sanderson. Bruce Croft and Norbert Fuhr contributed as session chairs. A full list is available on the IRF web site (<http://www.ir-facility.org/index.php/public/article/225>). The final afternoon was devoted to a series of workshops in which small groups of IR and IP people worked together on specific topics and reported back ways to set up joint activities including research proposals, specialist test collections and so on. This activity is continuing through mailing list (which others can join on a controlled basis). There were also demonstrations of commercial products and a variety of social events.

The organisation of the 2008 Symposium is now well under way: it will take place on the 6th and 7th November 2007, again in Vienna. Look at the IRF Web site for more details.
