

Greetings SIGIR members and friends,

One of the questions I've often been asked during the past three years I've served as Chair is why would anyone want to join SIGIR, and more specifically, what's in it for me? Such questions usually make me smile because more often than not the person asking me is someone who has published countless papers at SIGIR conferences and who has used SIGIR as a platform to establish and build their reputation and career through participation in workshops, tutorials, reviewing and conference leadership.

What good is SIGIR? Without this community, we would not have each other. We would not have well-organized and well-designed opportunities to come together to discuss and share ideas, and learn from one another. We would not have opportunities to network and discover research collaborators and friends. We would have fewer means to launch and refine our own careers and help others as they do the same. SIGIR is a supportive, person-centered community that provides infrastructure and inspiration to people all around the world who are interested in improving information access for the greater good. Why should you join SIGIR? Because without you, our community, and the opportunities and visions it creates, would not exist.

Our community has strengthened and grown during the past few years. The SIGIR Conference saw record attendance in 2017 (n=911) and 2018 (n=747); this year's conference in Paris is on track to reach these numbers. One of the underlying forces that has driven the current SIGIR Executive Committee has been to increase diversity and inclusion, with respect to people, participation and programming, and research topics. I am tremendously grateful to Jaap Kamps (Vice Chair), Emine Yilmaz (Secretary), Ben Carterette (Treasurer) and Charlie Clarke (Past Chair), as well as to all the SIGIR volunteers, for their support, energy and ideas during the past three years. Some of our most significant accomplishments include:

1. Continuing to look-after students by increasing conference travel support, appointing a Student Affairs Chair, and creating a Student Liaison program;
2. Initiating the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion lunch at SIGIR, and, as you will see below, creating new volunteer positions to expand and sustain these efforts;
3. Developing and instituting fiscal policies that allow organizers of the SIGIR conference, ICTIR and CHIIR to reduce the cost of conference registration for SIGIR members and students;
4. Creating and organizing the *1st ACM SIGIR/SIGKDD Africa School on Machine Learning for Data Mining and Search*, which you can read more about in this issue of SIGIR Forum.

Of course, there were other accomplishments, many behind-the-scenes issues and business to discuss and consider, and a steady stream of interactions with the ACM. Since the publication of the last issue of SIGIR Forum, the Executive Committee has created a number of new volunteer positions. Donna Harman has agreed to serve as the inaugural SIGIR Historian. Jiaxin Mao has joined Laura Dietz as *Student Affairs Co-Chair*. Barbara Poblete, Hussein Suleman and Suzan Verberne will serve as the inaugural *SIGIR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Co-Chairs*. The basic charge for this committee is to unify and coordinate existing DEI efforts; identify ways

to sponsor and encourage DEI programs at co-sponsored SIGIR conferences; and develop and implement the SIGIR Diversity Scholars travel grant program. This team will also lead the way in creating a DEI agenda and vision for SIGIR.

In early April, the SIGIR Executive Committee and a number of volunteers gathered in Cologne, Germany to work on a redesign of the SIGIR website, and formulate plans of action to improve documentation and create digital assets and collateral that can be used by the community. The SIGIR Executive Committee recognizes that lack of documentation, which is a legacy issue, is a huge block to inclusion. If we want SIGIR to be less cliquish and more inclusive, then documentation, and the transparency it provides, are necessary first steps. The outgoing Executive Committee looks forward to working with the incoming Executive Committee to continue these efforts to improve our communications and documentation, and to find new ways to promote the accomplishments of SIGIR community members, who do amazing things every day.

Speaking of amazing things and people, I'd like to close by recognizing Seamus Lawless, who dedicated countless hours of service over the course of his career to enrich and enliven the SIGIR community. Shay's generosity and kindness will be greatly missed by us all.

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