

An e-conference Management System ‘EasyChair’

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Abstract- The organizing process of International academic conferences consists of very time consuming and full of paper work for event handling such as Call for papers, submission of papers by authors, review process, registration process of author and general participants. Currently, there are several systems in use to support paper submissions to academic conferences, but they still require program chairs to spend a lot of time in organizing papers. Not only program chairs, authors and reviewers also facing difficulties to send their papers. To further improve the situation and reduce the burden of the chairs, and authors an e-conference management system is desirable. My research presented in this paper is part of the effort toward realizing such an e-conference management system called as “EasyChair”.

Keywords - EasyChair, e-conference management system, academic conferences, symposium

I. Introduction

A. What is conference?

A conference is normally known as meeting of several people to discuss about a particular theme. Sometimes it is called as convention, colloquia or symposium. While a conference differs from the others in terms of size and purpose, the term can be used to cover the general thought. A convention is larger than a conference, it is a gathering of delegates representing several groups. [1]

At a conference, innovative advanced ideas are thrown about and new facts are exchanged among professionals. Its purpose could be one of the following:

- An academic conference is a gathering of scientists or researchers or academics, where research findings are presented or a workshop is conducted.
- A business conference is held for people working in the same company or industry. They come together to discuss new fashions and opportunities relating to the business.
- A trade conference takes place on a larger scale. Apart from businessmen, there are members of the public who come to network with merchants and made new connections. Such a conference consists of workshops and white paper presentations.

Most conferences have one or more keynote speakers who will deliver the keynote speech. These are general at academic and business conferences. The speakers chosen are experts in the related field and their presence is meant to attract more people to attend the conference. There are various types of conferences

- A symposium is a formal gathering and includes refreshments and entertainment.

- A seminar is organized to discuss a particular topic. They are usually educational in nature and attendees are expected to receive new knowledge or skills at the end of the seminar.
- A workshop is more of a hands-on experience for the participants with demonstrations, activities and practicals; the amount of time one speaker addresses the group is limited.
- A round-table conference is a get-together of peers to exchange findings and opinions on a certain topic, usually political or commercial. There are a limited number of participants who sit at a round table, so that each one can see all the others.

B. Organizing an academic conference

Conferences are usually organized either by a group of researchers or by a scientific group with a common interest.

The conference is announced by way of a Call for Papers (CFP) or a call for Abstracts, which is sent to authors and explains how to submit their abstracts or papers. It describes the specified theme and lists the meeting's topics and formalities such as what kind of abstract or paper has to be submitted, to whom, and by what deadline. A CFP is usually distributed using a mailing list or by placing banners in notice boards. [2]

The following members are involving in an academic conference. There are

- Conference chair and committee
- Authors
- Reviewers and
- General participants

Conference chair and committee involves in following activities.

- Creating Call for Papers (CFP)
- Notify authors about their submissions
- Appoint reviewers and contact them
- Getting review reports from reviewers
- Take final decision on acceptance or rejection of papers.
- Organizing sessions
- Assigning session chairpersons
- Presiding the conference at the meeting
- Reviewing proceedings scripts. [3]

Authors are submitting their papers through in a traditional way like through email. And this submission process consists of following four type of paper submission phases.

- Abstracts
- Draft Papers
- Revised papers
- Final papers [4]

Reviewers involves in following process.

- examine the work of a scholar or researcher
- Providing a well written, unbiased feedback in a timely manner on the scholarly merits and the scientific value of the work, together with the documented basis for the reviewer's opinion
- Marking whether the writing is clear, concise, and relevant and rating the work's composition, scientific accuracy, originality, and interest to the journal's readers
- Avoiding criticism or personal comments
- Keeping the confidentiality of the review process: not sharing, discussing with third parties, or disclosing information from the reviewed paper. [5]

General Participants involves in following process

- Register to attend conference but cannot present paper.

Conference chair and committee, Authors, and Reviewers are doing their above processes through traditional way.

Conferences need to be well planned and well organized. Planning is the main key to a conference success, so early planning is important for everything to run smoothly. At very first, the conference team must be formed and the following matters like title, themes, topics, dates, venue, sponsors, etc. should be agreed.

With this primary planning complete, the first call for papers is issued (Normally conference website, which is launched around this time), preparing the submission phase. During the submission stage, researchers submit their work, either the full paper or only the abstract according to what the organization decided. At this time, submissions can be accepted to all the types of sessions the conference will held (presentations, talks, posters, workshops, panels...) or only to some of them, the rest being accepted later.

When the submission phase expires, the submitted work is evaluated. For this phase, the organization invites a number of suitable reviewers, according to the number of papers submitted, each submission is reviewed by one or more than one reviewers. The submission paper are assigned to reviewers, who evaluate them with the criteria decided by the organizing committee. Reviewing may be nameless, hiding the author details for the reviewers.

After the reviewing phase, the conference committee take the final decision on about the acceptances. The authors of the accepted papers should submit their full paper, if they submit abstract only. And also they have to resubmit the paper after made small corrections which has been suggested by reviewers. From this time registration for the conference is starts.

Then, we have to prepare conference schedule, timetable, and assigning events to sessions.

Finally, we have to prepare the conference proceedings are took necessary arrangements to published.

The following figure explain the process of arranging

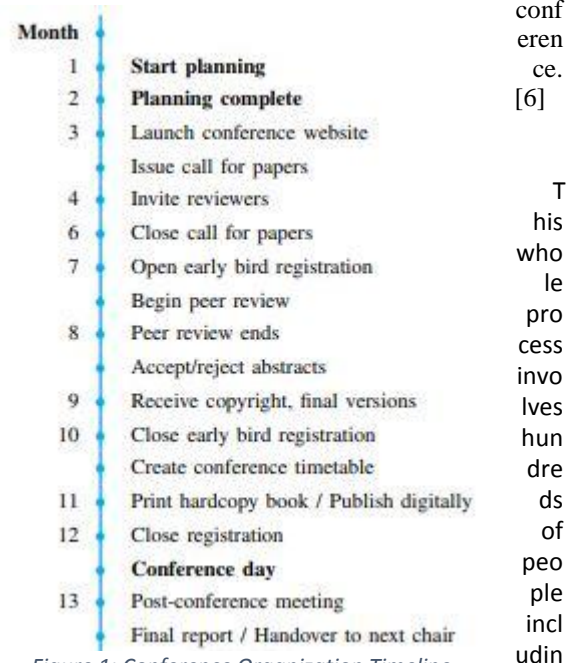


Figure 1: Conference Organization Timeline

hundreds and , thousands of e-mails and lot of organizer's time. If we automate the system then we can save lot of hours of time of organizing committee and we can reduce the extra burden of involved people in a conference.

For this we can use one of the e-conference management system. [6]

There are lot of Conference Management Systems (CMSs) in the market, with varying sets of features and different business models. Those are

- EasyChair
- OpenConf
- Ex Ordo
- EDAS
- ConfTool
- OSEM
- ePapers

C. Objective

The main goal of this project is to discuss the features of EasyChair Conference Management System.

II.Literature Review

A. What is EasyChair

EasyChair is a conference management system that is flexible, easy to use, and has many features to make it suitable for various conference models. It is currently probably the most commonly used conference management system. [7]

The first version of EasyChair was implemented in 2002. And it was used by 12 conferences in 2002-2004 and by 66 conferences in 2005. Now EasyChair proudly hosted 69,827 conferences and served 2,578,111 users. [8]

B. What EasyChair Helps to Do?

EasyChair was designed to help conference organizers and authors to manage with the complexity of the refereeing process. The current version supports

- Management and monitoring of the program committee;
- Sophisticated and flexible management of the access of PC members and referees to papers and conflicts of interests.
- Automatic paper submission.
- Paper assignment based on the preferences of PC members.
- List of the latest events.
- Submission of reviews.
- Sending email to PC members, referees and authors.
- Monitoring emails.
- Online discussion of papers;
- The author response) phase, when the author can respond to the reviews;
- Preparation of conference proceedings
- Generation and publishing of conference program
- Generation of conference brochures with program
- Conference program and proceedings on flash drives.

And also EasyChair launched a new service for conferences, called Smart CFP. It allows conference organizers to publish their conference calls for papers, including

- Creating a nicely looking CFP in a few minutes
- Choosing among a number of templates
- Uploading your conference logo
- Making your CFPs available to nearly 2 million EasyChair users
- Viewing analytics, including users and bots accessing and following your CFPs.

Likewise, this service can be used by the authors to find and follow relevant CFPs in their areas, including

- building a watch list of CFPs and view/download it in various formats
- Searching for relevant CFPs. [9]

C. EasyChair do the following tasks.

Easy chair do the following tasks. [10]

- Setup the conference in EasyChair:

The process of creating a new conference in the EasyChair system is called as “creating a new installation”. A request is made by logging into EasyChair and selecting EasyChair > New Installation from the main menu. We must fill out a form and must then wait for this to be approved by the EasyChair team.[10]

Once the conference is ‘installed’ we can manage it from within the EasyChair system. It is important to state the conference topics at this stage. These will allow authors to point out the topic of their paper during submission. It is then possible to automatically assign papers to relevant reviewers. In EasyChair there are topics, groups, categories and tracks.

We can create the conference topics on the same. The conference topics are located under the sub heading “Pre-Submission” by clicking on ‘Submission topics’. This then takes you to a screen where you can enter topics and section headings for the topics.



Figure 2 : New Installation Screen in EasyChair

- Invite program committee members:



Figure 3 : Define the topics in EasyChair

We can invite Program Committee (PC) members using the main menu commands PC > Invitations to PC and then selecting make invitation from the sub-menu. We can enter the names and emails of the people we want to invite in a prescribed format and a customized email is then sent to them with a link to accept. We must consider that the actual email they will receive will contain a standard invitation text and link before the custom email we compose. If they click the link to accept they will then receive another email with a link to the conference page on EasyChair, this will also inform them that if they do not currently have an account they will need to create one.

- Send out Call for abstracts or papers:

Although it is possible to send a Call For papers (CFP) from within EasyChair.

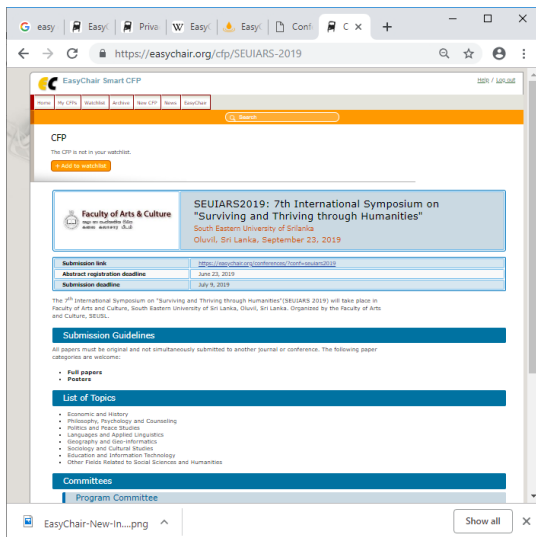


Figure 4 : An EasyChair smart CFP

- Upload abstracts and full papers:

Authors can upload their paper or abstracts by login their EasyChair account. It is also an easy process and they will receive a confirmation email to their email. And also they can upload their details, Title of paper, co-authors, Abstract of paper, key-words, and their paper in PDF form. Here author can select appropriate topics also.

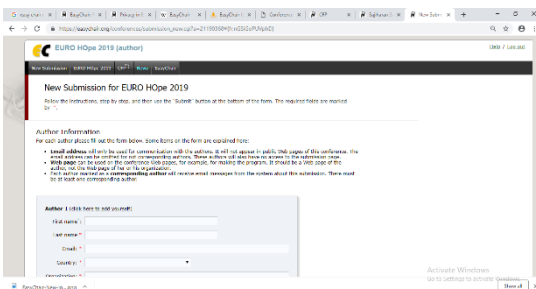


Figure 5 : Uploading a paper

- Withdraw abstracts and full papers:

An author can withdraw his submission through EasyChair at any time.

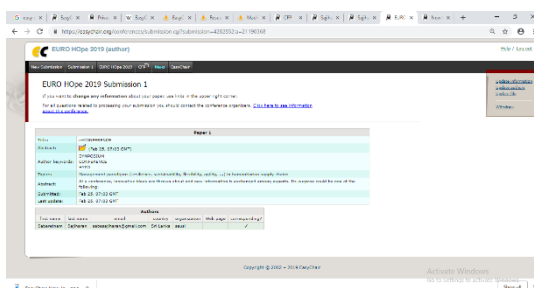


Figure 6 : Withdrawal of a submission

- Review abstracts:

If all the abstracts or full papers have been uploaded correctly it becomes very easy to review. We can view all abstracts as a single array by selecting the main menu command Reviews>All Papers.

- Accept abstracts and request full papers:

Once we have reviewed the abstracts and decided which are accepted. After we can call final papers through this EasyChair

- Assign papers to program committee members to review:

We can assign and forward the abstracts or full papers to correct reviewers and we can ask the replies from them through EasyChair.

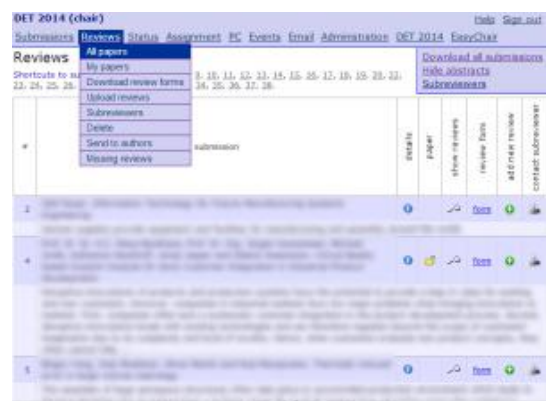


Figure 7: Viewing all abstracts in EasyChair

- Email Decisions and comments to authors:

We can send our decisions and comments to authors through this EasyChair.

- Produce conference proceedings:

We can easily arrange the proceedings through EasyChair by some clicks.

D. More features of EasyChair

- Creating an EasyChair account is a very easy process and an email address is enough to create an account.
- EasyChair provides lot of facilities to their users through free version also. That means only some advanced features in their commercial version. Near to 90% of their users are using free version.
- EasyChair is a web based service. Therefore, We don't need any server
- Efficiency: EasyChair is fast enough to manage large conferences and program committee meetings. They are using original implementation techniques which is dozens of times faster than

implementations of web services using the standard PHP/MySQL technology.

- Non English versions also possible: The information EasyChair stores is stored in Unicode, so it is possible to use any language, for example, Japanese, Chinese or French or Tamil.
- Reliability, Availability and Security: EasyChair is running always 24/7/365. Since 2005 they had only two interrupts up to now. Those are, one day they had a total hard disk failure arisen. EasyChair backed to normal within three hours without any data lost. The second interrupt was only 6 hours long, when their server provided had to do some work on its servers. Sometimes they have updates of EasyChair. They are taking only few minutes for and they are updating it on Saturdays, when the number of users is very low.
- Backup and Recovery: They are using the technique known as database replication to keep our data safe. They have live replicas of all data on two backup servers different from the EasyChair main server. This means that, in the case they have a total server crash, they should be able to recover data using one of the backup servers. [11]

III.Results:

Management of authors, reviewers and general participants is a very difficult task because of the participation of the authors / general participant from local as well as from abroad. The conference Management system helps the organizer to manage resources for all these participants and also reduces the paper work, and time. [12]

Organizer or admin can add information related to upcoming conferences of universities it helps the organizer to arrange conference in short time, and user by entering address into address bar can see the schedule of conference. Conference Management System provides facility like upload paper, inform about acceptance of paper, send the papers to reviewers, getting reply from reviewers, notify the authors about them status of their paper and proceeding preparation

Conference management system not only save time of organizer and also saves time of registered users.

IV.Conclusion:

The present study provides the benefits of EasyChair e conference Management System. It helps in handling the events in short span of time and it will make total process of an academic conference as an easy process for conference chair and committee, authors, reviewers and general participants. That means **EasyChair helps reduce the time and extra burden in arranging and conducting an academic conference.**

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