

ACM SIGIR Student Liaison Program

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Abstract

ACM SIGIR has recently created the Student Liaison Program, a means to connect and stay connected with the student body of the information retrieval (IR) community. This report provides more information about the program, introduces the founding ACM SIGIR student liaisons, and explains past, ongoing, and future activities. We seek suggestions and recommendations on the current plans as well as the new ideas that fit into our mission.

1 Introduction

Just this year, the ACM Special Interest Group on Information Retrieval (SIGIR) has created the Student Liaison Program in order to establish a better connection between the steering committee and the IR student population. The program also aims at encouraging further student involvement in the IR community and at SIGIR conferences. These conferences are meeting places for IR researchers to discuss research and initiate new connections. Building professional networks are a key criteria for a successful career in both academia and industry, thus creating a strong network early on is crucial for students. Student Liaisons work with the ACM SIGIR Student Affairs Chair to follow their mission:

- Every student is improving her or his network.
- No student is left behind or alone in the corner.
- Ensure ideal conditions for all students to thrive.

ACM SIGIR Student Liaisons have been selected from different geographic regions, with current representatives listed below, working closely with the current ACM SIGIR Student Affairs Chair, Laura Dietz.

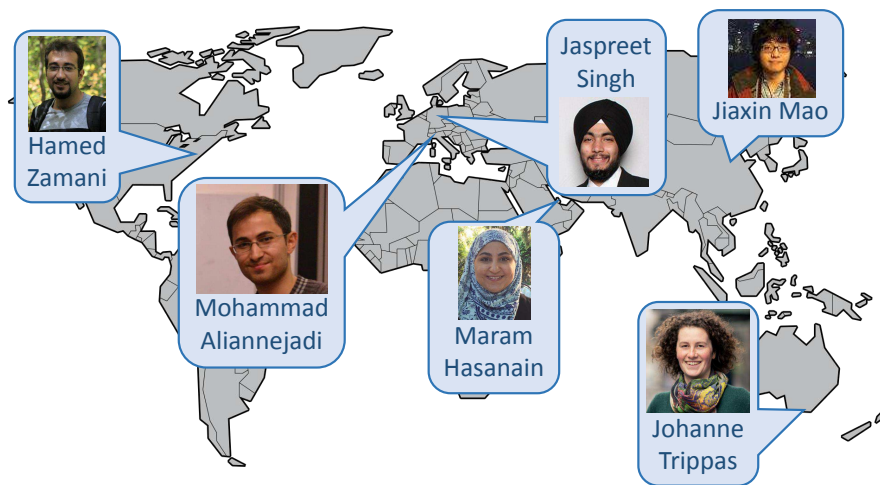


Figure 1: Six student liaisons from around the globe.

- Europe & Africa:
 - Mohammad Aliannejadi, Università della Svizzera italiana, Switzerland
 - Jaspreet Singh, Leibniz University Hannover, Germany
- Asia:
 - Maram Hasanain, Qatar University, Qatar
 - Jiaxin Mao, Tsinghua University, China
- Americas & Australia:
 - Johanne R. Trippas, RMIT University, Australia
 - Hamed Zamani, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA

A nice blog article about the ACM SIGIR Student Liaison Program and us, as liaisons, has recently been published in the Communication of the ACM (CACM) Blog.¹ More information about the program can be found on the ACM SIGIR Student Liaison website.²

Through this article, we introduce ourselves and how to get in touch with us. We detail our first set of successful activities during the SIGIR 2017 conference. We further briefly explain our plan for the near future on how to involve students in the peer-review process of IR conferences.

2 Achievements and Activities at SIGIR '17

Since the very first days when we were introduced to each other in early June, we planned a fun way of engaging new students and researchers in the community. The main idea is to facilitate means of communication between newcomers and the rest of the community. To

¹<https://goo.gl/AxUdk6>

²<https://sites.google.com/view/sigir-students>



Figure 2: Student Event at SIGIR '17.

this end, we came up with a quick plan to set up the “Ph.D. Buddy Program” for SIGIR 2017 conference in Tokyo, Japan. The purpose of this program is to help junior Ph.D. students, especially those attending the conference for the first time, break the ice and get to know more senior Ph.D. students, professors, and researchers. Planning and launching the program in only short time, we sent the call for the program to all SIGIR '17 participants of which 10% registered for the program. We identified small and heterogeneous groups of all registrees, and we asked those in each group to find each other during the conference and have a quick chat. Often this is the easiest way to find the right people to talk to.

We were introduced as Student Liaisons by Laura Dietz during the Student Luncheon event and SIGIR Business Meeting. With these warm introductions, we had the chance to mingle and speak with many students and professors. For instance, our role in warming the Student Karaoke Party was very significant as some students were too shy to sing but then, after breaking the ice, the stage was full of students. Moreover, we managed to use the opportunity of being at SIGIR '17 to speak directly with SIGIR Executive Committee and other people in charge about their next ideas for connecting students. Diane Kelly, Chair of ACM SIGIR Executive Committee, remarked her excitement about launching the liaisons program. We also discussed ongoing issues regarding SIGIR Student Travel grants.

3 Upcoming Plans: Student Reviewing Program

Many SIGIR students expressed interest in actively participating in conference reviewing processes. However, this is left solely to the student’s advisor to decide whether to pass their students some papers occasionally or devote any time to teach them to become good reviewers. Such practice may lead to an unfair reviewing distribution and learning opportunity overall. We believe it is important to include junior students in every stage of the reviewing process and advise them on good reviewing practices. We are planning to lobby for our proposed “Student Reviewing Program” (SRP). The key idea is to allow students to review under their own name, witness all stages of reviewing, while marking them as beginner reviewers, so that their opinion can be weighted appropriately in the discussion. In particular students can provide literature reviews and clarifying questions with the intent

to help authors make the papers stronger rather than focusing on an accept/reject decision. The inclusion of students as reviewers not only benefits the students but also the rest of the community, because paper authors receive additional reviews about their work and program chairs are given the opportunity to find good student reviewers who can later be promoted to regular Program Committee members.

Concerns, opinions, and suggestions regarding this idea are very much appreciated.

4 Next Round of Student Liaison Applications

The goal is to grow the Student Liaison Program to nine students in total. The round to apply to become an ACM SIGIR Student Liaison will be coming up in May 2018. Any full-time student who is outgoing and interested in connecting people and attends IR conferences is strongly encouraged to apply.

5 Communication Channels

The IR community benefits a lot from the SIGIR mailing list (SIG-IRList)³ as the primary communication channel. However, as the SIGIR mailing list is usually used for announcements, we strive towards a more collaborative and less-formal environments. We introduce two communication channels, specially for students but also open to the whole community:

- Follow us on Twitter: <https://goo.gl/TgqXAA>
- Join our Facebook group “SIGIR Students”: <https://goo.gl/n3Nisz>
- Contact us through our website: <https://goo.gl/8sDnED>

6 Conclusions

Given the positive feedback that we received for our first activities towards encouraging students and helping them to be involved in shaping the future of the IR community, we believe that the whole community benefits from the work of the Student Liaison Program, especially in the long term. We are always looking forward to suggestions, recommendations, and new ideas to contribute to our community.

7 Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the ACM SIGIR Executive Members, and in particular Diane Kelly, the ACM SIGIR Chair, for their support.

³<http://sigir.org/sig-irlist/>