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Volume Editors

Pamela Forner

Center for the Evaluation of Language and Communication Technologies (CELCT)

Via alla Cascata 56/c, 38123 Povo, Italy

E-mail: forner@celct.it

Julio Gonzalo

National University of Distance Education, E.T.S.I. Informática de la UNED

c/Juan del Rosal 16, 28040 Madrid, Spain

E-mail: julio@lsi.uned.es

Jaana Kekäläinen

University of Tampere, School of Information Sciences

Kanslerinrinne 1, 33014 Tampere, Finland

E-mail: jaana.kekalainen@uta.fi

Mounia Lalmas

Yahoo! Research

Avinguda Diagonal 177, 8th Floor, 08018 Barcelona, Spain

E-mail: mounia.lalmas@gmail.com

Maarten de Rijke

University of Amsterdam, Intelligent Systems Laboratory

Science Park 107, 1098 XG Amsterdam, The Netherlands

E-mail: derijke@uva.nl

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Preface

Since 2000 the Cross-Language Evaluation Forum (CLEF) has played a leading role in stimulating research and innovation in a wide range of key areas in the domain of information retrieval. It has become a landmark in the annual research calendar of the international information retrieval and search community. Through the years, CLEF has promoted the study and implementation of evaluation methodologies for diverse types of retrieval task and search scenario. As a result, a broad, strong and multidisciplinary research community has been created, which covers and spans the different areas of expertise needed to deal with the evaluation of solutions to challenging information tasks.

Until 2010, the outcomes of experiments carried out under the CLEF umbrella were presented and discussed at annual workshops in conjunction with the European Conference for Digital Libraries. CLEF 2010 represented a radical departure from this “classic” CLEF format. While preserving CLEF’s traditional core business and goals, namely, benchmarking activities carried in various tracks, we complemented these activities with a peer-reviewed conference component aimed at advancing research in the evaluation of complex information systems for cross-language tasks and scenarios. CLEF 2010 was thus organized as an independent four-day event consisting of two main parts, a peer-reviewed conference followed by a series of laboratories and workshops.

CLEF 2011 continued to implement this new format, with keynotes, contributed papers and lab sessions, but with a few additional refinements. First, in this year’s event we interleaved the conference presentations and the laboratories over a three-and-a-half-day period. Second, we added a “community session” aimed at creating awareness of funding opportunities, offering networking opportunities, and demonstrating emerging infrastructures that help support cross-language retrieval experiments.

This year, the papers accepted for the conference included research on evaluation methods and settings, natural language processing within different domains and languages, multimedia and reflections on CLEF. Two keynote speakers highlighted important developments in the field of evaluation. Elaine Toms (University of Sheffield) focused on the role of users in evaluation, whereas Omar Alonso (Microsoft Corporation) presented a framework for the use of crowdsourcing experiments in the setting of retrieval evaluation.

CLEF 2011 featured six benchmarking activities: ImageCLEF, PAN, CLEF-IP, QA4MRE, LogCLEF and, new this year, MusiCLEF. In parallel, there was a workshop dedicated to the evaluation of information access technologies in the setting of cultural heritage. All the experiments carried out by systems during the evaluation campaigns are described in a separate publication, namely, the Working Notes, distributed during CLEF 2011 and available on-line.

The community session at CLEF 2011 was organized around a strategic EU meeting, a networking session organized by the Chorus Network of Excellence, an Evaluation Initiatives session with overviews from other benchmarking fora, and an infrastructure session dedicated to the DIRECT system for handling data resulting from retrieval experiments.

The success of CLEF 2011 would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of all the members of the Program Committee, Organizing Committee, students and volunteers that supported the conference in its various stages. Thank you all!

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the sponsoring organizations for their significant and timely support.

These proceedings were prepared with the assistance of the Center for the Evaluation of Language and Communication Technologies (CELCT), Trento, Italy.

July 2011

Pamela Forner
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