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Sung Hyon Myaeng   Ming Zhou
Kam-Fai Wong   Hong-Jiang Zhang (Eds.)

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Volume Editors

Sung Hyon Myaeng
Information and Communications University (ICU)
119 Munji-Ro, Yuseong-Gu, Daejeon, 305-714, South Korea
E-mail: myaeng@icu.ac.kr

Ming Zhou
Hong-Jiang Zhang
Microsoft Research Asia
5F, Beijing Sigma Center
No. 49 Zhichun Road Haidian District, Beijing 100080, China
E-mail: {mingzhou,hjzhang}@microsoft.com

Kam-Fai Wong
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong, China
E-mail: kfwong@se.cuhk.edu.hk

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Preface

The Asia Information Retrieval Symposium (AIRS) was established by the Asian information retrieval community after the successful series of Information Retrieval with Asian Languages (IRAL) workshops held in six different locations in Asia, starting from 1996. While the IRAL workshops had their focus on information retrieval problems involving Asian languages, AIRS covers a wider scope of applications, systems, technologies and theory aspects of information retrieval in text, audio, image, video and multimedia data. This extension of the scope reflects and fosters increasing research activities in information retrieval in this region and the growing need for collaborations across subdisciplines.

We are very pleased to report that we saw a sharp increase in the number of submissions and their quality, compared to the IRAL workshops. We received 106 papers from nine countries in Asia and North America, from which 28 papers (26%) were presented in oral sessions and 38 papers in poster sessions (36%). It was a great challenge for the Program Committee to select the best among the excellent papers. The low acceptance rates witness the success of this year's conference.

After a long discussion between the AIRS 2004 Steering Committee and Springer, the publisher agreed to publish our proceedings in the Lecture Notes in Computer Science (LNCS) series, which is SCI-indexed. We feel that this strongly attests to the excellent quality of the papers.

The attendees were cordially invited to participate in and take advantage of all the technical programs at this conference. A tutorial was given on the first day to introduce the state of the art in Web mining, an important application of Web document retrieval. Two keynote speeches covered two main areas of the conference: video retrieval and language issues. There were a total of eight oral sessions run, with two in parallel at a time, and two poster/demo sessions.

The technical and social programs, which we are proud of, were made possible by the hard-working people behind the scenes. In addition to the Program Committee members, we are thankful to the Organizing Committee (Shao-Ping Ma and Jianfeng Gao, Co-chairs), Interactive Posters/Demo Chair (Gary G. Lee), and the Special Session and Tutorials Chair (Wei-Ying Ma). We also thank the sponsoring organizations: Microsoft Research Asia, the Department of Systems Engineering and Engineering Management at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and LexisNexis for their financial support, the Department of Computer Science and Technology, Tsinghua University for local arrangements, the Chinese NewsML Community for website design and administration, Ling Huang for the logistics, Weiwei Sun for the conference webpage management, EONSOLUTION for the conference management, and Springer for the postconference

LNCS publication. We believe that this conference set a very high standard for a regionally oriented conference, especially in Asia, and we hope that it continues as a tradition in the upcoming years.

Sung Hyon Myaeng and Ming Zhou (PC Co-chairs)
Kam-Fai Wong and Hong-Jiang Zhang (Conference Co-chairs)

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