
FROM THE CHAIR ...

Greetings,

I'd like to start this note by thanking the organizers, authors, reviewers, sponsors, and attendees of SIGIR 2011 in Beijing. The conference was a success: excellent attendance, interesting research presentations and demonstrations, enjoyable social events, as well as air conditioning that was mostly up to the hot and humid weather. As this Forum goes to press, CIKM 2011 is getting underway and WSDM paper notifications are poised to come out. The preparations for SIGIR 2012 in Portland, Oregon, are already moving ahead. In case you hadn't noticed, full research paper submissions for 2012 are due on February 13, a few weeks later than you might expect from the past several years. That's possible because the conference itself is running in August rather than July.

Elsewhere in this *Forum* you will find the notes from the SIGIR Business Meeting held at SIGIR. Among other important information about finances and conferences, it includes a preliminary summary of some findings from a survey that the executive committee ran this past summer. After the survey closed in the middle of August (a few weeks after the business meeting), I prepared a detailed presentation of the survey results which is also in this *Forum*. The general trend of responses did not change.

One of the issues motivating the survey was the rising cost of conference registrations. The survey responses make it clear that this concern is fairly widespread, though not universal. The executive committee has started discussions with conference organizers to find ways to bring costs down. Unfortunately, unless the conferences can raise substantially more sponsorship funding, the only way to reduce costs is to cut "benefits." But what should we sacrifice? The survey results do not clearly suggest what might be cut: most people like what they have. Food and beverages, particularly the banquet, are a healthy part of a conference budget, and thus a prime target for changes. It is not yet clear how or if things will change, so please continue sharing your ideas with the executive committee.

Another issue prompting the survey was SIGIR's substantial cash reserves. The primary use of those funds is currently to support student travel to the SIGIR conference. The survey shows broad support for continuing to do that and for expanding that program to include other conferences and IR-related events. The executive committee is currently drafting a policy to describe how that might work. It is not straightforward. For example, should SIGIR only support travel for "IR" students for a conference that is also sponsored by SIGWEB, should we work with other SIGs to providing matching pools, or does something else make sense? Can SIGIR support travel to the numerous workshops or "summer schools" that are largely self supporting and not sponsored by the SIG? And finally, who or what group should make decisions about who receives the funding? We hope to propose a new policy to the SIGIR community sometime in the next several months, though questions such as those may slow that down.

Please touch base with me or any other member of the executive if you have any thoughts on ways to address the challenges that prompted the survey or want to volunteer some of your time to help. We are moving forward on a few issues that seem particularly important or timely. If you wish to be involved in any of the work, we would be delighted to have your company.

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