Introduction to Information Access and Usability Minitrack

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This minitrack addresses a broad range of issues related to the design of the next generation of information retrieval systems, especially related to improving web search effectiveness from the user perspective. The core of this research is how to help the user access and make use of digital data. These issues are of prime interest to researchers, developers, and information managers. The multidisciplinary nature of this emerging area allows us to engage as a community of participants with a wide range of interests, including retrieval design, HCI, information seeking behavior, and information management.

Information Retrieval supports the computerized search of large document and digital media collections (millions or billions of items) to select small subsets of those documents relevant to a user's information need. Such algorithms are the basis for internet search engines and question-answering systems. At the same time, we know relatively little about the users who deal with a multi-billion-page Web. Further research is needed to address the user issues related to effectiveness and quality of experience when interacting with search engines. New metrics and methodologies are needed for retrieval evaluation as both the data sets of interest and user expectations grow exponentially. A focus on the user perspective allows us to align the user focus and the system focus in a multi-disciplinary forum that includes theoretical foundations, evaluation measures, methodologies, case studies and user study results.

This year in the Information Access & Retrieval Minitrack we include papers that explore this multidisciplinary approach. The first paper, A Novel Approach for Personalized Article Recommendation in Online Scientific Communities deals with the problem of finding and recommending appropriate information for the user, in this case in recommending scientific articles to researchers. The second paper, Classification of Microblogs for support of Emergency Responses, examines the very real problem of channeling microblogs to relevant departments during emergencies. The final paper in this session, Do Ads Matter? An Exploration of Web Search Behavior, Visual Hierarchy, and Search Engine Results Pages, approaches an issue of importance to both web designers and users, which is the impact of advertisements within the search engine hit lists.