Preface from NTCIR-9 General Chairs

Welcome to the Ninth NTCIR Workshop Meeting (NTCIR-9 Meeting) and the 4th International Workshop on Evaluating Information Access (EVIA 2011) .

The NTCIR is a series of evaluation workshops designed to enhance research on information access technologies, including information retrieval, cross-language information access, question-answering, information extraction, text mining, etc., with East Asian languages such as Chinese, Korean, and Japanese as well as English. Emphasis has been placed on East Asian languages, but it has attracted international participation outside. The Workshop is an ongoing process that takes place over the course of 18 months.

Under the new organization structure, NTCIR-9 plays host to the tasks listed below. The activities of each task are coordinated by 40 volunteer task organizers combined with central coordination by the program co-chairs. A hundred and nineteen research groups from 17 different countries are registered for one or more tasks and have conducted experiments using common data sets and experimental designs so that participants can compare the effectiveness of the results and learn from each other. Most tasks are unique to NTCIR-9, and this round we have one of the highest number of participating teams in the history of NTCIR.

[Core Tasks]

- GeoTime: Geo Temporal Retrieval
- INTENT: Mining and Satisfying Different User Intents for a Query,
  + 1CLICK Subtask: Satisfying a User's Need by the First Output
- RITE: Recognizing Inference in Text
- SpokenDoc: Retrieval for Spoken Documents

[Pilot Tasks]
- CrossLink: Cross-Lingual Link Discovery
- VisEx: Interactive Visual Exploratory
- PatentMT: Translation of Patent Documents

EVIA 2011, which was organized by three co-chairs, Kazuaki Kishida, Mark Sanderson, and William Webber, is a refereed workshop that welcomes submissions from both NTCIR-9 task participants and individuals not involved in the tasks. This workshop enlarges the NTCIR community, and we expect it to provide a wider forum to discuss related topics and research leading to future NTCIR tasks as well as future information access technology research.

The Conference of the NTCIR-9 Meeting and EVIA 2011 are organized by the NTCIR-9 Organizing Committee and the National Institute of Informatics (NII). We are extremely grateful to the sponsors of the Travel Support Awards, which are listed in the conference program and Website. Their generous support has enabled us to help promising young researchers and students to travel to the meeting.

We also thank the following organizations for their understanding of the project and for providing substantial support in various forms: Japan Patent Information Organization; Linguistic Data Consortium; Mainichi Newspaper; National Institute of Information and Communication Technology; Spoken Document Processing Working Group, organized in Special Interest Group of Spoken Language Processing of Information Processing Society Japan, UDN.COM, and Zhuhai Chilinstar and the Hong Kong Institute of Education

We are grateful for the Program Committees of NTCIR-9 and EVIA 2011, and for the task organizers of the NTCIR-9 and their organizations for the understanding that has enabled them to act as task organizers. In addition, several of the NTCIR-9 task organizers served as the editors of this volume

and provided feedback on the papers submitted by the participants. Many of the task participants volunteered to help with the dataset creation, and we appreciate their great contribution to this community-based activity. Last but certainly not least, we would like to thank the many people who worked behind the scenes—especially Miho Sugimoto, Mariko Okada, Junko Evance, and Fumiko Koiwahara—for their support throughout the entire NTCIR-9 process.

NTCIR-9 became a memorable one in various ways. It is the first time an NTCIR has introduced a new organization structure with multiple general co-chairs and program co-chairs, and the tasks have been coordinated by task organizers with only seed funding from the central coordination. We are proud to see that such organizational change turned out to be very successful in having such a wide variety of active tasks with the highest number of active participating groups.

On the other hand, there was a disaster caused by the devastating earthquakes and tsunami on March 11th, 2011. NII is far away from the affected areas of the north-east coast of Honshu, Japan. It is nothing compared to the difficulties in the affected areas, but there have still been some effects on continuing the activities of NTCIR's central coordination and support of relevance assessments and annotations. The assessors were working on the 20th floor of the NII building on that day. All of them were forced to stay at NII until midnight, and some stayed overnight because of the problems with public transportation caused by the earthquakes. The prolonged electricity shortage in the greater Tokyo area caused another problem for managing the activities. We are sorry that some of the registered teams had to give up continuing the experiments because of them. We are grateful for all the support and understanding that has enabled us to continue the activities, and finally we came here to have the meeting as usual. Our thoughts are with the people in difficulties, and we hope that our activities also help to show the strong global links of the people and their thoughts.

We sincerely hope that each of the participants will enjoy presenting their research results and engaging in discussion with each other at the Meeting, and that such an occasion will lead to fruitful collaboration and the enhancement of research.

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