Preface from the NTCIR-14 General Chairs

Welcome to the Fourteenth NTCIR Conference (NTCIR-14 Conference) and the 9th International Workshop on Evaluating Information Access (EVIA 2019).

NTCIR is a series of 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.

The previous conference was the 20th anniversary since the NTCIR project started, and this is the 20th anniversary since the first NTCIR Conference, summer 1999, which was held consecutively with the Workshop of IREX, another shared task evaluation on Information Retrieval and Extraction. Since then wide variety of tasks conducted through NTCIR, more than 200 researchers involved in the organizations, more than 1000 teams participated NTCIR task(s) and 4,654 research groups currently use NTCIR Test Collection(s) for their research (as of March 31, 2019). Part of the research impact through NTCIR are summarized and will be published as a Book from Springer, 2020, and asking constructive feedbacks to the draft chapters to make the book more meaningful, and the printed book will be delivered to all the attendees of NTCIR-15 Conference, December 8-11, 2020.

NTCIR-14 plays host to seven 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 eighty-seven research groups from 20 countries/regions participated in the NTCIR-14 tasks, to compete and collaborate on a common ground and thereby advance the state of the art.

[Core Tasks]

- Lifelog Search Task ("Lifelog-3")
- Open Live Test for Question Retrieval ("OpenLiveQ-2")
- QA Lab for Political Information ("QALab PoliINFO")
- Short Text Conversation ("STC-3")
- We Want Web ("WWW-2")

[Pilot Tasks]
- CLEF/NTCIR/TREC Reproducibility ("CENTRE")
- Fine-Grained Numeral Understanding in Financial Tweet ("FinNum:")

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 2018 was run by PC co-chairs Nicola Ferro, Ian Soboroff and Min Zhang.

The NTCIR-14 Conference and EVIA 2019 are operated by the NTCIR-14 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 attend 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 with real users, ADAPT Centre and Dublin City University for *Lifelog* task. For *QA Lab task*, we thank the National Center for University Entrance Examinations, JC Educational Institute, Inc. It was partially supported by JSPS Kakenhi 16H02912 and NII's Joint Research grant. For WWW, Sogou, Inc. kindly provided the Chinese corpus and the new query log data set, and Carnegie Mellon University let us utilise ClueWeb12. For FinNum, we thank the support from MOST Joint Research Center for AI Technology and All Vista Healthcare, Taiwan.

We are grateful to the Program Committees of NTCIR-14 and EVIA 2019, and to the NTCIR-14 task organizers and their affiliated institutions. In addition, several of the NTCIR-14 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, Hiroko Shoji, Hisayo Mizuno and Tomoko Osuga —for their continued effort throughout the course of the NTCIR-14.

NTCIR-15 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-14 conference, and that it serves as an opportunity for new research collaborations.

In these 22 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 of the Conference, 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.

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