ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting 2004: Secretary's Notes

David D. Lewis

David D. Lewis Consulting & Ornarose, Inc.
E-mail: <sigirsec@daviddlewis.com>

1   Opening Matters

The 2004 ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting took place on Wednesday, 28 July 2004, at the SIGIR 2004 conference in Sheffield, UK. All ACM SIGIR Executive Committee (EC) members were in attendance: Jamie Callan (Chair), Fabrizio Sebastiani (Vice-Chair), Justin Zobel (Treasurer), and David Lewis (Secretary). The current committee members began a 2-year term in 2003. At the end of the Business Meeting, the EC members indicated their willingness to have their terms extended by 2 years (as allowed by our by-laws). The Business Meeting was turned over to Sue Dumais (past Chair), and the EC left the room to allow the membership to vote. The membership voted to extend the terms.

Also in attendance was Noriko Kando, the Asian Regional Representative to the EC. The current EC has members from Europe and Oceania, so there are no Regional Representatives from these areas. (The current EC has an informal policy to have Regional Representatives from each region of significant SIGIR membership which is not represented by an EC officer.)

Jamie also thanked Eric Brown (the SIGIR webmaster and information officer), Peter Anick & Ian Ruthven (editors of SIGIR Forum), Raman Chandrasekar (editor of SIG-IRList), Christine Borgman (SIGIR liaison to the Joint Conference on Digital Libraries), Gene Golovchinsky (SIGIR liaison to SIGCHI), and Sue Dumais (SIGIR Awards Chair) for their past and/or ongoing service.

2   Reports

Jamie summarized the SIGIR Annual Report for 2004 (July 2003 - June 2004), which is available at http://www.acm.org/sigir/. He discussed the Viability Review which the ACM SIG Governing Board conducts every 4 years. SIGIR was reviewed in September 2003, and passed easily due to our stable membership and finances. Membership has continued to grow since 2003. Automatic registering of SIGIR Conference attendees in SIGIR is a major factor.

Jamie reviewed finances, indicating that the SIG continues to be financially healthy. However, more than half the cost of services (student travel, awards, etc.) is funded through conference profits, and there is a lot of variance in these profits. The EC will continue to keep close track of the finances of all planned SIGIR conferences.

3   SIGIR Services

Jamie reviewed services SIGIR provides to its members:

- SIGIR Forum: Your suggestions and, even more, your content are solicited. See http://www.acm.org/sigs/sigir/forum for more.

- SIGIR Proceedings Package: Subscribers get SIGIR, CIKM, and JCDL proceedings mailed to them. This has become increasingly popular (almost 140 subscribers in 2004), and, at the current cost of $30/year, we're losing money. Cost will probably go up next year.

- Digital Symposium Collection (DiSC) Package: A DVD with a large number of database-related proceedings and newsletters. Cost is $10/year, but it may not be mentioned on your SIGIR or ACM renewal forms. (Secretary's Note: The information on this on the ACM SIGMOD web pages is woefully out-of-date, and ACM's shopping site is spitting out ODBC errors. I'd suggest writing in a request for the "latest version of the SIGMOD Digital Symposium Collection DVD", or writing ACM Member Services at `ACMHELP@acm.org` for advice.)

- SIGIR CD: 25 Years of SIGIR Proceedings, 1978-2002.

- Student Travel Awards: These increased substantially from $18,500 for SIGIR 2003 to $53,000 for SIGIR 2004. The amount came 60% from EU funding obtained by Mark Sanderson (SIGIR 2004 Chair). A total of 58 students were supported, 18 from North America, 25 from Europe, and 15 from Australia/Asia. Whether this level of funding can be sustained for future conferences is not clear. *Secretary's Note: Information on SIGIR Student Travel awards is made available to authors of accepted papers, posters, and demos for each SIGIR Conference.*

- Best Paper and Best Student Paper Awards: SIGIR (the organization, not the conference) presents awards for Best Paper and Best Student Paper (which may be the same paper) at each SIGIR Conference. Last year the awards were revised from US $100/author to US $1000/paper (split evenly among the authors). The 2004 awards were sponsored by IBM, whom Jamie thanked.

- Reduced Conference Registration: SIGIR members receive member (or whatever is least expensive) registration at all ACM SIGIR sponsored or "in cooperation" conferences.

- Other benefits include the SIG-IRList newsletter, the SIGIR-ANNOUNCE email list for notifications from the SIGIR information officer, and access to IR-related content in the ACM Digital Library.

4 Initiatives and New Directions

- David Harper reported on the first SIGIR Doctoral Forum, which was run on Sunday, July 25 (the tutorial day) at SIGIR 2004. A group of PhD students was invited, based on applications, to present their dissertation ideas and get feedback from experienced IR researchers and other students. The forum was viewed as a success and will be repeated next year.

- Doug Oard discussed the SIGIR conference mentoring program, now in its fourth year. The growth in the number of papers mentored has been substantial, with 55 approved requests for mentoring for SIGIR 2004. However, the number of mentored papers that are actually accepted has stayed at a very low level (about 1 to 2 per year) since the beginning of the mentoring program. Doug will be polling the 2004 mentors to better understand the impact of the mentoring program and what its future should be.

- Sue Dumais has been chairing the Nominating Committee, which put forward members from the IR community as candidates for ACM Awards (ACM Fellow, Turing Award, etc.). Based on their nomination, Keith van Rijsbergen was recognized as a Fellow of the ACM, and was congratulated at the business meeting, and at the banquet.

- ACM SIGIR is transitioning to a global orientation in sponsoring the SIGIR conferences. Prior to 2002, ACM SIGIR was a 100% sponsor (i.e. taking all financial risks and rewards) of North American SIGIR conferences, and a 0% sponsor of SIGIR conferences held elsewhere. For 2002 to 2004, ACM SIGIR has been a 100% sponsor in North America, and a 50% sponsor in Europe. From 2005 on, ACM SIGIR will be a 100% sponsor of all SIGIR conferences. This both supports and reflects the increasing interest in holding SIGIR conferences outside of North America. There was some discussion of the possible impact of 100% sponsorship on the ability to get travel support from regional organizations, as we did from the European Union for SIGIR 2004.

- ACM SIGIR is beginning a new initiative to scan, organize, and add to the ACM Digital Library hard-to-find early IR reports, papers, and books. Dave Lewis, the SIGIR Secretary will be coordinating this effort, and will circulate a survey to identify important materials. Dave (`secretary_SIGIR@acm.org`) welcomes suggestions of materials to obtain, ideas on scanning and organization, and most of all volunteers to help with the work.

5 Conferences

5.1 SIGIR Annual Meetings: 2002-2007

Gordon Cormack, co-chair of SIGIR 2003 (Toronto, Ontario, Canada) reviewed SIGIR 2003. Despite SARS, the Rolling Stones, and other trials, the conference ended with a profit of $36.6K. Congratulations!

Mark Sanderson discussed SIGIR 2004, which looked to be moving along quite successfully. There were brief presentations on SIGIR 2005 (Salvador, Brazil), SIGIR 2006 (Seattle, WA, USA), and SIGIR 2007 (Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

Traditionally, SIGIR Annual Meetings alternated between Europe and North America (NA). Jamie indicated that the previous EC adopted a 5-year cycle of NA/Europe/NA/Europe/Other, which matches the already scheduled conferences in Europe (Sheffield, 2004), Other (Salvador, 2005), NA (Seattle, 2006), and Europe (Amsterdam, 2007). This cycle would suggest a North American conference in 2008, but there was strong support at the 2002 and 2003 SIGIR Business Meetings for hosting SIGIR in Asia before 2010.

The two presentations made at the 2004 Business Meeting were in fact from Asia. Mun-Kew Leong proposed holding SIGIR 2008 in Singapore, and Jian-Yun Nie proposed holding it in Beijing, China. A straw poll of the membership at the Business Meeting showed roughly equal support for the two proposals. There was considerable discussion of the proposals, and in particular the possible impact of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing on travel costs and availability. The SIGIR EC will look into this issue and others in considering the formal proposals this fall.

5.2 Associated Conferences

Jamie then reviewed issues related to non-SIGIR conferences with which SIGIR has associations.

SIGIR is a sponsor of the yearly CIKM (Conference on Information and Knowledge Management). CIKM 2003, in New Orleans, LA, USA, had 386 submissions (!), with a 15% acceptance rate (20% counting demotions to posters). It made a small profit, returning $1.5K to SIGIR, for which Jamie thanked General Chair, Don Kraft.

CIKM 2004 will occur November 8-13, 2004 in Washington, DC, USA. David Grossman is general chair. A total of 303 papers were submitted, with a 15-19% acceptance rate. CIKM 2005 will be held in Bremen, Germany.

SIGIR is also a sponsor of the yearly JCDL (ACM/IEEE-CS Joint Conference on Digital Libraries). JCDL 2004 was held in Tucson, AZ, on June 7-11, 2004. The General Chairs were Hsinchun Chen, Howard Wactlar, and Ching-chih Chen. JCDL 2005 will be held in Denver, CO, USA on June 7-11, 2005.