

Guest Editors' introduction: special issue of selected papers from ECML PKDD 2008

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The European Conference on Machine Learning started out in 1986 as the European Working Session on Learning and has quickly become the premier European conference of the field, attracting submissions from all over the world. Since 7 years, the ECML is collocated with the European Conference on Principles and Practice of Knowledge Discovery in Databases (PKDD). This year, 521 papers have been submitted to ECML/PKDD. We nominated 30 Area chairs, each supervising the reviews and discussions of about 17 papers. In addition, 307 reviewers completed the program committee. Based on their reviews and internal discussions, which were concluded by the recommendations of the Area Chairs, we selected 100 papers for presentation at the joint conference, giving us an acceptance rate of 20%. Among the accepted papers, we selected the 14 best papers for publication in the Machine Learning Journal and the Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery Journal.

What you are holding in your hands is almost the opposite of a special issue, which is usually focusing on one single topic. In contrast, you find here instances of different classes of models and methods. Even if two papers share one characteristic they are almost orthogonal in the other respects. Thinking of this selection from the European ML conference as the best of European research is misleading as well. The authors from five different European countries are balanced by authors from five non-European countries. While this makes it hard to give an overview, it may amplify the reader's pleasure and interest. The comprehensive papers may introduce the reader to topics aside from his or her own current research

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area within the large field of machine learning. For us, it was a pleasure to collect this bouquet of papers. We believe that the authors deserve a large audience. For one of the articles that was accepted for the journal issues, a reviewer wrote: “If all ECML PKDD papers were as good as this, I would keep a copy of the proceedings on my night table”. Wherever you keep your favorite reading, we hope this selection of fine articles will make it up there!