

Overview of the VisEx task at NTCIR-9

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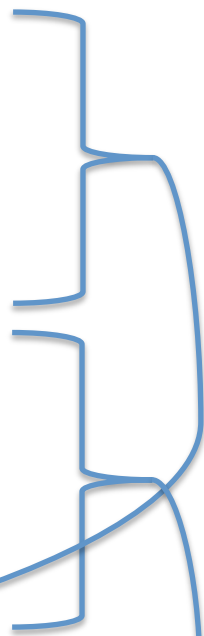
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Objective

- To establish an efficient and effective framework for objective evaluation of interactive and explorative information access environment systems (IAESs) by bridging empirical user studies and benchmark tests
- To conduct sophisticated evaluation based on empirical user studies in order to acquire more useful and richer data, which is expected to reveal some relationship between two evaluation approaches

Policy

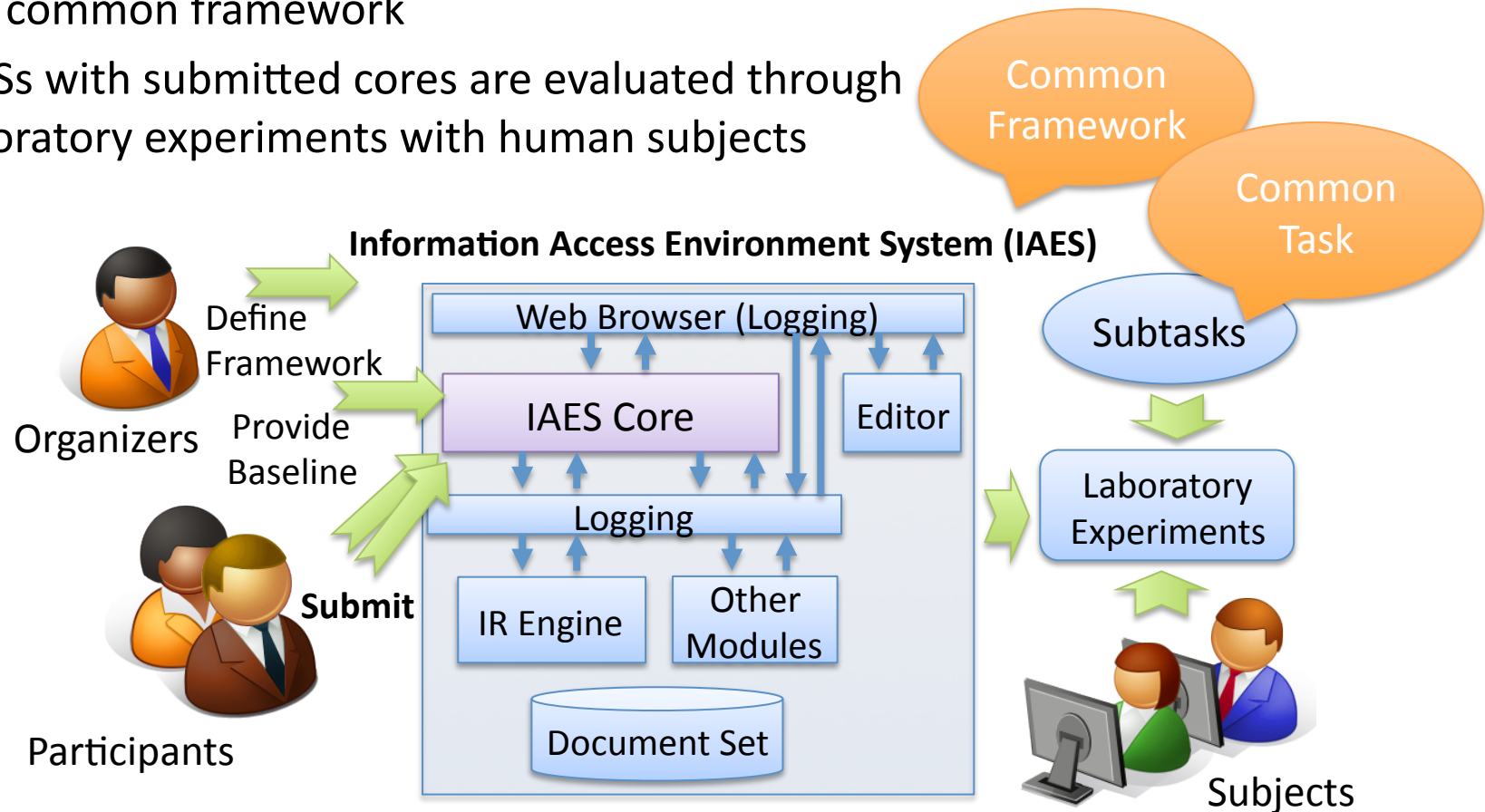
- All activities of interactive and explorative information access should be observed
 - The task should be able to elicit explorative behaviors from users
 - Factors not relevant to the evaluation should be excluded
 - Not only the behavior of the information access as a whole but also their component actions should be observed
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For the empirical study to properly evaluate the IAESs as a whole

For the results to reveal a relationship with the benchmark evaluation

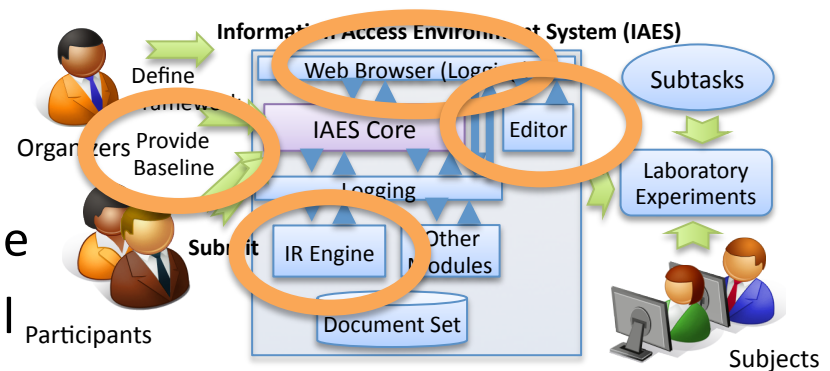
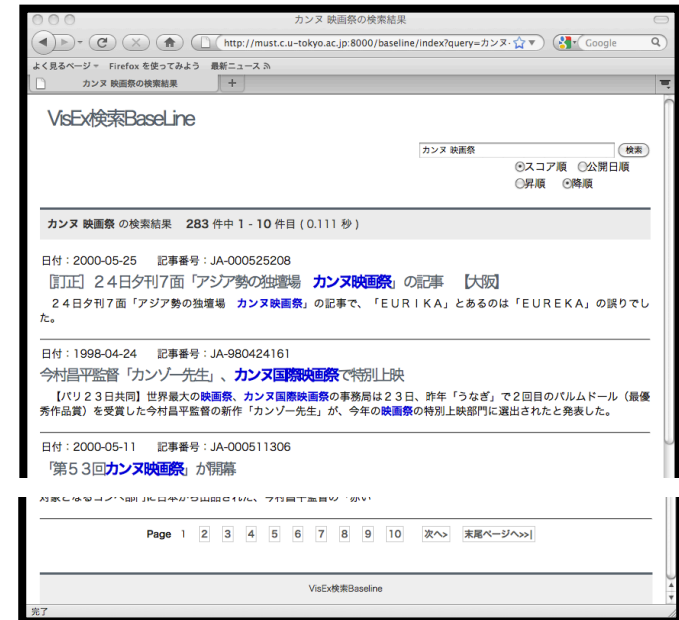
Framework

- A common framework is postulated for explorative information access environment systems (IAESs).
- The participants submit a core of an IAES, which works in the common framework
- IAESs with submitted cores are evaluated through laboratory experiments with human subjects



IAES Modules

- IR engine:
Apache Solr full-text search server
- Web browser: Firefox browser
- Editor:
developed as an add-on of Firefox
 - HTML document editor
 - Logger of users' actions in the browser and the editor itself
- Baseline system
 - Provided by the organizers
 - Reference to be compared with submitted systems
 - Similar to ordinary web search engine
 - Allows users keyword-based retrieval

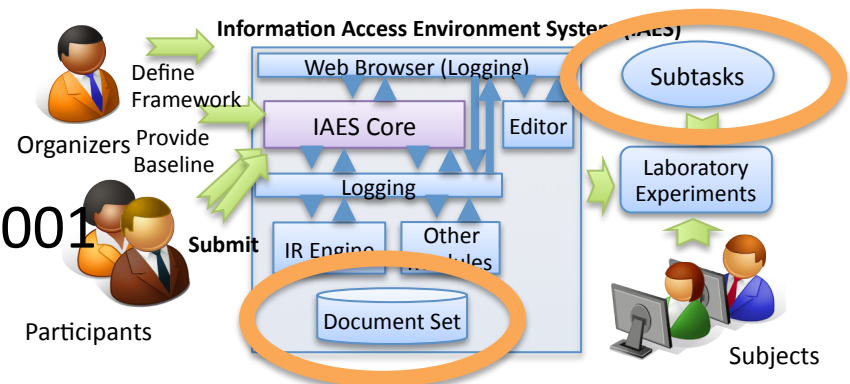


(Sub)Tasks and Document Set

The task asks the subjects to collect information on a given topic and compile it into a report using a given IAES

- Event Collection Subtask
 - requests the subjects to make a report on events specified as a topic by collecting the characteristics of the events
 - Airplane crashes that have happened in Asia
 - Nuclear tests that have been conducted in different countries around the world
- Trend Summarization Subtask
 - requests the subjects to make a report summarizing trends related time-series statistical information given as a topic
 - The situation about gasoline
 - The evaluation of the Cabinet

Mainichi newspapers from 1998 to 2001 were used as the document set



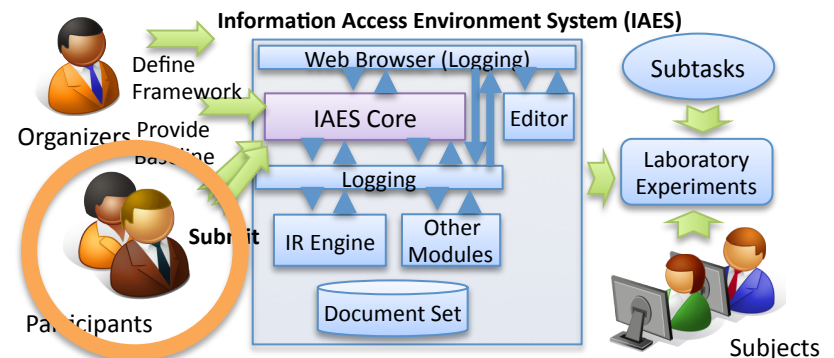
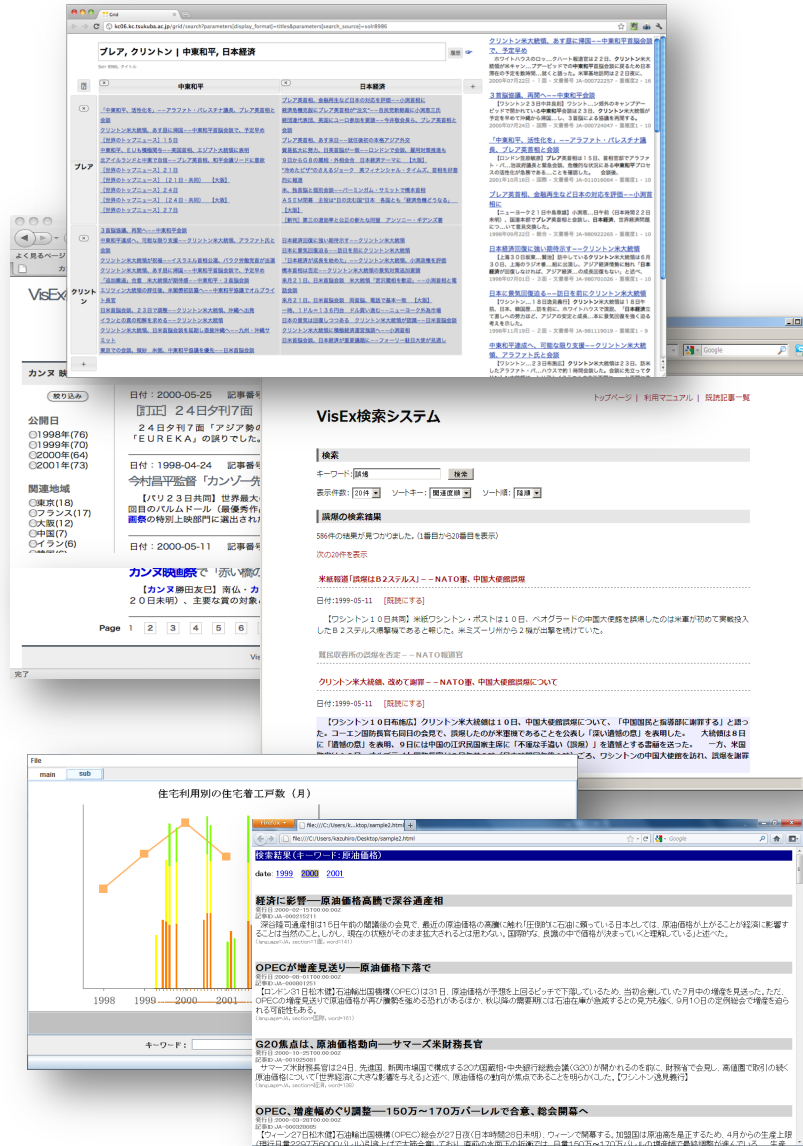
Systems Submitted

Four teams participated
Each team submitted one system

- University of Tsukuba (Grid)
- Kansai University (KN)
- Tokyo Metropolitan University (TM2011)
- The University of Tokyo (UTLIS)

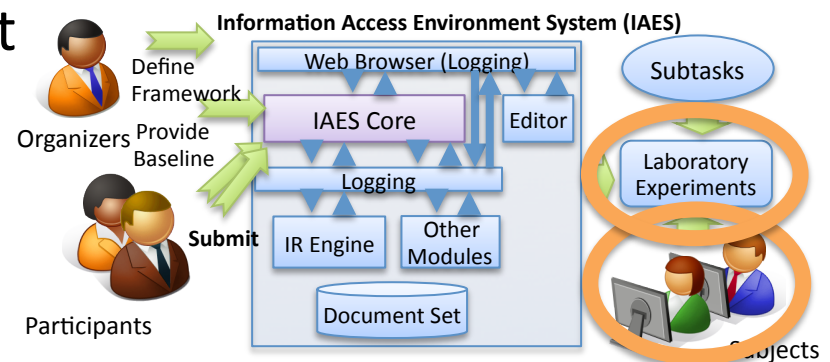
Two types of the submissions

- Proposals of a novel interface
- Experiment on the effects of some function



Experiment Design

- One unit of experiment is a combination of a system and a subtask
 - Eight units of the experiment were conducted including two units of the baseline system
- Five subjects attend each unit
 - Each subject attends just one unit
... between-subjects experiment design
- Each subtask consists of four topics and one training topic
- Pre-experiment, post-session (Five times), and post-experiment questionnaire surveys were conducted



Data Obtained

Data obtained through the experiments include

- Reports made by the subjects
 - Main products of the information access activities
- Log records
 - Dynamic process of the activities
- Data collected using questionnaire surveys
 - Subjective impressions of the subjects involved

It is expected to be possible to comprehensively grasp the complex activities of interactive information access, and to understand the roles of IAESs in those activities by analyzing the data individually and synthetically

Outcome

- Extensive range of data was obtained on users' behavior and their impression
 - We are still on the way of the analysis
 - The basic framework was confirmed to be promising
- Every team obtained valuable data for the evaluation of the submitted system
- It was more difficult than expected to understand the obtained data and draw a clear picture from it
 - Especially from the viewpoint of establishing an evaluation framework

Possible reasons for the difficulty

- Great diversity of behavior among the subjects and too few subjects
 - The characteristics of IAESs were buried in such diversity
- Difficulty to quantify the suitability of the products and processes of interactive information access
 - No clear criterion for what is the ideal
- Some lack of sophistication on the mechanisms for capturing log records

Example of Data Analysis (Report Analysis)

Number of articles referred to in reports

		1			2			3			4		
		min	max	med	min	max	med	min	max	med	min	max	med
Event	Baseline	4	12	8	3	10	6	9	14	11	9	18	12
	Grid	5	11	6	4	13	8	6	15	8	7	14	12
	TM2011	5	15	10	4	12	9	8	18	13	11	18	14
	UTLIS	4	12	10	7	12	8	6	11	9	8	13	9
Trend	Baseline	4	8	6	5	12	9	5	14	7	5	9	8
	Grid	4	8	6	3	16	7	4	13	8	3	13	12
	KN	4	10	10	2	23	10	8	22	9	9	13	10
	UTLIS	5	10	6	4	9	9	6	12	8	6	12	8

Similarity to the baseline in terms of retrieved articles

		1	2	3	4
EVENT	Grid	0.48	0.28	0.50	0.57
	TM2011	0.44	0.41	0.70	0.75
	UTLIS	0.54	0.28	0.67	0.67
TREND	Grid	0.76	0.60	0.20	0.70
	KN	0.50	0.35	0.41	0.78
	UTLIS	0.72	0.66	0.38	0.79

Example of Data Analysis (Log Analysis)

The proportion of knowledge compilation time

		1	2	3	4
EVENT	Baseline	0.42	0.26	0.38	0.31
	Grid	0.45	0.38	0.44	0.43
	TM2011	0.53	0.32	0.40	0.43
	UTLIS	0.44	0.33	0.31	0.36
TREND	Baseline	0.55	0.60	0.49	0.41
	Grid	0.58	0.56	0.55	0.53
	KN	0.41	0.36	0.31	0.34
	UTLIS	0.56	0.58	0.58	0.41

Knowledge compiling time:
the time when the editor tab is active
an approximation of the time taken by the user
to compile information and write it into a report

Example of Data Analysis (Questionnaire)

System Evaluation through Questionnaire Surveys

		Usability	Functionality	Efficiency
EVENT	Baseline	5.8	4.0	4.0
	Grid	2.8	3.8	3.2
	TM2011	5.6	3.8	4.2
	UTLIS	5.8	4.2	5.2
TREND	Baseline	4.0	3.4	3.2
	Grid	5.8	5.0	5.2
	KN	5.4	4.4	4.6
	UTLIS	5.0	4.0	4.8

The average values of the subjects' answers to questions, each of which used a seven-point Likert scale with a score of seven meaning the best evaluation

Conclusion

- The VisEx task was conducted, which aimed to establish a framework for evaluating interactive and explorative information access environments
- Four teams participated
- The basic framework was confirmed to be promising
 - Extensive range of data was obtained on several aspects of complex behaviors of interactive information access
- A lots of lessons have been learned
 - The task should be more difficult in order to derive explorative behaviors of users
 - The diversity of user behavior should be reduced somehow
 - More sophisticated log-taking mechanism or principle is expected