

The Roots and the Tree of Information Retrieval in Italy

(Invited Talk)

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1 ABSTRACT

In the late 1950s, scholars started investigating methods for the automatic representation, management, and retrieval of information. It was then that Modern Information Retrieval was born. Modern information retrieval (IR) is based on computer science, library science, linguistics, mathematics, and statistics. For this reason, it is intrinsically interdisciplinary and its study and advancement requires the collaboration of experts with diversified skills. Modern information retrieval arose in parallel in the USA and Europe – and Italy was no exception. In fact, when the Italian educational and scientific computing society – named AICA – was founded in 1961, it was decided to organize activities around special interest groups representing the most active areas of computer science. One of these groups was the group on information retrieval – named GLIR – that was founded in 1962 to gather scholars with academic and industrial backgrounds who had already begun to deal with various aspects of IR. Almost sixty years have passed since then and IR has grown coherently with the different evolutions, and sometimes “revolutions”, that occurred. Especially since the 1990s with the advent of the Web, where information retrieval reached one of its highest peaks as the field that gave birth to search engines, the attention to the field has grown as well as the issues addressed and results achieved.

The talk will review the work that has been done in information retrieval in Italy from its beginnings up to now, with the objective of identifying some lessons learned and thus preventing the same mistakes from being made again. Furthermore, it will point to some challenges that need to be faced by those who are interested in advancing the field.

2 BIOGRAPHY

Maristella Agosti is Professor of Computer Engineering in the Department of Information Engineering, University of Padua, Italy, where she leads the Information Management Systems research group. She is member of the Galilean Academy. Her research focuses on information retrieval and digital libraries. She has been and is involved in a number of European Commission research projects including EXAMODE, CULTURA, PROMISE, and DELOS. She contributed to the launch of the ESSIR summer school in 1990 and the Italian Conference on Digital Libraries in 2005. In 2016, she received the Tony Kent Strix Award.

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