
Preface

The Society for Artificial Intelligence and Statistics (SAIS) is dedicated to facilitating interactions between researchers in AI and Statistics. The main responsibility of the Society is to organize the biennial International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Statistics, AISTATS. The Eleventh such meeting took place March 21–24, 2007 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Papers from a large number of different areas at the interface of statistics and AI were presented at the conference. In addition to traditional areas of strength at AISTATS, such as probabilistic graphical models and kernel machines, the presentations encompassed topics such as semisupervised and unsupervised learning, learning on graphs, dimensionality reduction, optimization, non-parametric methods. This diversity contributed to a strong and stimulating program.

There were approximately 150 submissions. Almost every paper was assigned three reviewers. On the basis of the reviews, 19 papers were selected for presentation in the plenary session and 66 were selected for the poster sessions, based on their interest and relevance to the conference and on their originality and clarity of exposition. Equal acceptance criteria were used for all submissions, and our decision of how each paper was presented was aimed at creating a varied program rather than drawing a distinction between poster papers and plenary papers. Accordingly, in these proceedings we have ordered all of the papers alphabetically by the lead author's name. The conference web page may be consulted to see how individual papers were presented.

While the United States was the country with the most submitted papers, the conference received submissions from countries belonging to five continents and both hemispheres: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China and Hong Kong, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Romania and the United Kingdom. This range of countries emphasizes the truly international character of the conference. It is worth noting that several papers had their co-authors based in different countries.

The 2007 AISTATS meeting, for the first time, was collocated with the Learning Workshop <http://snowbird.djvuzone.org/>. On March 22, the two meetings had a common plenary session, a common poster session, followed by a common banquet.

It is a pleasure to thank all those who helped this volume to come into existence and the conference to be successful and exciting. First and foremost, we cannot be grateful enough to our program committee members, who agreed to give up their time to review and on occasion discuss papers, all in a very short period of time. We were impressed by how thorough were the reviews we received. It is by the reviewers' dedication that we were able to put together a conference program that we feel is in keeping with the AISTATS standards of excellence.

We thank our sponsors Google, ITA Software, Microsoft Research and Yahoo! Research whose donations allowed us to make the registration fees affordable to a

larger number of participants, and especially to students.

The Conference Management Toolkit created at Microsoft Research helped us coordinate the paper submissions and reviewing process; we thank the CMT team for their support during the various phases of assembling the program.

Karen Smith took care of local arrangements, collecting registration fees, negotiating contracts and a million other tasks needed to run AISTATS smoothly. Her competent and efficient presence made our life inestimably easier.

Special thanks to Seongho Wu who designed and managed the AISTATS web site, helped with several tedious jobs of entering data and with other aspects of the conference organization; to Daryl Pregibon who handled the financial side of AISTATS; and to Mike Fink and Luis Ortiz who enthusiastically joined the team for the last round of preparations. We quickly found that Yann LeCun and Yoshua Bengio, the Learning Workshop organizers, were thinking in the same spirit as us about most aspects related to the meetings' collocation; this made our collaboration a very pleasant task and ensured that we could have a truly joint meeting on the common day of presentations.

Many thanks to Tony Veroeven and Patty Keller of Omnipress who took care of the production of the electronic proceedings. It was a pleasure to work with them.

Finally, we want to thank the authors, those whose papers were accepted and those whose papers did not make it into these proceedings; it is their work that gives meaning to the AISTATS Conference.

Marina Meilă and Xiaotong Shen, AISTATS 2007 Chairs