ICAPS 2017 Fall Meeting: Lessons Learned

Attendees:

Alan Fern
Michael Ley
Brian Williams
Mathijs de Weerdt
Laura Barbulescu,
Eva Onaindia
Sven Koenig
Gabi Roger
J. Benton
Malte Helmert
Mausam
Minh Do
Siddharth Srivastava

Lessons learned and suggestions from 2017 (Mausam)

Issues that were talked about over beer.
- Talked about new tracks
- Best papers not always necessary per track (too many best papers?)
- Advantages/disadvantages of many tracks
- Fast tracking was difficult when not asked early enough
- Added a reproducibility bullet on review form
- Removed borderline recommendation on review form to force people to make choices
- Talked about a 9th page
- Allowed authors to buy the 9th page
- Mausam believes that 9th page should not have any content
- Blai's software did not work for them
- Still workable without software since there are not thousands of papers
- Sharing PCs across tracks was a bit confusing
    - They did it by assigning a max number per track for reviewers
- Did not find an easy way to support meta-reviews
- Allowed to anonymize after initial submission

Which new things were most successful and most important:
- New learning track was not as successful as he hoped.
    - Did not feel the reviewers were as high quality
    - Did not get the highest quality papers
- Fast tracking of papers
    - Should have publicized to authors earlier

Q&A from 2018 chairs (Gabriele, Sven)

Sven : Wondering about conflicts of interest. Is there a better way than requiring people to go through individual papers?

Mausam: There is a way for authors and reviewers to declare specific conflicts. They did things largely manually.

Sven: How well does the leading reviewer model work compared to having an SPC?

Mausam: Picked people who they really believed in to be leading reviewers. Some leading reviewers did not do their job. Mausam and Jeremy went over borderline papers and asked specific questions when needed. Asked reviewers to augment the reviews to include discussion in reviews

Gabriele: How did you handle papers by organizers?

Mausam: At least make sure that both Sven and Gabriele don't write a paper together. Removed Steve from PC discussion for his paper. Easychair makes it easy to make papers invisible to chairs. Mausam handled Jeremy's papers and would ask for Steve's help if necessary.

Gabriele: How did you use Blai's software for chair papers?

Gabriele: What was wrong with Blai's software?

Mausam: Easychair changed its format and Blai's software failed. Blai figured out format and changed software. Mausam's students ran it and tried to upload the assignments, but upload wasn't working. So his students manually entered assignments. For some reason Blai's software did not satisfy reviewer bounds and had an unequal distribution to reviewers. He wasn't able to optimize the parameter setting of Blai's software. So they ended up doing manual adjustment to the uploaded results of Blai's software. Also does not handle leading reviewers yet.

Brian: Blai agreed that the last thing he would do as a council member will be to make adjustments to the software. Has anyone talked with Blai?

Mausam: Haven't communicated with Blai.

Brian: Suggests contacting Blai now and perhaps run a test on last year's data.

Gabriele: Blai already gave software and they are currently working through issues.

Malte: In 2011 we used Easychair assignment and it worked well.

Alan: Also worked well in 2014.

Conference Chair Discussion

Lessons learned and suggestions from 2017 (Laura)

Laura: In terms of organizing the conference one of the first issues that came up was how to collect registration and make payments. Decided to go through the university for conference registration and made all payments through a university account. Got discount for banquet venue since going through CMU.

Laura: Other early things to figure out where the banquet should be. Needed to be proactive in Pittsburgh---reserved about a year in advance. Liability insurance needs to be purchased. They needed coverage for alcohol, since one event required that. Many companies were not able to help with the alcohol insurance.

Laura: Initial idea was for DC students to get their registration fee covered to be a volunteer. Many non-DC student contacted them to ask about being a student volunteer to cover registration. Decided to offer having students help tend the telepresence robots to cover their registration costs.

Laura: Make sure you get a block of rooms in a hotel with a cutoff date.

Mathijs: Is the telepresence reproducible in Delph?

Laura: Should be. Would need to find a company with the robots and have a telepresence chair to help with the scheduling of slots.

Mathijs: Who was the telepresence chair in 2017?

Laura: They didn't have a chair. The local arrangements person helped with it.

Mathijs: Did you consider using a mobile app for program?

Laura: They did have the schedule on the app. A student set it up.

Mathijs: Do you think it was a good thing?

Laura: Not sure. It was well received in London and that is why they decided to do it.

Malte: The one that Blai introduced for AAAI is called Guidebook. Malte loved it for AAAI. Blai would be the expert in the ICAPS community.

Laura: Thinks that they also used Guidebook.

Mathijs: Did you have a conference bag and what should be in it?

Laura: Ended up with a bag and an umbrella with printed program and pens with ICAPS logo. One issue is that you need to estimate how many you need to order to make sure you cover the people.

Mathijs: Was the bag a good idea?

Laura: Probably. People seemed to be interested in getting the bag and the program is a good thing to have.

Mathijs: ICAPS 2018 is overlapping with RSS.

Brian: A subset of community had worked to co-locate the two conferences, but the excitement was limited.

Laura: No insight into why RSS decided to overlap.

Brian: Any comments about things we might be able to do?

No comments.

Mathijs: Will have a public event with Rao talking about impact of AI on society.

Brian: Last year no ICAPS summer school. Instead had the robotics summer school. Planning do that again this year. Wants to make sure that the robotics school doesn't interfere with ICAPS summer school. Planning to have robotics summer school in July and in North America.

Alan: NSF for summer school

Brian: Impression that it was a grant to ICAPS not the summer school. Want money spent for student early career development. Were only allowed to spend 10% on invited speakers and rest for deferring student costs.

Mathijs: William is the funding chair and Alan can work with them.

Q&A from 2018 chairs (Matthijs)

Sid: How did Laura resolve the alcohol insurance issues?

Laura: Went to many companies and one question was usually about coverage for alcohol. As soon as answer was yet, many companies couldn't help. They got a name of a broker that could help. Laura shopped around to find the cheapest insurance that would cover needs.

Sid: Did Laura use the university for hotel block booking?

Laura: They did go through university, but it wasn't required since hotel is really a separate thing from university (no liability).

Sid: If I understand correctly they did not have any financial liability with hotel booking.

Laura: Correct.

Sid: RSS'19 will be in Freiburg. If anyone has contacts we could try to deconflict.

Malte: Surprised. Do you have more information? Will ask around at the roboticists in Freiburg.

J. Benton: Did any students complain about volunteering or were they happy to do it.

Laura: They seemed happy. No complaining.

Benton: Several places are going to be looking for deposits. Will ICAPS be able to take care of that.

Laura: Yes. They talked with Wheeler to get some funds for deposits on certain venues.