

ECML/PKDD 2004 – Conference banquet
Thursday 23 settembre 2004, Garden of Palazzo Ducale, Lucca

Address by Mr. Andrea Tagliasacchi, President of the Province of Lucca

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to welcome you all here at Palazzo Ducale, the home of the administration headquarters of the Province of Lucca. I am pleased to see here so many distinguished visitors of our city, coming from the four corners of the world.

I hope that you enjoyed the tour of our town. Also, I hope that you will enjoy (you are enjoying) this dinner, based on some delicacies from the territory of Lucca and Garfagnana – Garfagnana is a part of our province, a green mountain valley between the Appenines and the Apuan Alps, a place of tiny villages where I come from, together with two of the scientific chairs of your conference, Fosca Giannotti and Dino Pedreschi.

The theme of your research is **knowledge**: how to discover it in the mountains of data we accumulate, how to learn it from experience and history recorded in data, how to manage the acquired knowledge, how to disseminate and share it among people and institutions.

The theme of knowledge discovery and learning is a crucial one, and you are well aware that is not purely technological – as any fascinating new frontier for humanity, it is social, cultural, legal, scientific and technological at the same time. It is at the heart of the information revolution we live in, it is crucial to the realization of a global knowledge society, which may hopefully represent a step forward in terms of justice, fair distribution of resources, and peace.

There is a striking contrast between the great opportunities offered by the access to increasingly wide sources of knowledge, potentially made available to all people, and the sad times we live in today's world, full of sharp divisions, war, violence, unfairness, hate. The lyrics of the British poet T. S. Eliot come to my mind:

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?

Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

These verse from the poem *The rock*, written in the thirties, seems to depict perfectly, as poets can do, our experience today: our wisdom, our capacity of taking wise decision seems got lost among the many things we have learnt but we can't apply; at the same time, we can hardly learn new knowledge from the information that floods us.

I like to think that also your work, as scientists that try to find new and better means to create useful knowledge, is an important contribution towards a better future. I hope that the knowledge discovered with your achievements will enable wiser decisions from policy makers, and that we can find the wisdom and peace that we have lost.

Thank you very much for coming to Tuscany for your conference, and thanks for coming here in Lucca tonight. Please enjoy the rest of your stay, and bring back to your home a cheerful memory of the time spent with us.

Cheers!