Lessons Learned from 2016 and Suggestions:

Date: 11/14

Telecon Participants: Mausam; Brian Williams, Andrew Coles, Daniele Magazzeni,

Amanda Coles, Scott Sanner, Stephen Smith, Laura Barbulescu, Alan Fern, Minh Do;

Program Chair Discussion:

Scott Sanner: Four quick comments.

1) Positive and negative feedback on scribe reviewers (use one of the reviewers to write the meta-review)
    a. Main reason to do it is more PC members and fewer reviewers.
    b. Argument against is that there is no removed SPC. Decision often follows the scribe reviewer.
    c. Mausam asked if the 2 chairs would be enough to monitor discussion.
        i. Scott said they were able to handle it.
    d. Malte said feedback from survey is quite mixed on scribe reviewers.
        i. Difficult from the scribe point of view to play both reviewer and meta-review roles
2) Be proactive in suggesting that authors switch tracks. Some authors are not aware of the different tracks.
    a. 80% of people they suggested to switch did actually switch.
    b. Do this before the bidding starts.
    c. 2016 let each track chair look at papers in track and suggest some papers as not being appropriate.
    d. Amanda: one concern was that after seeing reviews it sometimes seemed that track changes may have been appropriate.
    e. Malte: should we try to change the call for papers to clarify what we mean by an application track
    f. Mausam: will relay suggestion to track chairs
    g. Scott: 3 papers switched tracks after the reviews and track chairs then decided whether the paper was appropriate for their track
3) Blai Bonet has great reviewer assignment system for EasyChair. Scott got good feedback from reviewers about assignments.
    a. Mausam: has already obtained software, but unclear how to give student access to EasyChair system other than giving full access. Scott said the account needs full access.
4) Some papers are excellent but contain a flaw that cannot be published... in two cases last year, we allowed a conditional accept... consider doing this year when needed.

Amanda Coles:
    1) There were a few situations where they considered conditional accepts. They did it for 2 papers in 2016. Gave them a deadline (about a week) to fix a particular aspect of the paper. Then the lead reviewers or chairs looked at the fix and decided whether they were happy or not.

Mausam:
    1) Not many abstracts yet, should we be worried.
        a. Several: No. Submissions come in the last 48 hours.

Conference Chair Discussion:

Danielle Magazenni:
    1) Lots of things to do after the conference. Be prepared for that.
    2) Got to know at least one sponsor very late. So conference fees were not able to take this into account.

3) Survey results regarding students. Would like to have more activities between students and senior members.

4) ICAPS 2015 had problems with format of workshop papers. In 2016 they distributed a uniform format to the workshop chairs.

Andrew Coles:

1) Need to think carefully about the time required for paper presentations. Especially think about the journal presentation track and be more specific about the format of the journal track presentations.

a. They lucked out on the time available and the presentations that were accepted.

b. Work early with local arrangement chairs regarding this.

c. Danielle: feedback from survey. If there are too many papers, then the preference is to have shorter full presentations or more parallel sessions.

2) Difficulty in spending NSF sponsorship funds. Can only spend on US students. Should state that "students registrations will get a discount due to sponsorship" to help with this.

a. Last year's funds can carry forward. They got permission to cover US students going to summer school.

b. Brian: currently planning the summer school (will take that offline with Steve)

3) In 2016 needed to absorb summer school costs into regular conference. May want to be pessimistic and assume that will be the case in 2017.

Brian:

1) Any lessons learned related to summer school.

a. Danielle: was very good and there should be more

b. Andrew: great mixed program, challenge is making the finances work out, no woman speakers

c. AIJ gave a grant. Handled summer school fund raising separately from main conference and it was less successful.

Steve:

1) Currently faced with a decision of having CMU or some other entity handle registration. CMU will charge 12% tax but there will be no space charge (except for one room). If they go outside of CMU, then it could become much more complicated if any internal CMU services are needed.

2) Malte: SOCS has always handled registration themselves. Suggested talking to Wheeler Ruml. Suggests making a rough draft of pros and cons to see numbers and services.

3) 2016 handled it internally because King' s gave a discount since everything was done through King's (e.g. catering).

4) Do we need to sign a contract with AAAI. Dan: yes

Laura:

1) How did previous chairs block hotel rooms.

a. Malte: should talk with Wheeler since it varies based on destination.

Steve:

1) Fast tracking of workshop papers to main conference should be sped up. It was too late in many cases, since papers were already submitted to another conference.