Preface from NTCIR-13 General Chairs

Welcome to the Thirteenth NTCIR Conference (NTCIR-13 Conference) and the 8th International Workshop on Evaluating Information Access (EVIA 2017).

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 1997 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. This is the 20th anniversary since the NTCIR project started, and the NTCIR-14 Conference, June 2019 will be the 20th anniversary since the first NTCIR Conference, summer 1999.

NTCIR-13 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 P. Kato and Yiqun Liu. A hundred and five different research groups from 20 countries/regions participated in one or more of the NTCIR-13 tasks, to compete and collaborate on a common ground and thereby advance the state of the art.

[Core Tasks]

- Personal Lifelog Organisation & Retrieval Task ("Lifelog-2")
- Medical Natural Language Processing for Web Document ("MedWeb")
- Open Live Test for Question Retrieval ("OpenLiveQ")
- QA Lab for Entrance Exam ("QALab-3")
- Short Text Conversation ("STC-2")

[Pilot Tasks]
- Actionable Knowledge Graph ("AKG")
- Emotion Cause Analysis ("ECA")
- Neurally Augmented Image Labelling Strategies ("NAILS")
- We Want Web ("WWW")

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 2017 was run by PC co-chairs Nicola Ferro and Ian Soboroff.

The NTCIR-13 Conference and EVIA 2017 are operated by the NTCIR-13 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 data and an open live test environment for online evaluation at *OpenLiveQ* task, which enabled us to run a LivingLab-type evaluation on the operational environment for the first time, and for providing the Yahoo! News comments data for *STC-2 Japanese* subtask; Insight Centre for Data Analytics and Dublin City University for *Lifelog* and *NAILS* tasks. *MedWeb* is partially supported by Fuji Xerox Co. Ltd. and IR-Advanced Technologies Inc.. For *QA Lab-3 task*, we thank the National Center for University Entrance Examinations, JC Educational Institute, Inc. It was partially supported by NII's Todai Robot Project and NII's Joint Research grant. For WWW, Sogou, Inc. kindly provided the Chinese corpus and the query log, and Carnegie Mellon University let us utilise ClueWeb12.

We are grateful to the Program Committees of NTCIR-13 and EVIA 2017, and to the NTCIR-13 task organizers and their affiliated institutions. In addition, several of the NTCIR-13 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 Madoka Ishioroshi, Kazuko Matsuo, Mitsuko Matsuda, Mari Mizuno —for their continued effort throughout the course of the NTCIR-13.

NTCIR-13 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.

The Center for Dataset Sharing and Collaborative Research was launched in NII in April 2015, 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-13 conference, and that it serves as an opportunity for new research collaborations.

In these 20 years, "Search" became ordinary-life social infrastructure, and closed to human life, and then always new tasks are emerging and enhancing. How Information Access research (IA) community and IA evaluation research community response to the social expectation to us. On the 20th Anniversary, we would like to thank all the participants, organizers and contributors, and would like to think and envision fruitful enhanced next 10 years and future together with all of you in the NTCIR/EVIA community.

December 2017

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