Introduction from the Program Chairs

Welcome to Agile 2008, the world conference on agile software engineering! Welcome to Toronto, Canada - the city of openness, energy and diversity!

This is the 8th annual conference in the series of established conferences organized by the Agile Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to promotion of agile methods and helping agile teams to succeed.

We have introduced many innovations this year, motivated by the constantly increasing popularity of agile methods and the associated growth of this conference. Think about it. In 2001, the first XP Universe conference attracted just a couple hundred attendants, but by 2007 we had grown to over a thousand! We decided that growth would be best accommodated by decentralization, so we adopted the multi-stage metaphor of a music festival to guide our reorganization. This year, eighteen stages have been designed and organized by experts (acting as stage producers) who are truly passionate about their particular areas. Each stage has a feel of a smaller, focused mini-conference while providing the conference attendee with a wide choice of topics to choose from.

This was an experiment which turned out to be a great success. We have a very solid program with over 400 sessions. Both practitioners and researchers will find sessions of value to them. Feedback from previous conferences was used to create the program that best suits the needs of the attendees. For example, we responded to comments that there was not enough content aimed at developers - not enough guidance on coding patterns and testing techniques. So this year we have a Developer Jam with both tutorials and coding clinics that will give developers hands-on experience with expert guidance. A nearby stage will focus on intelligence-enhancing tools for agile software development.

Another innovation for Agile 2008 was our submission system. With the exception of research papers, all submissions were open for community viewing and reviews. Reviews began immediately after sessions were submitted. As it became apparent the early submissions got immediate feedback and a chance to improve their proposals, submissions poured in long before the deadline. Thus the wisdom of crowds was brought to bear on all submissions, and particularly the early ones. When submissions closed, we had over 1000 talks, workshops, tutorials, experience reports, and other proposals to consider. Each stage committee then did the hard work of reviewing and selecting submissions for their stage. In this way, the wisdom of experts, informed by the community reviews, was tapped to select the sessions for the conference.

These proceedings include both research papers and experience reports - over 100 papers in total. The acceptance rate for research papers is 23% and for experience reports is 46%. These papers will be permanently available in the IEEE digital library, adding to the body of knowledge of agile software development. In addition, workshop facilitators will post summaries of their workshops to the Agile Alliance web site shortly after the conference.

The theme of this year's conference is "Expanding Agile Horizons", and certainly the innovations in this conference have expanded its horizons both in sheer volume, and also in community involvement in putting the conference together. Many sessions talk about expanding agile horizons in other ways - for example, moving beyond small systems to large ones; moving beyond software and looking at the whole system; moving beyond development and including the whole life-cycle.

We are proud that this conference has been organized by the agile community and for the agile community. It brings together more community members than ever (1600+), eager to share their experiences and insights with colleagues. There were 272 committee members who contributed their time and expertise to review and select sessions, mentor new presenters, on top of very busy schedules. Coordinating their efforts, 33 producers and co-producers helped schedule and organize the stages. We salute all authors, all reviewers, and all producers! We would like to extend our deep gratitude to all of them.

Grigori Melnik and Mary Poppendieck
Agile 2008 Program Chairs