2021 ICAPS Council Meeting

August 3, 2021, 15:00- 19:15   CET, Remotely via Zoom

Attendees:

Council Members:
J. Benton, Alan Fern, Patrik Haslum, Erez Karpas, Michael Katz, Daniele Magazzeni, Eva Onaindia, Gabriele Röger, Scott Sanner, Shirin Sohrabi, Matthijs Spaan, Hankz Hankui Zhuo

Non-Council Attendees:

Only for agenda item 3 (representing ICAPS 2021) 15:145 CET: Susanne Biundo, Robert Goldman

Only for agenda item 4 (representing ICAPS 2022) 16:15 CET: Akshat Kumar, Pradeep Varakantham, Sylvie Thiébaux, William Yeoh

Only for agenda item 5 (representing ICAPS 2023) 17:00 CET: Roman Bartak, Andrea Orlandini, Mauro Vallati, Milena Zeithamlová

1. Opening/Formalities

1.1 Review and approve minutes of the ICAPS 2020 Council Meeting
Approved.

1.2 Election of new officers
Congratulations to the new officers:
- Jeremy Frank for accepting again the role of Treasurer
- Shirin Sohrabi for her role as Inclusion Chair

A special thanks to J. Benton for his hard work as Inclusion Chair over the past years.

1.3 Welcoming new members
Congratulations to the new elected members: Michael Katz and Hankz Hankui Zhou.

1.4 Thanking departing members
Thanks to Alan Fern and Patrik Haslum for their strong involvement in the ICAPS community.

2. Governance

2.1 ICAPS 2020 Report and Update (presented by Erez Karpas)

Erez analyzed the statistics on participation:

1. Hard to get a lot of engagement in attendance (500 people attended for one hour, less than 100 people attended for 10 hours)

Erez analyzed the results from the post-conference survey:

1. 263 responses to the survey out of 1330 registered participants
2. Virtual conferences lead to partial attendance: ~75% of attendees participated in at most 10 sessions (roughly half the program)
3. Virtual conferences encourage new participants: 40.3% newcomers
4. Virtual conferences are hard for newcomers: about 41.8% of all participants stated that only talked to people they've met before on gather.town
5. Some comments out of line

Dan: nicely surprised by the good rate of newcomers in the survey; continue working to engage new joiners

Discussion (lessons learned from ICAPS 2020 and application to ICAPS 2021):

1. Erez: we want more people in gather.town; make the 'GO TO GATHER' icon bigger to force people to gather together.
2. Shirin: circulate the incident report form among the community at ICAPS 2021, put it up on the ICAPS council web page as well.
3. We concur with making a comment on the incident report form at the Opening Remarks (Hankz) and the Community Meeting. Two forms: one in Google docs and another one for members of ICAPS community in China.

2.2 Treasurer's Report (presented by Dan Magazzeni)

A big thanks to Jeremy for his effort in managing the ICAPS finances.

The bottom line is that the state of treasury is in good shape.

Discussion on funding opportunities:

1. Erez: better be conservative in anticipation of future physical conferences
2. Gabi: support new initiatives on Planning and Scheduling
3. Erez: address the community for proposals that benefit the community
4. Michael: initiatives up to a certain amount, determine how many initiatives, how to deal when multiple initiatives
5. J.: analyze outreach of initiatives

Conclusion: we concur with committing 10.000$ for P&S initiatives; the Council will decide in case of receiving multiple proposals.

We agree on getting Diane Male a thank you present for her work. We leave this up to Jeremy.

3. ICAPS 2021 (presented by Hankz Hankui Zhuo and Robert Goldman)

Hankz presented on ICAPS 2021:

1. New competition track: 5 problems from industry
2. Tools used: slideslive + Rocket.chat + Zoom + Gather.town
   a. Live streaming
   b. Pre-recording videos available immediately after live talk on the conference website
   c. slideslive only used during the second week (expensive for workshops run in parallel)
3. Improvement in Gather design
4. Budget
   a. Fees: students $20, non-students $50
   b. Balance: +$17,440 (without considering reimburse of registration fees and unexpected expenses)
   c. Waiving 118 registration fees for sponsors, invited speakers, organizers, etc.
   d. TOTAL Registrations: 410
      i. 292 paid registrations (149 full registration, 143 student registrations)
      ii. 118 free registrations
   e. Eligible for registration refund: students attending main conference for >5hours, Chinese researchers supported by HUAWEI, etc.
   f. FINAL balance: maybe loss of money; the purpose is commitment, not profit.
5. Main Program (changes wrt ICAPS 2020):
   a. More invited talks
   b. Industry talks

Robert presented an overview on the ICAPS 2021 PC:

1. SPC model
2. A significant amount of desk rejected papers (14.4%):
   a. important to insist on anonymity breach
   b. confusion about 4+1/8+1 length specification
3. Call for Tutorials run late (4 tutorials submitted, 2 tutorials withdrawn)
4. Lessons learned:
   a. PC needs to be more controlling of the conference organization, specially control over all deadlines

b. Need of better passing of information and feedback to the next ICAPS organizations (too unstructured interaction)

Susanne Biundo and Robert Goldman leave the meeting.

4. ICAPS 2022 (presented by Pradeep Varakantham)

The president thanks ICAPS 2022 organization for putting together a proposal in such a short notice.

Pradeep presented on ICAPS 2022 (new aspects):

1. New track: human-aware planning and learning track
2. New chair: Diversity and Inclusion chair (Gabriele Röger)

Discussion:

1. Workshop proposal submission deadline is set Dec 23rd → a few comments on the fact that Dec 23r does not seem a very suitable date due to proximity to winter break vacations.
2. The end of the discussion period is set Feb 9 and Meta-reviews due is set Feb 9 → comments on the suitability of making these two dates equal, suggestions to move the end of the discussion period to an earlier date.
3. Discussion on the conflicting dates of ICAPS with other AI conferences: the idea of considering moving ICAPS to September is transmitted as to avoid clashing with AAAI and IJCAI dates; Sylvie suggests to re-think the timeline in the future.
4. The ICAPS 2022 organizing team will announce ICAPS 2022 as a physical conference in the community meeting (virtual conference as contingency):
    a. J. points out that hosting a hybrid conference requires addressing the council first.
    b. Erez warns about the message of a hybrid conference and to be careful to take good care of the social events.
    c. Organizers are warned that notification of holding a physical/hybrid conference should be made well in advance for plan travelling

The ICAPS 2022 organizing team leaves the meeting.

5. ICAPS 2023 (presented by Roman Bartak)

Roman presented on ICAPS 2023:

1. Journal track still open
2. Remote participation coordinated by Lukas Chrpa
3. Tentative dates for main conference: 4-6 July 2023
4. A robotics competition will be tentatively scheduled

5. New: late-breaking papers that present fresh but not very stable work (sort of short papers); a discussion on whether these papers are to be included in the ICAPS proceedings comes up (may hurt conference ranking).
6. New: flexible registration fees
   a. Workshop/Tutorial only
   b. Conference
   c. Remote participation

Discussion:
1. In general, flexible registration fees is welcome. Nevertheless, it is also pointed out that this will lead to many PhD students with only accepted workshop papers not attending the main conference.
2. Since the conference will be hosted at the Charles University Campus of Prague, flexibility on cancellation is in principle easy.
3. Flexibility to move the conference to later dates but not earlier.

Conclusion:
1. The council accepts to assign the ICAPS 2023 organization to the proposal presented by Roman Bartak.
2. The council suggests the ICAPS 2023 organizing team to include a Diversity and Inclusion chair like in ICAPS 2022; the objective is to promote this role in the organizing committee in coordination with the officer of the Council who acts as Inclusion chair (Shirin Sohrabi).

6. Discussion items

6.1 Small AI Conferences meeting (Dan Magazzeni)

Dan tells he attended a meeting that gathered small AI conferences together: Chris Beck (CP), Sven Koenig (SoCS), Dan Mgazzeni (ICAPS), KR, CPAIOR and SAT. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how small AI conference can survive major AI conferences.

Two actions were agreed upon:
1. Look into an initiative to put together all the participants of these conferences in a kind of federated AI conference or multi-AI conference, an international conglomeration or co-location of small AI conferences that share research field or aim to find synergies among several closely related fields.
2. Concerns about the impact of the conference rankings were raised at the meeting. Participants aim for joining forces that help stand for a strong position in the conference ratings.

Overall, the idea is to promote synergies and gain public visibility of all communities together.

The Council decides to further explore this initiative and delegates in Eva Onaindia as the ICAPS member for subsequent meetings.

6.2 Publisher discussion (Scott Sanner and Robert Goldman)

Scott (message dropped in the chat): think carefully to move away from AAAI press. Upsides of AAAI press: hosting, indexing, and visibility (e.g., to search engines). Whoever takes over the role of looking into changing publishers, it is important to keep in mind what is currently working well now with AAAI Press.

Robert presents several alternatives for proceedings publisher: ConfDNA, Dagstuhl, Easychair series, CEUR Workshop Proceedings, ACM Publications, etc.

Gabi: there is no updated agreement ICAPS and AAAI Press; need to review the current contract and see the implications (e.g., the copyright belongs to AAAI Press so what happens to our past proceedings if we move away from AAAI Press?).

Robert: we need to look into the transition plans of AAAI press.

The Council decides to delegate in Robert Goldman to further investigate about the Proceedings publisher, and contact Gabi and Scott with findings.

6.3 Diversity data (J. Benton)

J. summarizes definitions for diversity, inclusion and equity. He claims diversity data (gender, registrant country) is not reported for most ICAPS iterations. The problem is that we have an Inclusion Chair but no way of tracking effectiveness of effort for increasing diversity & inclusion.

The Council decides that J. drafts a report with the main bullet points to be shared with the organizers to collect and report on diversity data

1. Gender/gender identity (pronouns), registrant country
2. Possibly on special accommodation, accessibility requirements, etc.

6.4 Ethical considerations (J. Benton and Michael Katz)

J. and Michael discuss on how to consider ethical concerns and societal impact in the papers. Request all ICAPS iterations to clarify whether a paper may be evaluated based on societal impact/ethical consideration for consistency among papers.

Discussion points:

- Ethics considerations do not have to be on every paper.
- Write up a statement to explicitly determine when this type of ethical/societal considerations are applicable/requested/required.

- Offer a guideline and it is up to the reviewer to determine if the ethical/societal consideration must be contemplated.
- We need to avoid that considering ethical aspects in evaluating a paper depends on the reviewers assigned to the paper. In order to ensure that all papers are equally treated, there needs to be more guidance (e.g., in the CFP, reviewing criteria).
- J. says ICAPS 2022 should put this into a call → start conversation with ICAPS 2022.

7. Wrap-Up

7.1 Community meeting preparation

Erez: ask for volunteers to organize an International Planning Competition (IPC)

Scott (message dropped in the chat): foster the role of planning in the competitions. It is important that our competitions highlight the role of AI planning (model-based) for the greater community rather than supporting that the model-free approach of RL always wins.

7.2 ICAPS Council Meeting 2022

The next meeting will be on the first day of ICAPS 2022.