CALL FOR WORKSHOP PROPOSALS
NIPS 2007 Post-Conference Workshops -- December 7 and 8, 2007
Neural Information Processing Systems -- Natural and Synthetic
Whistler Resort & Spa and the Whistler Hilton Resort & Spa, BC, CANADA
http://www.nips.cc/
Proposal Deadline: 3rd August 2007

Following the Neural Information Processing Systems (NIPS) 2007 Conference in Vancouver, Canada, workshops on a variety of current topics in neural information processing will be held on December 7 and 8, 2007, in Whistler, BC, Canada.

We invite researchers interested in chairing a workshop to submit a proposal. The goal of the workshops is to provide an informal forum for researchers to discuss important research questions and challenges. The emphasis should be on discussion; the workshop format should not be simply a mini-conference but should aim for a dynamic sharing of ideas. We particularly encourage workshops that will bring together unusual groupings for the transfer of ideas and methods. Controversial issues, open problems, and comparisons of competing approaches are not only encouraged but preferred as workshop topics. Representation of alternative viewpoints and panel-style discussions are encouraged. Workshop topics should be developed with a view to make an interesting workshop for the participants; proponents should familiarize themselves with previous workshops and the topics covered in recent NIPS papers.

We are especially interested in workshops that bridge traditional discipline or sub-discipline boundaries and endeavor to define new research directions, as opposed to workshops that are merely a forum for the presentation of recent results. We particularly encourage neuroscience topics and those that connect neuroscience and computer science.

Format

There will be six hours of workshop meetings per day, split into morning and afternoon sessions, with free time between the sessions for ongoing individual exchange or outdoor activities. Selected workshops may be invited to submit proceedings for publication in the post-NIPS workshops monographs series published by the MIT Press.

Organizer Responsibilities

Workshop organizers have several responsibilities, including:

- Coordinating workshop participation and content, including arranging short informal presentations by domain experts, arranging for expert commentators to sit on discussion panels, formulating discussion topics, etc;
- Moderating the discussion, and reporting its findings and conclusions to all NIPS workshop participants during the evening plenary sessions;
- Writing a brief summary and/or coordinating submitted material for post-conference electronic dissemination;

- Potentially organizing pre-reading for the workshop if accepted (this might take the form of a position paper, or a tutorial, or even just a reading list);
- Ensuring they have unambiguous acceptance to attend from any people named as confirmed in the proposal;
- Attending the workshop (multiple organizers are all expected to attend).

Submission Instructions

Proposals should include a title, description of what the workshop is to address and accomplish, proposed workshop length (1 or 2 days), planned format (e.g., lectures, group discussions, panel discussion, combinations of the above, etc.), and proposed speakers. Names of potential invitees and any confirmed speakers should be given where possible. Preference will be given to workshops that reserve a significant portion of time for open discussion or panel discussion, as opposed to a pure "mini-conference" format. An example format is:

- Tutorial lecture providing background and relevant terminology;
- Discussion or panel presentation;
- Short talks or panels alternating with discussion and question/answer sessions;
- General discussion and wrap-up.

We suggest that organizers allocate at least 50% of the workshop schedule to questions, discussion, and breaks. Past experience suggests that workshops otherwise degrade into mini-conferences as talks begin to run over. For the same reason, each workshop should include no more than 12 talks per day and preferably fewer. Poster spotlights and sessions have been effectively incorporated into previous workshops and are another good way to facilitate informal discussion.

We encourage organizers to give thought how they might make effective use of pre-distribution of written material in order to maximize the time available for discussion, noting however that asking invited speakers to prepare written materials is unlikely to enhance the chances of acceptance of such invitations.

The proposal should motivate why the topic is of interest, why it should be discussed, and the targeted group of participants; in essence, it should explain why NIPS needs a workshop on this topic and what its impact will be. It should include a brief CV of the prospective workshop chair(s) with a list of publications to establish scholarship in the field. We encourage workshops that build, continue, or arise from one or more workshops from previous years, although an argument that there were n workshops previously on a topic and therefore we need a $(n+1)$th are discouraged; some genuine novelty is necessary. Please mention any such connections. Descriptions of previous workshops may be found at:

http://nips.cc/Conferences/2006/Workshops/
http://nips.cc/Conferences/2005/Workshops/
http://nips.cc/Conferences/2004/Workshops/

Unfortunately, NIPS cannot provide travel funding for workshop speakers. In the past, some workshops have sought and received funding from external sources to bring in outside

speakers. In any case, the organizers of each accepted workshop can name two individuals to receive free registration for the workshop program.

Proposals should be emailed as plain text to: Bob.Williamson@anu.edu.au by **3rd August 2007** (please do not use attachments, Word, postscript, html, or pdf files). Submissions should include the name, address, email address, phone and fax numbers for all organizers. If there is more than one organizer, please designate one organizer as the primary contact. Proposers are encouraged to ensure their proposal is as cogent, coherent and concise as possible.

Selection Criteria

In selecting workshops from the proposals, we will take account of:

- Alignment with the interests of NIPS attendees (as evidenced by previous NIPS papers and workshops);
- Alignment with emerging trends in the fields of interest to NIPS;
- Extent to which the workshop attempts to be agenda setting as opposed to merely reporting new results or a "me too" activity;
- Degree of cross-disciplinarity;
- Evidence that workshop chairs can effectively manage the discussions (based for example on past workshop or conference organization);
- Calibre of invited speakers;
- Realism of the schedule (ten 15 minute talks back-to-back is not…)
- Fraction of proposed invited speakers who can confirm their attendance conditional on the workshop being approved;
- Overall interest and excitement of the proposal and its potential to positively impact the field;
- Overall balance of fields and interests.

Applicants are encouraged to ensure that these aspects of their proposed workshop are clear in their proposal.

Process

The selection of workshops will be done by the workshop co-chairs. We may recommend the merger of multiple proposals that overlap in a particular area; proponents are not obliged to accept such suggestions, in which case we will choose between competing proposals on a given topic. Our aim is to select the best set of workshops for participants; this does not necessarily mean the largest number of workshops. We expect to make a decision on which workshops will be invited to run within two weeks of the submission deadline. There will be no extensions granted for proposal submissions. We look forward to working with workshop chairs to generate a range of interesting, high quality sessions.

Bob Williamson,	**Adrienne Fairhall,**	**Charles Isbell**
(ANU & NICTA)	(University of Washington)	(Georgia Tech)

NIPS 2007 Workshops Co-Chairs