A Conversation with the Chinese KDD Leaders

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In August 2012, the 18th Annual ACM SIGKDD Conference, KDD 2012, will be held in Beijing, China. This is the first time for this flagship knowledge discovery and data mining conference to be held in Asia, and the second time for it to be held outside North America. As before, the KDD 2012 conference will be a central place where researchers, practitioners and students from academia, business, government and industry converge to exchange the newest and most exciting ideas and results in the KDD area. Unlike previous KDD conferences, however, many new faces will be seen, new voices heard, and new perspectives discussed. This is particularly true because this KDD will be held in Beijing, the heartbeat of China's universities, research institutes, industrial and governmental offices; the epicentre of the rapidly rising and opening China.

Over the years, we have seen a dramatic increase of interest in KDD from China, both in research and practice. Social networks, microblogging (Weibo) and online commerce have been flourishing, with user populations at hundreds of millions strong and rapidly expanding. A recent KDD related workshop held on a weekend in Beijing easily attracted more than 500 students and researchers with almost no advance notice, thanks to the rise of social media. This hunger for knowledge is rivaled only by the grandeur of the nation's capital, as exemplified by the magnificent Great Wall, which serves as the perfect stage to host us all.

Thus, the KDD 2012 conference will be a perfect bridge for East to meet West. To kick off this important event, we have invited 13 of the top Chinese leaders in KDD- related academic and industrial research areas to tell us about the history of KDD in China, their own work, and their views on how KDD throughout the world can move forward. In selecting the interviewees, we have been careful to provide a balanced view on perspectives, by choosing among scholars and researchers from machine learning, AI, databases, statistics and industrial applications. In this written interview, we have given them three questions to answer:

Q1: What is your view on the history and important milestones of the Chinese KDD research and applications area?

Q2: What is your expertise and contributions to KDD research and development?

Q3: What is your view on the future of KDD, both in China and the world?

Below are their answers, for which we would like to express our sincere thanks to all of them for taking their precious time to carefully respond. We hope these questions and answers will give an interesting perspective on KDD in China, and help to set the stage for face-to-face meetings in Beijing, during KDD 2012. In presenting their responses, I have chosen to order the articles in alphabetical order according to the authors' last names.

Finally, to complete the perspective, I have also invited Dr. Usama Fayyad, our current ACM SIGKDD Chair, and Dr. Gregory Piatetsky-Shapiro, our previous Chair, each to write a piece on the history of KDD. Professor Jianyong Wang of Tsinghua University in Beijing, China and I have translated this article to Chinese, and will publish it in a newsletter of the Chinese Computer Federation, the Chinese counterpart of ACM. We also include this article in English here in the KDD Exploration.

See you all in Beijing!

About the author:

Qiang Yang is a professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and an IEEE Fellow and ACM Distinguished Scientist. His research interests are data mining and artificial intelligence (including automated planning, machine learning and activity recognition). He received his PhD from Computer Science Department of the University of Maryland, College Park in 1989, and has taught in University of Waterloo and Simon Fraser University in Canada from 1989 to 2001. His research teams won the 2004 and 2005 ACM KDDCUP international competitions on data mining. He is an invited speaker at IJCAI 2009, ACL 2009, ACML 2009 and ADMA 2008, etc. He was elected as a vice chair of ACM SIGART in July 2010. He is the founding Editor in Chief of the ACM Transactions on Intelligent Systems and Technology (ACM TIST), and is on the editorial board of IEEE Intelligent Systems and several other international journals. He was a PC co-chair or general co-chair for a number of international conferences, including ACM KDD 2010, ACM IUI 2010, and will be the PC Chair for IJCAI 2015.

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