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Flexible Query Answering Systems

Third International Conference, FQAS'98
Roskilde, Denmark, May 13-15, 1998
Proceedings



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Preface

This volume constitutes the proceedings of the Third International Conference on Flexible Query Answering Systems held at Roskilde University, Denmark, 13–15 May, 1998.

The conference addresses problems and aspects of users posing queries and (electronic) systems producing answers. In order to recognize a query-answering system as being flexible, we expect it to produce answers which correspond to the users' needs, and that cannot in general be obtained by a strictly logical interpretation of the query. The latter often leads to empty answers, too large answers, or even irrelevant answers. We see no sense in giving a precise definition of this notion of flexibility as it relates to the way a user experiences the system.

Flexibility in query-answering can be touched upon at several levels where we identify the following three as central. Firstly, the *query interface*; do the linguistic and other means make it possible to express ones needs in an easy way? Is it possible to indicate vagueness or leave choices open to the system? Secondly, *representation*; what are the underlying formalism and semantics applied for representing information? Can knowledge, domain knowledge, and metaknowledge be integrated in some way? And thirdly, *query evaluation* which does not necessarily have to comply with the semantics but can extend or restrict this in several ways. The quality of answers produced should be measured for usefulness before classical virtues such as soundness and completeness.

Taking a broad view of the contributions to this conference, they cover conceptual definitions and requirements as well as implemented systems and theoretical models in which flexibility is or can be exemplified. The conference theme overlaps naturally with several established research areas but is distinguished by a particular focus. We can mention logic, fuzzy logic, various database “schools” (deductive, fuzzy, extensions to the relational model, object-oriented etc.), linguistics, philosophy, human-computer interfaces, and information retrieval.

We are grateful to have invited contributions from distinguished and experienced researchers; Patrick Bosc, Jack Minker, and Ami Motro. By their talks at the conference, they provided a higher level of abstraction, drawing attention to the central issues, and gave the future prospects and historical background of the field. We would also like to express our thanks to the members of the program committee, particularly to Hendrik Decker, Fosca Giannotti, and Robert Demolombe for their great efforts as invited session chairs. Finally, we greatly acknowledge the support of the sponsoring organizations (listed below) which made the conference possible.

Roskilde
July 1998

Troels Andreassen
Henning Christiansen
Henrik Legind Larsen

Organization

FQAS'98 is organized by members of the Intelligent Systems Group at the Computer Science Department, Roskilde University, Denmark.

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STVF, The Danish Technical Research Council

PDC, Prolog Development Center, Copenhagen, Denmark

COMPULOG, Network of Excellence in Computational Logic

DBC, Danish Library Centre, Ballerup, Denmark

ERUDIT, European Network in Uncertainty Techniques Developments for Use in Information Technology

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