

Preface from the NTCIR-12 General Chairs

Welcome to the Twelfth NTCIR Conference (NTCIR-12 Conference) and the 7th International Workshop on Evaluating Information Access (EVIA 2016).

NTCIR is a series of parallel and collective evaluation efforts designed to enhance research on diverse information access technologies, including, but not limited to, cross-language and multimedia information access, question-answering, text mining and summarisation, with an emphasis on East Asian languages such as Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, as well as English. Launched in the late 1990s, NTCIR has attracted hundreds of research groups from well over 20 different countries and regions. Each NTCIR conference concludes the researchers' efforts over the course of 18 months or so, in the form of official results and future work items.

NTCIR-12 plays host to nine tasks as listed below. These are coordinated in parallel by some forty task organizers, who operate under the central coordination of the program co-chairs, Makoto Kato and Kazuaki Kishida. A hundred and fifty-seven different research groups from 20 countries/regions participated in one or more of the NTCIR-12 tasks, to compete and collaborate on a common ground and thereby advance the state of the art.

[Core Tasks]

- Search Intent and Task Mining “IMine-2”
- Medical Natural Language Processing for Clinical Document “MedNLPDoc”
- Mobile Information Access “MobileClick-2”
- Spoken Query and Spoken Document Retrieval “SpokenQuery&Doc-2”
- Temporal Information Access “Temporalia-2”
- Mathematical Information Retrieval “MathIR-3”

[Pilot Tasks]

- Lifelog Task “Lifelog”
- QA Lab for Entrance Exam “QALab-2”
- Short Text Conversation “STC”

While the NTCIR conference is a venue for task participants and organisers to discuss the official task results, open problems and future task designs, EVIA is a one-day workshop for information access researchers to present their work on evaluation methods, measures, test collections, experimental designs, etc. EVIA papers are peer-reviewed. This year, EVIA 2016, was run by PC chairs Charles Clarke and Emine Yilmaz.

The NTCIR-12 Conference and EVIA 2016 are operated by the NTCIR-12 Organizing Committee and the National Institute of Informatics (NII). We are very grateful to the sponsors listed in the conference program and our website. Their generous support has enabled us to help promising young researchers and students to travel to the conference.

We also thank the following organizations and people for their understanding of the project and for providing substantial support in various forms: Yahoo! JAPAN Corporation for providing the search query data for *IMine-2* and *MobileClick-2* tasks, and Sogou for providing the user behavior data for *IMine-2* task; Insight Centre for Data Analytics and Dublin City University for *Lifelog* task, and the European Science Foundation via its Research Network Programme “Evaluating Information Access Systems” for financial support for the *Lifelog*'s satellite workshop in Glasgow concurrent to this NTCIR-12 conference; *Math-3* task has been supported by the Leibniz association under grant SAW-2012-FIZ_KA-2, JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers 2430062, CREST, JST, and the National Science Foundation (USA) under grant no. HCC-1218801; We should also thank the Wikipedia for making their data available for the *MathIR-3* task; Fuji Xerox Co. Ltd. and IR-Advanced Linguistic Technologies Inc. for the financial support and Katsuko Toba for providing the data for *MedNLPDoc* task; Wider Planet for providing data for *MobileClick-2* task; For *QA Lab-2* task, we thank the National Center for University Entrance Examinations, JC Educational Institute, Inc., Sundai Preparatory School, Benesse Corporation, Yoyogi Seminar and the answer creators for data provision and for making accessible the real-world prep exams, which nation-wide human high school students take together, part of the task was supported by NII's Todai Robot Project and NII's Joint Research grant; For *SpokenQuery&Doc-2* task, we also thank JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 25330130, 26282049, and 15K00254, and the Speech and Audio Cloud Working Group, SIG-SLP, IPSJ, for providing the SDPWS1to7 data, and the student members of Itoh laboratory at Iwate Prefectural University, Nishizaki laboratory at University of Yamanashi,

Akiba and Yamamoto laboratories at Toyohashi University of Technology for constructing spoken queries; Weibo and NTT DATA for helping us create the *STC* test collections.

We are grateful to the Program Committees of NTCIR-12 and EVIA 2016, and to the NTCIR-12 task organizers and their affiliated institutions. In addition, several of the NTCIR-12 task organizers served as the editors of this volume and/or 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 people who worked behind the scenes—especially Mariko Okada, Kazuko Matsuo, Mitsuko Matsuda, and Kazuko Mukai—for their continued effort throughout the course of the NTCIR-12.

NTCIR-12 continues the structure introduced at NTCIR-10 with multiple general co-chairs and program co-chairs, and with tasks coordinated by task organizers with an optional seed funding from NTCIR. We are proud to see that this organizational reform turned out to be very successful in having such a wide variety of active tasks.

In addition to the above, in April 2015, a new Center for Dataset Sharing and Collaborative Research was launched in NII to encourage the close collaboration with various data providers and enhance the research based on the dataset including NTCIR. This Center provides a solid foundation of the NTCIR activities. We sincerely hope that all participants will enjoy presenting and discussing their research results at the NTCIR-12 conference, and that it serves as an opportunity for new research collaborations.

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