

## Preface

These proceedings contain the refereed full technical papers presented at the 26th Annual European Conference on Information Retrieval (ECIR 2004). ECIR is the annual conference of the British Computer Society's specialist group in Information Retrieval. This year the conference was held at the School of Computing and Technology at the University of Sunderland. ECIR began life as the Annual Colloquium on Information Retrieval Research. The colloquium was held in the UK each year until 1998 when the event was held in Grenoble, France. Since then the conference venue has alternated between the United Kingdom and Continental Europe, and the event was renamed the European Conference on Information Retrieval. In recent years, ECIR has continued to grow and has become the major European forum for the discussion of research in the field of Information Retrieval. To mark this metamorphosis from a small informal colloquium to a major event in the IR research calendar, the BCS-IRSG decided to rename the event to the European Conference on Information Retrieval.

ECIR 2004 received 88 full paper submissions, from across Europe and further afield including North America, China and Australia, a testament to the growing popularity and reputation of the conference. Out of the 88 submitted papers, 28 were accepted for presentation. All papers were reviewed by at least three reviewers. Among the accepted papers 11 have a student as the primary author, illustrating that the traditional student focus of the original colloquium is alive today.

The collection of papers presented in this book reflect a broad range of IR problems. Contributions from keynote speakers Gary Marchionini and Yorick Wilks kick start the proceedings with Marchionini's proposal for a new paradigm for IR, based on his emphasis on the interactive nature of IR tasks, and Wilks' thought provoking discussion of the role of NLP techniques in IR. The organization of the proceedings reflects the session structure of the conference, topics covered include user interaction, question answering, information models, classification, summarization, image retrieval, evaluation issues, cross language IR and categorization, summarization, information models, question answering, cross language IR, image retrieval and Web-based and XML retrieval.

I am indebted to many individuals for the quality of this year's conference proceedings. Specifically, I would like to acknowledge the significant efforts of the programme committee, my co-chair John Tait and posters chair Michael Oakes. Thank you for your hard work, and for meeting the tight deadlines imposed. It has been my pleasure to work with you to produce a high-quality conference programme. Thanks also to the conference gold sponsors, Microsoft Research, Canon UK, Leighton Internet, BCS-IRSG, and the University of Sunderland.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Arthur Wyvill and John Cartledge for their work on the paper submission system, Zia Syed for his help in publicizing ECIR 2004 and Lesley Jenkins for her excellent administrative sup-

port. Most of all, I would like to thank my husband Alan Lumsden for his love and support as well as the invaluable contribution he made at various stages in the development of ECIR 2004.

January 2004

Sharon McDonald

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ECIR 2004 was organized by the School of Computing and Technology, University of Sunderland, United Kingdom.

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