

# ICAPS'08 Conference Report

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## Abstract

This report describes the organization of ICAPS'08, the *18th International Conference on Automated Planning and Scheduling*, which took place in the SMC conference center at 66 Goulburn Street in Sydney, Australia on September 14-18, 2008.

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# 1 Conference committee

The structure of the conference committee followed closely the conference proposal from 2006, except that the number of doctoral program chairs was increased from 2 to 3 at the request of the original two DC chairs. The doctoral consortium involved a lot of work and having three DC chairs was very well justified.

A difference to almost all other ICAPS conferences is that we had only one chair for tutorials and for workshops. This also seems very well justified considering the relatively small amount of work and the relatively large communication overhead that is inherent in these tasks which don't have many components that can be naturally divided to two or more chairs.

Conference Chairs:	Bernhard Nebel, Jussi Rintanen
Program Chairs:	Chris Beck, Eric Hansen
Tutorial Chair:	Blai Bonet
Workshop Chair:	Ronen Brafman
System Demonstrations Chair:	Yannis Dimopoulos
Doctoral Consortium Chairs:	Judy Goldsmith, Robert Sloan, Neil Yorke-Smith
Sponsorship Chairs:	Mark Boddy, Federico Pecora
Local organization:	Adi Botea, Patrik Haslum

## 2 Submissions and reviewing

### 2.1 Reviewing process

We used the *EasyChair* review management system, which turned out to be very good choice: the system is flexible, easy to use and its use does not currently cost anything.

The assignment of papers to PC members was based on the bids by the members of program committee. Each paper was first assigned to one of the four conference/program chairs, and each chair subsequently assigned each of their papers to a PC member. Almost all papers had two or three PC members who had expressed strong preference to review that paper. The assignment could have been done automatically by EasyChair, but we ended up doing the assignment manually. There are criteria a good assignment has to satisfy that cannot be achieved with automatic assignment based on the bids only. We believe that the assignments of each paper to PC members should be carried out by people who are experts on the topic of the paper. Our selection of Conference/Program chairs was made with this idea in mind, but this could have been achieved just as well by using a small Senior Program Committee consisting of 4 to 6 members (including the program chairs). Having a larger SPC is problematic because this takes some of the best people away from doing actual reviewing without improving the quality of the paper assignment.

### 2.2 Program committee

The program committee (see Table 1) had 82 members and its composition was roughly similar to previous ICAPS conferences, except maybe a slightly bigger emphasis on scheduling. In the end, it seemed that we could have done with one fewer constraints/scheduling PC members since some of them had only 4 papers to review when the average number of 5.5. We would have benefited from a couple of more PC members with both wide interests and good technical understanding of several topics: we sometimes had problem assigning PC members to papers with deep technical content and a topic that did not fit well in any single topic category. The program committee members in some cases used additional reviewers for writing some of the reviews. There were a total of 65 reviewers (see Table 2).

Fahiem Bacchus	Laura Barbulescu	Roman Bartak	Michael Beetz
Piergiorgio Bertoli	Mark Boddy	Blai Bonet	Daniel Borrajo
Adi Botea	Ronen I. Brafman	Dan Bryce	Amedeo Cesta
Andrew Davenport	Richard Dearden	Rina Dechter	Giuseppe De Giacomo
Erik Demeulemeester	Yannis Dimopoulos	Minh Do	Carmel Domshlak
Stefan Edelkamp	Alan Fern	Maria Fox	Daniel Gaines
Héctor Geffner	Alfonso Gerevini	Enrico Giunchiglia	Bob Givan
Patrik Haslum	Milos Hauskrecht	Malte Helmert	Pascal Van Hentenryck
David Hildum	Jörg Hoffmann	Adele Howe	Jinbo Huang
Félix Ingrand	Ari K. Jónsson	Froduald Kabanza	Rao Kambhampati
Henry Kautz	Craig Knoblock	Sven Koenig	Richard Korf
András Kovács	Philippe Laborie	Hoong Chuin Lau	Derek Long
Mausam	Sheila McIlraith	Nicolas Meuleau	Martin Müller
Karen L. Myers	Angelo Oddi	Gilles Pesant	Federico Pecora
Sanja Petrovic	Marco Pistore	Kanna Rajan	Ioannis Refanidis
Wheeler Ruml	Miguel A. Salido	Scott Sanner	Reid Simmons
David E. Smith	Stephen Smith	Trey Smith	Francis Sourd
Matthijs Spaan	Matt Streeter	Sylvie Thiébaux	Manuela Veloso
Gérard Verfaillie	Thierry Vidal	Vincent Vidal	Petr Vilím
Jean-Paul Watson, Sandia	Dan Weld	David E. Wilkins	Weixiong Zhang
Rong Zhou	Shlomo Zilberstein		

Table 1: Program Committee

Martin Allen	Nicholas Armstrong-Crews	Jorge Baier	J. Benton
Eric Beaudry	Yngvi Björnsson	Michael Brenner	Menkes van den Briel
Shih-Fen Cheng	Andrew Coles	Luca Compagna	Elisabeth Crawford
William Cushing	Peng Dai	Avi Dechter	Anna Robert
Guillaume Erbs	Patrick Eyerich	Na Fu	Simone Fratini
Christian Fritz	François Galasso	Angel Garcia-Olaya	Vibhav Gogate
Alban Grastien	Peter Gregory	Dominik Jain	Kalev Kask
Michael Katz	Raman Kazhamiakin	Olga Kerhet	Tamas Kis
Peter Kissmann	Akshat Kumar	Christine Largouet	Carlos Linares López
Marco Maratea	Annapaola Marconi	Robert Mattmüller	Conor McGann
Francisco Melo	Martin Michalowski	Matthew Michelson	Lorenz Mösenlechner
Lars Otten	Nicola Policella	Fabio Patrizi	Marek Petrik
Frederic Py	Riccardo Rasconi	Gabriele Röger	Alessandro Saetti
Oscar Sapena	Sebastian Sardina	Ivan Serina	Guy Shani
Dmitry Shaparau	Tomas Singliar	Siddharth Srivastava	Damian Sulewski
Ramesh Thangarajoo	Rattapoom Tuchinda	Pradeep Varakantham	Stefan Wöfl
Fei Xiao			

Table 2: Additional reviewers

country	authors	papers
United States	108	46.25
Spain	24	14.70
Canada	29	13.33
Germany	21	9.50
France	20	9.00
Australia	15	7.67
United Kingdom	14	7.23
Israel	6	5.33
Brazil	7	3.00
Italy	8	2.57
China	9	2.42

Table 3: ICAPS'08 submissions by country

## 2.3 Schedule

<b>Technical papers</b>	Electronic abstracts:	April 29, 2008
	Paper bidding deadline:	May 1, 2008
	Electronic PDF papers:	May 3, 2008
	Papers assigned to PC members:	May 4, 2008
	Draft reviews to Authors:	June 5, 2008
	End of author feedback:	June 7, 2008
	Notification:	June 14, 2008
	Final papers:	June 27, 2008
<b>Tutorials</b>	Proposals:	March 7, 2008
	Notification:	March 28, 2008
<b>Workshops</b>	Proposals:	March 3, 2008
	Notification:	April 7, 2008
	Submissions:	June 18, 2008
	Notifications:	July 11, 2008
<b>Demonstrations</b>	Submission:	June 13, 2008
	Notification:	July 11, 2008
<b>Doctoral program</b>	Submission:	June 18, 2008
	Notification:	July 11, 2008

Before the reviewing phase for the technical papers, the reviewing schedule was considered quite tight by some of the program chairs, but the schedule turned out to be very feasible.

Unlike most other conferences, we had almost all of the assignment of papers to PC members finished by the submission deadline of the papers, and got the papers to PC members only one day after the paper submission deadline. The assignment process had started immediately after the end of the bidding phase during which the PC members indicated which papers they prefer to review.

## 2.4 Paper statistics

A total of 151 papers were submitted. A total of 453 reviews were written, 3 for each paper, which meant on average 5.5 reviews per PC member.

The countries with the most submitted papers are given in Table 3.<sup>1</sup>

One of the papers was retracted after the authors got the initial reviewers in the beginning of the discussion period. 51 papers were accepted for presentation in the conference and to be published in the proceedings. All 51 papers were assigned a 22.5 minute talk in the conference program. Later, further 14 papers were invited for poster presentation in the conference but these papers were not published in the proceedings. In retrospect, it seems that the poster papers, which we decided not to regard as “full” papers to keep the acceptance percentage relatively low (33.8), should have been given two pages in the proceedings so that they

<sup>1</sup>The numbers of papers are weighted according to the number of authors. For example, a paper with 3 authors, one of which is from Australia, counts as  $\frac{1}{3}$  papers from Australia.

topic	acc.	subm.	acc. %
PLANNING WITH UNCERTAINTY AND INCOMPLETE INFORMATION	8	36	22.2
contingent planning	1	11	
POMDPs	3	10	
MDPs	2	10	
game-theoretic and multiagent planning	2	4	
other	0	1	
SCHEDULING	15	39	38.5
algorithms	5	17	
applications	3	11	
temporal and constraint reasoning	5	6	
uncertainty	1	2	
other	1	3	
APPLICATIONS	8	20	40.0
robotics	2	5	
architectures and execution	1	5	
path and route planning	3	4	
other	2	6	
HIERARCHICAL PLANNING	1	3	33.3
DETERMINISTIC PLANNING, STATE-SPACE SEARCH ALGORITHMS	8	34	23.6
search algorithms	1	7	
oversubscription, costs, hybrid systems	2	6	
applications (web services, verification, other)	0	6	
decomposition, repair, reuse	0	5	
modelling and semantics	0	4	
complexity, tractability	3	3	
plan recognition	1	2	
experimental	1	1	
CLASSICAL PLANNERS (STRIPS, PDDL)	11	19	57.9
planning heuristics	6	8	
SAT	2	3	
search for classical planning	1	3	
macros	0	3	
learning	2	2	

Table 4: Numbers of papers by topic: submitted and accepted papers, and acceptance rate

would still qualify as “publications”. Although papers this short have little value when trying to understand the research they describe, this is important for some authors to justify travel to the conference.

Statistics on numbers of papers by topic are given in Table 4.

## 2.5 Awards

Three of the papers were given an award. A decision was made to award one paper in which the primary author is a student with the *Best Student Paper* award and two papers with the *Distinguished Paper* award.

### Best Student Paper:

Julie A. Shah, Brian C. Williams, *Fast Dynamic Scheduling of Disjunctive Temporal Constraint Networks through Incremental Compilation*

### Distinguished Papers:

Mohan Sridharan, Jeremy Wyatt, Richard Dearden, *HiPPo: Hierarchical POMDPs for Planning Information Processing and Sensing Actions on a Robot*

Ronen I. Brafman, Carmel Domshlak, *From One to Many: Planning for Loosely Coupled Multi-Agent Systems*

The award winners were chosen by the 4 conference and program chairs, based on recommendations by the reviewers of the papers and more cursory reviews of shortlisted papers by selected PC members and other experts. The primary criteria when selecting the award winners were the quality and the significance of the research.

## 2.6 Proceedings

The proceedings were published by the *AAAI Press*.

*Proceedings of the Eighteenth International Conference on Automated Planning and Scheduling (ICAPS 2008)*

Edited by Jussi Rintanen, Bernhard Nebel, J. Christopher Beck, and Eric Hansen, 438 pp., references, index, illus., ISBN 978-1-57735-386-7

Each paper was allocated 8 pages in the proceedings, and the authors were given the possibility of buying 1 or 2 extra pages for AUD 150 per page. The authors of a couple of papers took advantage of this opportunity. In addition to the proceedings, a CD-ROM containing the proceedings was handed out to all participants.

## 3 Program

In addition to the presentation of the submitted technical papers, the conference program included 6 workshops, 4 tutorials, 4 system demonstrations, and 3 invited talks. The workshops and tutorials were chosen from proposals obtained after a public call for workshop and tutorial proposals as well as invitations made by the workshop and tutorial chairs. System demonstrations were chosen from proposals obtained through a public call.

### 3.1 Doctoral consortium

The program of the doctoral consortium consisted of presentations by senior researchers on advisor-student relations (Abdul Sattar), research skills (Francesca Rossi), job hunting (Wheeler Ruml), and presentation skills (Judy Goldsmith), discussions, a panel, and poster presentations by the students as a part of the joint CP-ICAPS poster session. Number of student participants was 21, with the USA, Australia, Canada and Germany having the strongest representation, respectively with 8, 3, 3 and 3 students. All students except the ones from Australia/NICTA got financial support to help covering their travel costs.

### 3.2 Workshops

*Constraint Satisfaction Techniques for Planning and Scheduling*, Miguel A. Salido, Antonio Garrido, Roman Barták, Amedeo Cesta

*Knowledge Engineering for Planning and Scheduling*, Roman Barták, Lee McCluskey

*Scheduling and Planning Applications*, Luis Castillo, Gabriella Cortellessa, Neil Yorke-Smith

*Multiagent Planning*, Matthijs Spaan, Mathijs de Weerd, Brad Clement, Shlomo Zilberstein

*A Reality Check for Planning and Scheduling Under Uncertainty*, Daniel Bryce, Mausam, Sungwook Yoon

*Oversubscribed Planning & Scheduling*, Laura Barbulescu, Steve Chien, Mark Giuliano, Rob Sherwood

### 3.3 Tutorials

*Abstraction Heuristics for Planning: PDBs and Beyond*, Patrik Haslum, Malte Helmert

*First-Order Planning Techniques*, Scott Sanner, Kristian Kersting

*Constraint Processing for Planning and Scheduling*, Roman Barták

*External-Memory Graph Search*, Stefan Edelkamp, Eric Hansen, Shahid Jabbar, Rong Zhou

### 3.4 System demonstrations

*Emma: An Event Management Assistant*, P. M. Berry, T. Donneau-Golencer, K. Duong, M. Gervasio, B. Peintner, N. Yorke-Smith

*An Interactive Environment for Plan Visualization and Generation: InLPG*, A. E. Gerevini and A. Saetti

*The Bear Project: A Cognitive Approach to Robotics*, M. Anshar, B. Johnston, R. Novianto, C. Stanton, M.-A. Williams

*CP-based Social Scheduling*, J. Feldman, E. Freuder, L. Ioffe, J. Little, O. Manzano

### 3.5 Invited speakers

*Computational Voting Theory: Of the Agents, By the Agents, For the Agents*, Jeffrey S. Rosenschein, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*How to Relax*, John Hooker, Carnegie Mellon University (joint invited speaker with the CP'08 conference)

*Preferences, Planning, and Control*, Ronen Brafman, Ben Gurion University (joint invited speaker with the KR'08 conference)

### 3.6 Collocated events

ICAPS'08 took place in parallel in the same venue with the following conferences and workshops.

- International Conference on Principles and Practice of Constraint Programming (CP-08)
- International Conference on Principles of Knowledge Representation and Reasoning (KR-08)
- International Workshop on Nonmonotonic Reasoning (NMR-08)

In addition, the following workshop took place on the Blue Mountains near Sydney on September 22-24.

- International Workshop on Principles of Diagnosis (DX-08)

At least 8 of the participants of DX participated also ICAPS and its collocated events.

Collocation seems to be an important factor in the popularity of an ICAPS conference. Conferences with collocation have repeatedly gotten the highest numbers of submissions: the ICAPS'08 conference, with its 151 submissions, beat the record of all earlier ICAPS conferences. The ICAPS'09 conference, without collocation, got slightly more, 159, but these included a high number of "short papers" most of which probably would not have been submitted if the standard 8 page paper had been the only submission format.

## 4 Questionnaire

Two weeks after the conference we sent out a very non-scientific post-conference questionnaire to 7 enthusiastic young researchers representing different segments of the ICAPS community. The questions and answers are as follows.

- *What were in your opinion the highlights of the conference, if any?*

The workshops and invited talks.

The Doctoral Consortium was very well organized this year. While not a highlight for me personally, I think this should be mentioned.

The conference venue was great.

I had the opportunity to be a mentor in the doctoral consortium this year and thought that it was run particularly well. I think that the organizers made a big effort to help the students feel integrated and meet many people in the field. I was part of the DC every year I was a student and thought that this year's DC was much improved.

DC is very well organized. Festivus. Conference dinner.

Talking with people one-on-one. Invited talks.

- *What did not work well? (Do you have ideas how to improve things?)*

The poster session: posters seemed distributed randomly about the room and there were a ton of posters; better effort to co-locate posters by area might increase visits in the future.

The usual problem of having all the talks I wanted to go to happening in parallel tracks at the same time, followed by sessions where nothing really grabbed me. I know Adele Howe and Rob Holte found a way to do scheduling for AAI that used paper bids to estimate which talks the same people would want to go to and find a min-conflict schedule. The idea of giving the dissertation award winner a slot was great, but it should have been an hour with no conflicts. Poster session was too short. Not enough food at breaks and poster session (although it was high quality).

The very tight session schedules were sometimes bad, in that some interesting discussions got cut off. On the other hand, they were also good, since most of the sessions stayed strictly on schedule, making it easier to jump between talks in parallel sessions.

I thought that holding the conference in a large metropolitan city was overwhelming. I much preferred recent conferences in Monterey, Lakes District, and Trento that were a bit more isolated. The isolation gave us a chance to have more interaction than was possible in large city where everyone seems to disappear in the crowd.

Complicated parallel sessions. Too many colocated events, it's sometime hard to seek ICAPS people among 500+ people during breaks.

Workshop locations were a bit fragmented, hard to find the rooms. Too many parallel events on the workshop days (not sure how to avoid this). Some confusion for poster session, which conference's posters go where. Proceedings of other conferences not provided electronically – include a CD?

- *Was the collocation with CP, KR or NMR useful? Why? Would you prefer ICAPS taking place without collocation?*

Collocation was great... I could drop in on related talks in KR and CP and the joint invited talks were some of the best.

Personally, I don't think I benefited from the collocations much, and I'm indifferent about them.

I think co-location every other year would be nice.

I have nothing bad to say about the collocation, but nothing overwhelmingly positive either. I did attend some interesting CP/KR talks, but not many. It seems that even with three conferences running two parallel tracks each, there's always some times when there's nothing that interests me in any of them (and other times when there are things that really interest me in all of them at the same time...) I think perhaps having joint invited speakers contributed to making the invited talks more interesting (wider audience).

I found no benefit to the collocation other than having the invited talks from the other areas. I prefer no collocation. I don't want ICAPS to feel like AAI.

I think at most one is fine. I don't know many people who are interested in attending sessions in multiple conferences. I think most of the young researchers and students only know people in their conference anyway. If co-locate with another conference, I prefer there are more integrated events than just co-invited talks or join-sessions (that only appear in the brochure). Some panels with people from different community targeting some joint topics or some possible collaborations would be good. Some social joint event such as fun competition with competing teams from two communities so people can lighten up would be nice too.



- + good to meet colleagues in the other conferences
- + papers that overlap multiple conferences (for me, CP-ICAPS)
- lots of parallel tracks
- less focus than standalone ICAPS

- *Do you have comments on the presentation format (parallel sessions, length of talks, papers vs. posters)?*

I would not change the format, I think it worked well.

Parallel sessions were fine; I missed hardly any presentation I wanted to attend. Length of talks was fine. Papers vs. posters: I think it's good to have a full talk for every full paper that is accepted, like this year and unlike last year. So all decisions this year were 100% spot on. I did like the commentary talks last year and think it's worth considering having them again. If scheduling constraints become too tight, the first thing I'd reduce are the invited talks. One or two invited talks overall would be plenty enough for me. Another way to reduce scheduling stress would be to schedule more things for the evening (e.g. Festivus, Community Meeting), but I understand that this wasn't possible because the conference venue wasn't available. Could be done in the future, though.

I have nothing against posters as a presentation format, but I do think papers and posters should be treated equally as publications (i.e., both published, same number of pages in proceedings, not distinguished by quality, etc.)

Please, no more parallel sessions. I felt like ICAPS was trying to fill time because it freed up so much from the parallel talks.

I miss the commentary part from ICAPS-07. Less complicated parallel sessions would be good. I prefer presentation to have an optional poster too.

Two parallel sessions is fine. I like seeing all papers at the poster session (but how to enable authors to circulate rather than stand besides their poster the whole time?)

- *Any comments on the non-technical sessions (Festivus, Community Meeting)?*

I always like the community meeting. I didn't find Festivus too interesting this year, mainly due to the repetition in topics over the years (applications, applications, applications).

I liked the open discussion after the community meeting last year and would like to see it return. Festivus was good, but I think every 2 years is a good frequency. The community meeting is very important but wasn't as interesting this year for some reason. There was no indication of what issues the council is thinking about and no solicitation of public opinion. Perhaps this was intentional, but it made things less interesting.

Festivus should be tabled for a few years so that we can build up some more angst. This year's was pretty boring.

DC was very good. Community meeting was a little boring (I'm not sure how to make it better). Festivus was ok but not as good as last time. I think we can have prepare it much earlier with people suggesting the topics for grievance to the organizers, then the executive committee selects the most urgent topics to discuss.

These should exist.

- *Any other comments?*

I really liked EasyChair. I was somewhat skeptical initially given past experiences with the system, but it has improved dramatically and was much nicer to work with than ConfMaster. The registration and accommodation process was the most painless I've ever seen. Two thumbs up. The hotel and conference venue map was great, and I think the hotels were great value for money. I also find it very important that hotels are \*close\* to the conference venue, as they were this year.

I wish there had been a nice poster to put on my wall.

I think the mailing list work well. The website, especially the hotel information is very informative.  
Very effective organization. No conference poster to download and put up around your department!

Similarly to the more systematic questionnaire that the ICAPS'07 organizers did in 2007 (and which unfortunately was not available to the ICAPS'08 organizers before the conference), the comments do not suggest big changes in the way the conferences are run. Some of the respondents liked parallel sessions and collocation, some others did not as much. Some liked the Festivus, others did not. Some liked the big city setting, some others did not.

According to the comments we got in this questionnaire and otherwise, the doctoral consortium was exceptionally well organized this year.

## 5 Participant numbers

The registration numbers were lower than in previous ICAPS conferences because of the distance of the conference from the North American and especially the European perspective. Travel times from Europe to Australia are at least 20 hours, and travel is more expensive than between the rest of the inhabited continents.

The registration numbers given below are not directly comparable to ICAPS conferences without collocations, because many participants registered to the other collocated conferences CP and KR instead of ICAPS.

### By category

category	early	late	total
non-student	77	8	85
student	47	1	48
free registrations	6	0	6
total	130	9	139

### By country

USA	51	Italy	6	Czech Republic	3	Greece	1
Australia	24	France	5	Singapore	3	Hong Kong	1
Germany	9	UK	5	Netherlands	2	Ireland	1
Spain	9	Brazil	4	South Korea	2	Japan	1
Canada	7	Israel	4	Sweden	2	Portugal	1

## 6 Organizational issues

### 6.1 Reviewing process

#### 6.1.1 Anonymity of the reviewing process

The reviewing process was double blind, but a large number of the submitted papers were not truly anonymous.

- Eight of the papers had the authors' names on the title page, contradicting the author instructions.
- Many papers had earlier been presented in workshops, circulated by email, or posted in the Internet.
- Several papers contained invisible information inside the PDF file.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>We were not aware of this issue and only noticed this after the conference.

- the “Author” field in Acrobat Reader’s “Properties” window  
This reveals the full name or surname of at least one author for 15 ICAPS’08 submissions and the first name of an author for 5 submissions.
- lines with the word “Author” inside the PDF file (`fgrep --binary-files=text Author`)  
This reveals the full name or surname of an author for further 23 submissions, and the first name of an author for 4 submissions.
- lines with the word “Title” inside the PDF file (`fgrep --binary-files=text Title`)  
This reveals the first name of one author for 1 further submission.

The hidden information inside PDF files reveals the identity (full name or surname) of at least one author of 38 papers and of 10 papers partially (first name or nickname). This is 31.8 per cent of all submitted papers.

The only action we took to maintain anonymity after the submissions arrived was to request the authors of the papers with the authors’ names on the title page to resubmit their papers without the names, and to reassign the papers to other PC members when the original PC members had already seen the papers (the PC chairs did not check the papers before making them available to the PC). The reassignment was unfortunate because often the original PC members were better suited to review the papers (which is why in one case we decided not to reassign.)

We observed in a couple of cases that papers got much better scores from PC members who are former collaboration partners of the authors and possibly knew who the authors were. Presumably there were also reverse cases in which knowledge of the authors’ identity prompted the reviewers to give a lower score. Some of these cases could be viewed as involving a conflict of interests, which suggests that reviewer assignment in future conferences should enforce a stronger policy to avoid biased reviewing. These problems are partly caused by paper assignment and partly by the general difficulty of achieving true anonymity in a small community like ICAPS.

**Recommendation:** The submission instructions must request the authors to make sure that their PDF files don’t contain hidden information about the authors’ identity.

### 6.1.2 Conflicts of interest

Different ICAPS conferences have handled Conflict of Interests questions differently. ICAPS’08 made a decision that the Conference/PC chairs can submit a paper to the conference, but preferably do not, and only if the chair is not the primary author. The only argument for accepting chairs’ papers in the conference is the need to avoid causing a disadvantage to the chairs’ co-authors. Only one paper with a chair as a co-author was submitted, and the paper was not accepted because there was also a decision that any papers from the chairs that are not strong accepts will be rejected automatically. Earlier ICAPS conferences seem not to have had a similar policy, and it would seem that the conference series should adopt it.

Another issue was papers by close (current or former) colleagues of the chairs. The policy of ICAPS’08 was that the review process of colleagues’ papers is supervised by another chair. This policy generally works, but there can still be problems related to these papers. One such paper had strong recommendations for both acceptance and rejection from the PC members, and the paper was consequently a very controversial borderline paper. The chair responsible for the paper argued for acceptance, and the COI chair demanded rejection because he could be viewed – from an outside perspective – as having contributed to the paper’s acceptance, merely by being one of the co-chairs. Situations like this seem to be difficult to avoid.

Clearly, the Conflict of Interests problems and solutions also apply to the planning competitions associated with the conferences.

**Recommendation:** The ICAPS Conference Guide should include something about the handling of Conflicts of Interest. The conference chairs should not be publishing papers in the conference they are chairing. Exceptions to this, possibly, are the situations in which the co-authors are the main authors and are not students

of the conference chairs, and the papers are so strong accepts that no questions about the appropriateness of their acceptance can arise.

## 6.2 Planning competition

The interaction between the conference and the planning competition did not go particularly well. There were two main issues.

First, the planning competition committee and organizers failed to recognize the fact that all the competition related events during the conference require substantial support from the conference local organization. Communications about the competition organizers' wishes came very late, and the organizers seemed to assume that publicity for the competition automatically has a very high priority in the conference.

Second, the competition organizers decided to give award money to the winners of the different tracks of the competition. Awarding the winners of individual competition tracks an equal sum as the winner of the best paper awards expresses inappropriate priorities. Still more inappropriately, because of the high number of different tracks, some competition participants won several awards, leading to award sums substantially exceeding the best paper awards. This seems to be sending the very questionable message that implementing planners for the planning competition is a higher priority than doing high quality research. For planners that do implement novel valuable ideas, the proper way to acknowledge this is through the scientific part of the conference, i.e. accepting those papers to the conference for presentation. Participation in the planning competitions, even when it is successful in terms of the competitions' evaluation criteria, cannot be a substitute for peer-reviewed evaluation of research through the usual publication process, because the competitions' focus is completely different from academic research. Due to the high number of tracks in the competitions, it seems that the easiest way to avoid the award payments in the competitions to exceed the best paper award payments is to not pay money to the competition participants at all.

**Recommendation:** The conference guide and the competition procedures should be clarified to make the competition events a part of the rest of the conference planning. Time, money and room allocation for the competitions must be proportional to the importance of the competition and the rest of the conference. All the decisions about financial and publicity/presentation issues are made by the conference chairs based on wishes/recommendations by the competition organizers.

## 7 Conference location considerations

There has been some discussion about the feasibility of organizing conference in distant locations like Sydney.

The following are the sums of the one-way great circle travel distances (in kilometers) of 419 CP-ICAPS-KR participants from their home/office address to selected cities (which at least one participant came from). This is one way of estimating the travel effort and costs if the conferences had been organized in some other city than Sydney.

Amsterdam	2691029	Cork	2777521	Jerusalem	3161419	Tokyo	3778670
Bremen	2694458	Marseille	2779716	Montreal	3212927	Mexico	3819786
London	2708504	Helsinki	2787739	Toronto	3247887	Chennai	3866437
Freiburg im Breisgau	2712208	Toulouse	2788033	Providence	3265347	Hong Kong	3880684
Paris	2712888	Rome	2818291	Pittsburgh	3302960	Singapore	4205960
Praha	2723042	Barcelona	2829495	Chicago	3313451	Pretoria	4389175
Edinburgh	2726930	Reykjavik	2852413	Vancouver	3386813	São Paulo	4418407
Lausanne	2728718	Moscow	2880304	Dubai	3451368	Brisbane	4932101
Linköping	2733995	Madrid	2898901	San Francisco	3553820	Sydney	5017776
Vienna	2749211	Thessaloniki	2907319	Phoenix	3573310	Melbourne	5061743
Genova	2761240	Lisboa	2997292	Los Angeles	3597127	Auckland	5392232

In the above list, produced by the linear summing of the great-circle distances, there is a global "center of gravity", located close to Amsterdam, and the sum of the distances increases as the distance from Amsterdam

increases.

The transportation on short distances is typically slower and more expensive (per unit distance) than on long distances.<sup>3</sup> Travel time, cost and effort have a logarithmic component with respect to the distance. This is due to increasingly fast and cost-effective vehicles are used on longer distances (foot, car, train, airplane), and distance-independent factors in the costs and effort figure relatively less on longer distances. We developed a formula for estimating the travel costs and effort more accurately. For distance  $d$ , our estimated travel cost (return trip) is  $\frac{\ln^5 d}{50}$  Euros. For 100, 1000, 4000 and 16000 kilometers this formula respectively yields 41, 315, 784 and 1700 Euros, which seems like a reasonable approximation of the actual travel costs. The ranking of the cities and the estimated total travel costs for the conference in Euros are as follows.

Paris	361448	Cork	376413	Montreal	439978	Mexico	509184
Amsterdam	362996	Vienna	377420	Toronto	442512	Tokyo	517261
London	363029	Barcelona	378117	Providence	444303	Hong Kong	521332
Freiburg im Breisgau	363349	Rome	383595	Jerusalem	445830	Chennai	522315
Lausanne	364707	Linköping	385181	Pittsburgh	448633	Singapore	538987
Bremen	367235	Madrid	389002	Chicago	453605	Sydney	555040
Toulouse	370729	Helsinki	400222	Vancouver	472164	Brisbane	558936
Genova	371028	Lisboa	403642	Phoenix	482442	Melbourne	562084
Marseille	371294	Thessaloniki	406509	San Francisco	482726	Pretoria	562350
Praha	372683	Reykjavik	406872	Dubai	484500	São Paulo	562420
Edinburgh	373499	Moscow	417190	Los Angeles	484672	Auckland	602631

In this ranking, the distance from the global center of gravity still figures strongly, but additionally the presence or absence of a large number of local participants has a moderate impact. The average travel cost to Sydney according to this calculation was 1325 Euros, and to Paris it would have been 863 Euros. Clearly, savings achieved by organizing a conference in a central location could be largely offset by more expensive accommodation and other local expenses.

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<sup>3</sup>There are similarly other kinds of inaccuracies in this kind of estimation: transportation between two major traffic hubs on different continents can be much faster than between two moderately distant small towns on the same continent.