

ACM SIGIR 2008

Thirty-First Annual International
ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and
Development in Information Retrieval

20-24 July 2008, Singapore

Proceedings

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Tat-Seng Chua
and Mun-Kew Leong

Special Issue
of the SIGIR Forum



Association for
Computing Machinery





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**The Association for Computing Machinery
2 Penn Plaza, Suite 701
New York, New York 10121-0701**

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ISBN: 978-1-60558-164-4

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ACM Order Number 606081

Printed in the USA

Preface from the General Co-Chairs

Welcome to SIGIR 2008 in Singapore! This is the 31st annual meeting of the ACM Special Interest Group in Information Retrieval, and the first time that SIGIR is hosted in Asia.

SIGIR is the premier academic conference in information retrieval. With the surge in activities and interests in the Web, the attendance and submission of papers to the conference has grown tremendously over the last few years, with a corresponding rise in the quality and variety of papers. This has allowed us to put together a wide spread of technical sessions covering topics such as ranking, query analysis, filtering, evaluation, summarization, multimedia retrieval and question-answering, as well as emerging topics like web search, social tagging and collaborative filtering. In addition to the main paper sessions, we have a packed schedule with two really interesting plenary keynotes, a full day of tutorials on state-of-the-arts topics, workshops on important emerging topics after the main conference, as well the doctoral consortium, technical demos, and the poster session.

SIGIR prides itself as forum where both young and established researchers easily interact to discuss topics and concerns of common interests. To this end, we have also put together a series of social programs including the newcomers breakfast, welcome reception, poster reception, and the conference banquet.

We would like to thank our main sponsors, Microsoft, Yahoo!, and Google for their perennial strong support, and to welcome the Information Retrieval Facility as a new SIGIR sponsor. It has really helped us to keep the registration fees affordable in the face of rising costs everywhere. Also, the conference location here in Singapore in 2008 has meant that an unprecedented amount has been spent on student travel support. The chairs and the SIGIR Exco would especially like to thank Amit Singhal, who made a significant donation in honor of Donald B. Crouch; and Microsoft, who directed that a component of their sponsorship package be committed to student travel support in honor of Karen Spärck Jones.

The successful organization of a conference of such scales and technical depth would not have been possible without the hard work over the last many months of all the various chairs. We want to thank Doug Oard, Sung Myaeng and Fabrizio Sebastiani and their band of hardworking reviewers in the international program committee, Fabio Crestani, Efthimis Efthimiadis and Hang Li and their team for posters and demos, Edie Rasmussen and her team for looking after tutorials, Peter Anick and Hwee Tou Ng and their team for workshops, Jian-Yun Nie and his mentors, Noriko Kando and her best paper committee, and, finally, Sue Dumais and Andrew Trotman and their panel of doctoral mentors. Lastly, we'll like to thank all our local organizers, but especially Ee-Peng Lim who was responsible for these proceedings, Min-Yen Kan for the registration, Junhan Zhu for the website, and Mrs Siew Foong Ho, who has been amazing as our conference secretariat and behind-the-scenes organizer.

We hope you will find the programs that we have put together at this conference fruitful and thought-provoking, and will take the opportunity the conference offers to meet old friends and make new ones, to share and discuss the latest ideas, and to explore Singapore, our culture, and, most especially, our cuisine!

Tat-Seng Chua

*National University of Singapore
Singapore*

Mun-Kew Leong

*National Library Board
Singapore*

Preface from the Program Committee Co-Chairs

Welcome to the 31st year of SIGIR, the Annual International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval. The growth in SIGIR in recent years has been remarkable. SIGIR 2005 received a record 368 full paper submissions, SIGIR 2006 eclipsed that record with 399 submissions, and SIGIR 2007 exceeded all expectations with 490 submissions. Things stabilized a bit this year, with 497 full paper submissions from 35 countries. Notably, more submissions were received from Pacific Rim countries (182) than from any other region (North America 159, Europe 107, India 31, Middle East 9, South America 7, Africa 2). Of these submissions, we were able to accept 85 full papers (17%). These contributions include many long-standing areas of information retrieval research (e.g., indexing, evaluation, classification, user studies), several topics that have received increasing attention in recent years (e.g., learning to rank, social tagging) and some emerging topics that may inspire more work along similar lines in the future (e.g., collaborative search, sentiment analysis). Along with these full papers, we accepted 99 posters, 11 demonstrations, 9 tutorials and 10 workshops, and 11 Ph.D. candidates were selected to participate in our doctoral consortium.

Again this year, the selection of full papers was performed using a two-stage reviewing process. A total of 35 members of the Senior Program Committee (two more than in 2007) were selected based on their expertise, with significant attention to balancing continuity from previous years with addition of new perspectives, and to reflecting the increasingly diverse global scope of the SIGIR membership. The PC co-chairs and Senior PC members nominated more than 400 primary reviewers, 337 of whom accepted our invitation and actually reviewed papers (an 8% increase over the 313 reviewers who performed that critical role for SIGIR 2007). For the first time this year, PC and Senior PC members bid for papers, which were then assigned by the PC chairs based on those bids, the reviewer's stated subject expertise, and avoiding known conflicts of interest. Each paper was assigned to three primary reviewers (which resulted in five papers typically being assigned to a reviewer), and to one Senior PC member (which typically resulted in 14 papers being managed by a Senior PC member). All reviewing was double blind, with the identity of authors known only by the PC chairs during the review process, and with reviewer identities known only by unconflicted members of the PC. The Senior PC member assigned to each paper encouraged reviewers to discuss substantive differences of opinion, they requested additional reviews when needed, they led the discussion of the paper at an in-person PC meeting (at the University of Maryland, March 27-28, 2008) at which final decisions were made, and they produced a meta-review for each paper that summarized the basis for the Program Committee's decision. We wish to especially thank the members of the Senior PC for their outstanding work!

Similar processes were followed for selection of posters and demonstrations, tutorials, workshops, and doctoral consortium participants. We are grateful to Peter Anick, Fabio Crestani, Susan Dumais, Efthimis Efthimiadis, Hang Li, Hwee Tou Ng, Edie Rasmussen and Andrew Trotman for their leadership of those important selection processes, and to Jian-Yun Nie for his leadership of the mentoring program that serves as an important entry point for researchers who are new to our community. We also wish to thank the SIGIR executive committee for their thoughtful and responsive guidance throughout the process, and to express our appreciation to Ee-Peng Lim, who as Proceedings chair has brought our program together in a form that will make a lasting mark on our field. Finally, we all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Tat-Seng Chua and Mun Kew Leong, the conference General Chairs, for their visionary leadership and their adroit management to the myriad of details that have made this first Asian SIGIR conference possible!

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