

Information integration is still one of the major challenges in Data Management, both where several interesting research questions remain open. Last week, the Bertinoro Workshop on Information Integration (INFINT 2007) took place in the Bertinoro International Center for Informatics, co-organized by Phokion Kolaitis (IBM Almaden, USA), Maurizio Lenzerini, (Università di Roma La Sapienza) and Arnon Rosenthal (The MITRE Corporation, USA). The goal of the workshop was to compare the problems addressed by the research in the field, and the requirements arising in real world applications, so as to better understand how to improve important tasks such as database integration (for example in the banking domain), web service composition (for example in public administrations), information exchange in scientific communities (for instance in biology), or information extraction from the Web (for example for business intelligence).

One of the outcomes of the workshop is that the most challenging problems are not in the lack of techniques, but in the effective capability to use them. The designer of an information integration system should possess advanced skills in analysis and modeling, and should be skilled to design solutions that appropriately use principles, methodologies and tools developed by the research community. A badly designed system will suffer from several integration problems, which will arise in many places in the system, and could be anticipated and eliminated with a careful design process. In other words, to invest in innovation and design culture brings great benefits in the realization and maintenance of complex systems.

In Italy, advanced academic research in Information Integration is carried out in various Universities (Roma, Milano, Trento, Bolzano, Modena, Cosenza), and is re-known internationally. It is, however, unclear whether this work will result in concrete advances from the Italian ICT industry point of view.

Guido Vetere