

The CLEF Initiative: Conference and Labs of the Evaluation Forum

by Nicola Ferro

Since 2000, CLEF has played a successful role in stimulating research and promoting evaluation in a wide range of key areas in the information access and retrieval domain. In 2010, a radical innovation and renewal process led to the establishment of the CLEF Initiative, whose mission is to promote research, innovation, and development of information access systems with emphasis on multilingual and multi-modal information by providing an infrastructure for:

- multilingual and multimodal system testing, tuning and evaluation
- investigation of the use of unstructured, semi-structured, highly-structured, and semantically enriched data in information access
- creation of reusable test collections for benchmarking
- exploration of new evaluation methodologies and innovative ways of using experimental data
- discussion of results, comparison of approaches, exchange of ideas, and transfer of knowledge.

The CLEF Initiative is structured in two main parts:

1. A series of Evaluation Labs, i.e. laboratories to conduct evaluation of information access systems and workshops to discuss and pilot innovative evaluation activities.
2. A peer-reviewed Conference on a broad range of issues, including:
 - the activities of the Evaluation Labs
 - experiments using multilingual and multimodal data; in particular, but not only, data resulting from CLEF activities
 - research in evaluation methodologies and challenges.

Due to these changes and the broader scope of the CLEF Initiative, the acronym CLEF, traditionally expanded to Cross-Language Evaluation Forum, now translates to Conference and Labs of the Evaluation Forum.



*Impressions from the
CLEF conference*

This renewal process and the organization of the annual CLEF events are partially supported by the EU FP7 PROMISE project (Participative Research labORatory for Multimedia and Multilingual Information Systems Evaluation).

CLEF 2011: The Second Event of the CLEF Initiative

CLEF 2011 was hosted by University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 19-22 September 2011 as a three and a half days event where conference presentations, laboratories and workshops, and community sessions were smoothly interleaved to provide a continuous stream of discussions on the different facets of experimental evaluation.

14 papers (ten full and four short) were accepted for the Conference and published by Springer in their Lectures Notes for Computer Science (LNCS) series. Two keynote speakers highlighted important developments in the field of evaluation. Elaine Toms, University of Sheffield, focused on the role of users. She argued that evaluation has moved from an emphasis on topical relevance to an emphasis on measuring almost anything that can be quantified. Omar Alonso, from Microsoft USA, presented a framework for the use of crowdsourcing experiments in retrieval evaluation.

The community sessions at CLEF 2011 were organized around a strategic EU meeting to promote funding opportunities, a networking session on IR for scientific multimedia data organized by the Chorus Network of Excellence, an Evaluation Initiatives session with overviews from other benchmarking fora, and an infrastructure session dedicated to the DIRECT system for handling scientific data resulting from retrieval experiments.

Five benchmarking evaluations ran as labs in CLEF 2011:

- CLEF-IP: a benchmarking activity on intellectual property
- ImageCLEF: a benchmarking activity on image retrieval, focusing on the combination of textual and visual retrieval
- LogCLEF: a benchmarking activity on multilingual log file analysis, namely language identification, query classification, success of a query
- PAN: a benchmarking activity on uncovering plagiarism, authorship, and social software misuse
- QA4MRE: a benchmarking activity on the evaluation of machine reading systems through question answering and reading comprehension tests.

There were also two exploration workshops:

- CHiC (new): a workshop aimed at a systematic and large-scale evaluation of cultural heritage digital libraries

- MusicCLEF (new): a pilot lab/workshop on the evaluation of music search engines using both audio content and textual descriptions

CLEF 2012: Information Access Evaluation meets Multilinguality, Multimodality, and Visual Analytics

CLEF 2012 will be hosted by the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, 17-20 September 2012. The Call for Lab proposals was issued at the beginning of November 2011 and 10 lab proposals and two workshops proposal were received. Seven labs and one workshops, out of which four are new, have been selected to run during 2012:

- CHiC (new): a last-year workshop turning into a benchmarking activity for the cultural heritage domain based on Europeana collections
- CLEF-IP: a benchmarking activity on intellectual property
- ImageCLEF: a benchmarking activity on image retrieval
- INEX (new): the well-known Initiative for Evaluation of XML retrieval joins efforts with CLEF to target new synergies between multilingual, multimodal and semi-structured information access
- PAN: a benchmarking activity on plagiarism detection
- QA4MRE: a benchmarking activity on the evaluation of Machine Reading systems through Question Answering and Reading Comprehension Test
- RepLab (new): a benchmarking activity on microblog data for online reputation management
- eHealth (new): a workshop on new evaluation issues in the health domain, related to the Louhi series of workshops on NLP in Health Informatics.

The Call for papers for the Conference was released December 2011; the expected deadline for the submission of papers is late April 2012.

Links:

CLEF 2012: <http://www.clef2012.org/>
 CLEF: <http://www.clef-campaign.org/>
 DIRECT: <http://direct.dei.unipd.it/>
 PROMISE: <http://www.promise-noe.eu/>

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INTERACT conference participants

Building Bridges - INTERACT 2011

by Joaquim Jorge

INESC-ID and The IFIP Technical Committee on Human-Computer Interaction (TC13) closed yet another successful instance of its bi-annual event last September.

INTERACT 2011 gathered close to 400 people in sunny Lisbon, from 5-9 September, culminating in a non-stop one week marathon with two main conferences, thirteen workshops, six tutorials and four keynote presentations during which the participants discussed their views on the design and use of current and future interactive systems. The event was organized by INESC-ID, part of the Portuguese ERCIM member PEG.

INTERACT's main theme this year was "Building Bridges". And many were built. From 2 to 4 September a singular conference called INTERACCIÓN brought together the Portuguese and Spanish communities, just before the main event.

Bridges were also built when participants from industry exchanged their view of the world with practitioners, usability professionals and scientists in engaging and vibrant dialogues. INTERACT also built bridges across the world - 400 participants from 43 different countries from around the world attended the main conference. The program featured a record number of 112 technical papers selected from 402 submissions (28% acceptance rate) and 60 short communications selected from 278 submissions (22% acceptance rate). These numbers represent increases of 12% in volume as reported to 2009, attested by the some 1800 pages of proceedings published by Springer LNCS. Indeed, such figures are witness to the

prominent role and community engagement in the INTERACT event. No less than 800 different reviewers were called upon to select entries from almost 700 submissions to the overall technical program.

Outstanding keynote presentations by Mary Czerwinski (MS Research), António Camara (Ydreams), Don Norman (NNG) and Saul Greenberg (Calgary) served as capstone to this very successful event.



Mary Czerwinski

INTERACT 2011 is also building bridges between the real and digital realms. The post-INTERACT initiative aims at continuing and extending the exchanges past the physical venue to continue the conference online, via video recordings of all technical sessions and debate forums that we hope will continue and enhance the dialogue between authors and the community.

The next conference will take place in Cape Town South Africa on September 2013. We hope to see you there!

More information:
<http://interact2011.org>