



June 30, 2010

## **AN OPEN LETTER TO LAW FIRMS AND COMPANIES IN THE LEGAL TECH SECTOR**

### **Re: Invitation to Participate in the 2010 TREC Legal Track**

In support of the 2010 Text Retrieval Conference (“TREC”), we strongly encourage legal community stakeholders – particularly e-discovery service providers, law firms and corporate counsel – to participate in the TREC Legal Track, an international, interdisciplinary research effort aimed at objectively modeling the e-discovery review process for purposes of evaluating the efficacy of various search methodologies. Now in its fifth year, the 2010 TREC Legal Track will feature two tasks: an “interactive” task and a “learning” task; both tasks have been designed to encourage greater participation both the legal community and by academic teams.

The interactive task (which is based, in part, on principles from *The Sedona Conference® Best Practices Commentary on the Use of Search and Information Retrieval Methods in E-Discovery*<sup>1</sup>) has been featured since 2008. The task is intended to model the real-world conditions in which companies and law firms – and the e-discovery service providers they engage – must meet their information-retrieval objectives and obligations when responding to e-discovery requests. Since its inception in 2008, the interactive task has seen participation by both commercial and academic teams and has enjoyed the support of a wide range of attorneys and other legal professionals who have voluntarily contributed their time in support of the exercise. Building on the results of the first two years, we hope to attract still broader participation in 2010.

The learning task is new to the Legal Track for 2010; it models the circumstance in which automatic or semi-automatic methods are used to guide review strategy for the first or later passes of a multi-stage document review effort. In this task, participants are given a “seed set” of documents from a larger collection that has previously been assessed as responsive or non-responsive to a legal discovery request. Using this information, participants must (a) rank the documents in the larger collection from most likely to least likely to be responsive; and (b) for each document, estimate the likelihood of responsiveness as a probability. We expect that this exercise will provide valuable information on the effectiveness of machine learning and other ranked methods used to expedite and prioritize review.

We strongly encourage all e-discovery service providers, as well as all interested parties with ties to the legal tech sector, to participate in, and take advantage of, both of these important initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> 8 *Sedona Conf. J.* 189 (2007), available at [www.thesedonaconference.org](http://www.thesedonaconference.org).

The TREC Legal Track was introduced in 2006 by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), an agency of the United States Department of Commerce, and in cooperation with the United States Department of Defense. The Legal Track is not designed to be a competition among industry players. Also, importantly, TREC is not focused on product testing, indeed advertising claims based on or using TREC results are expressly prohibited. Rather, TREC is designed to bring together thought-leading representatives from government, academia and industry to foster broad-scale, collaborative progress in the field of information retrieval, while also serving to provide an objective evaluation framework based upon commonly-used metrics, for various information retrieval methodologies applied to document review.

Among its important objectives, one stands out as particularly significant to members of the bench and bar. Namely, the TREC Legal Track represents the emergence of an important research platform: a credible, collaborative and independent process and protocol by which both established and emerging search methods used for document review may be evaluated and benchmarked.

For e-discovery service providers, law firms and corporate counsel, participation in the TREC Legal Track offers an unprecedented opportunity to be at the forefront of an important movement to evaluate document review processes, create industry best practice standards and, in so doing, provide the legal community and their clients reliable information in the emerging field of large-scale document review and electronic discovery.

The learning task is already under way (but still open to new participants), and the interactive task will be getting under way shortly. We encourage members of the legal community to go to the TREC Legal Track home page, read the guidelines for both of the tasks (as well as additional information about the Legal Track) and to consider participation in this important initiative.

For more information about participation, see:

TREC Legal Track home page: <http://trec-legal.umiacs.umd.edu/>

NIST TREC Conference home page: <http://trec.nist.gov/>

NIST TREC FAQ: <http://trec.nist.gov/faq.html>

NIST TREC Legal Track FAQ: <http://trec-legal.umiacs.umd.edu> (forthcoming)

TREC 2010 Interactive Task Guidelines: <http://trec-legal.umiacs.umd.edu/> (forthcoming)

TREC 2010 Learning Task Guidelines: <http://plg.uwaterloo.ca/~gvcormac/legal10/>

To register your intent to participate, please contact the TREC Program Manager at [trec@nist.gov](mailto:trec@nist.gov) **on or before July 15, 2010**. For additional information, feel free to contact Maura R. Grossman at [mrgrossman@WLRK.com](mailto:mrgrossman@WLRK.com); tel. # 212.403.1391.

Respectfully,

/s/ *Richard G. Braman*

Richard G. Braman, Executive Director, The Sedona Conference®  
June 30, 2010

*/s/ Kenneth J. Withers*

Kenneth J. Withers, Director, Judicial Education and Content, The Sedona Conference®  
June 30, 2010

*/s/ Jason R. Baron*

Jason R. Baron, TREC Legal Track Founding Coordinator; Co-Chair of  
The Sedona Conference® Working Group 1  
June 30, 2010

*/s/ Maura R. Grossman*

Maura R. Grossman, 2010 TREC Legal Track Coordinator; Member of  
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June 30, 2010

*/s/ Ellen M. Voorhees*

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June 30, 2010