KDD-98 Exhibits Overview

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ABSTRACT

Initially started as a half-day long display of research prototypes, the KDD exhibits quickly evolved into an industry event eagerly sought by the practitioners, researchers and the vendors in the field. In this article, I provide an overview of the KDD-98 exhibits program and the outline the factors that led to its success.

Keywords

KDD attendance statistics, KDD exhibits and KDD exhibit talks.

1. KDD Attendance in Numbers

Since its inception in 1995, the KDD conference enjoyed steadily growing rates of attendance, both from the academia and the industry. With an average annual growth rate of 30 percent, the number of attendees has more than doubled in size compared to the initial year attendance (see table I.) In terms of affiliations, on average, 40 percent of the attendees have academic affiliations while 60 percent are affiliated with the industry[1].

Table 1: KDD Attendance Statistics

	'95	'96	'97	'98
Number of Attendees	350	457	577	773
Number of Exhibitors	6	18	26	39
• **Commercial**	1	9	17	26
• **Academic**	5	9	9	13

Similarly, the number of exhibitors grew more than six-fold, from 6 in 1995 to 39 in 1998, with the share of commercial product exhibits growing ever faster.

A critical component of this growth has been the field's ability to 1) turn the ideas and papers crossing the field into practical applications and 2) have the applications further drive the research. The mainstream deployment of these applications and the ensuing user feedback, in turn, leads to new challenges and, thus, propagates further growth.

2. KDD-98 Exhibits Program

The critical factors that make an exhibits program successful are 1) the diversity of the exhibitors and their products on display, 2) a sample of attendees representative of the practitioners and researchers in the field, and 3) an environment amenable to exploration, interaction and feedback.

The KDD exhibits program traditionally received high marks for the 1st and 2nd factors but performed below expectations for the 3rd factor. The exhibits usually packed the poster presentations, research prototype demonstrations and commercial product exhibits in one – usually small – room and typically stayed open for four hours. The size of the room coupled with the length of time allowed for the exhibits caused overcrowding.

As a result, we implemented the following changes in the '98 exhibits program:

- Separated the poster presentations in space and in time from the exhibits. This served to differentiate the academic work from the commercial companies and allowed more space for the exhibits.
- Allowed the exhibits to run for two full days (August 28th and 29th).

In order to make the KDD conference more attractive to the commercial vendors and industrial users of data mining, we also implemented the following additional changes in the conference program:

- Ran the exhibits session independent of and in parallel with the plenary paper sessions so that the exhibits would become separately accessible from the conference – as in the industrial tradeshows.
- Featured generic data mining presentations by guest speakers as part of the exhibits program.

By doing so, we thought that we would 1) convince the price-sensitive, local users of data mining to join us, and 2) change the minds of the commercial vendors who may be perceive KDD as a purely academic conference, however inaccurate[2]. We thought this was a good opportunity to increase awareness of KDD in the

[1] The proportions are based on the affiliations self-reported in the 1996 and 1997 registration questionnaires. More than 60 percent of the conference attendees filled the registration questionnaire in both years. The share of the academic affiliations was 35 percent in 1996 and 45 percent in 1997.

[2] In the last two years, at least 60 percent of the conference attendees were affiliated with the industry.

industry and in the vendor community, especially because the conference was in New York City, where Wall Street, New Jersey, Connecticut and Philadelphia, where major users of data mining clustered, are less than an hour away.

In addition, we heavily advertised the exhibits in electronic media. We sent the call for participation to the newsgroups frequented by the industrial users of data mining, such as Datamine-L, SAS-L, SPSS-L, S-news, Systat-L, BMDP-L and Stat-L…

The results of this new approach to the KDD-98 exhibits were much better than anticipated. A total of about fifty exhibits-only visitors from the tri-state area and from areas as far away as Atlanta, GA, responded to our invitation indicating their intention to visit the exhibits.

On the vendor front, most major commercial data mining tool vendors participated in the event, with the exception of IBM[3]. The full list of commercial exhibitors included:

Table 2: KDD-98 Commercial Vendor Exhibits[4]

	Commercial Vendor	**Tool/Application**
1	Azmy Thinkware	SuperQuery
2	Compression Sciences	K-Wiz
3	Data Description	DataDesk
4	Data Mining Technologies	Nuggets
5	Interleap	Interleap
6	ISL Decision Systems	Clementine
7	Isoft	Alice
8	Megaputer Intelligence	PolyAnalyst
9	Salford Systems	CART
10	SAS	EnterpriseMiner
11	Sentient Machine Research	DataDetective
12	Silicon Graphics	MineSet
13	SPSS	AnswerTree, NeuralConnection
14	SRA International	KDD Explorer
15	Tektonic Software	InfoCharger
16	Thinking Machines	Darwin
17	Ultimode Systems	ACPro
18	Unica Technologies	PRW, Model1
19	Urban Science	GainSmarts
20	WizSoft	WizRule, WizWhy

[3] IBM's, a 3 year veteran of the KDD exhibits, decision to not to participate in the KDD-98 exhibits was a direct result of the change in the positioning of their data mining tool IntelligentMiner from an all-purpose multi-strategy tool to a vertically oriented tool.

[4] This list excludes the publishers and the research prototype exhibits. For a complete list of the exhibitors along with the product descriptions, visit URL: http://www.kdnuggets.com/kdd98/exhibits.html

3. KDD-98 Exhibit Presentations

To make the exhibits more attractive to both the vendors and the users of data mining, the exhibits program also featured "industrial strength" presentations. We invited Gordon Linoff, the co-author of *Data Mining Techniques for Marketing, Sales and Customer Support* and Shivakumar Vaithaynathan from IBM Research to present *Data Mining in the Real World* and *Data Mining on the Internet: Overview, Algorithmic Challenges and Applications*, respectively. Finally, Ismail Parsa from Epsilon presented *Data Mining Tools*.

The presentation topics were carefully selected as generic as possible to reflect on the knowledge level of the audience expected to attend and to give them an overview of the current state of data mining in these areas.

All three of the exhibit presentations were extremely well attended. The room, capable to seating 150, was full during all three presentations and people were still standing in the back and sitting in the hallways.

Gordon Linoff's talk covered the issues related to the application of data mining in the real world, from data access and preprocessing to the discovery and visualization of knowledge. He concluded his presentation with a case study he implemented for a telecommunications operator. Shivakumar Vaithaynathan discussed current applications of data mining on the Net. He also focused on the algorithmic challenges presented by the unstructured data ever growing on the web. He concluded by reviewing some new algorithms.

In his presentation, Ismail Parsa segmented the data mining tools marketplace and provided related statistics from KDD-Cup data mining tools competition[5]. He reviewed the five essential criteria used to differentiate between the data mining tools and concluded by summarizing the results of a data mining tool evaluation case study implemented for a financial service provider. The proceedings of the exhibit talks are available in URL: http://www.epsilon.com/kdd98/presentaion.html.

The product exhibits are a crucial part of KDD, as the field is driven by applications. Initially started as a half-day long display of research prototypes, the KDD exhibits quickly evolved into an industry event eagerly sought by the practitioners, researchers and

[5] For more information on the KDD-Cup, visit URL: http://www.epsilon.com/new/1datamining.html

the vendors in the field. We are looking forward to continue the tradition in the next five years.

About the Author

Ismail Parsa is Senior Director of Quantitative Analysis in Epsilon's Analytic Consulting Group. Mr. Parsa has over a decade of research and consulting experience in turning data into information and information into business solutions. While at Epsilon, Mr. Parsa managed Epsilon's Statistical Analysis and Modeling Group and established Epsilon's Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining Center. He is currently in charge of integrating packaged data mining solutions into Epsilon products.

Mr. Parsa is also very active in the KDD community. He is on the organizational board of the KDD conference. He organized KDD-Cup data mining tools competition two years in a row and serves in the customer advisory board of the leading data mining tool vendors. He regularly speaks at conferences on topics related to data mining and its applications to marketing.

Ismail Parsa holds a B.S. and a M.S. degree in Economics with concentration in econometrics from George Mason University where he assisted Dr. James M. Buchanan, the 1982 Nobel Laureate in Economics.