
From the Chair...

Dear IR community,

I'm excited to be writing my first SIGIR Forum Letter as Chair of SIGIR! Along with the new Executive Committee—Tetsuya Sakai, Vice-Chair; Claudia Hauff, Secretary; Min Zhang, Treasurer; and Diane Kelly, Past Chair—we are looking forward to the next three years to grow our SIG and strengthen our community. I am very pleased that we now have an Executive Committee with representation from North America, Europe, and East Asia, and among our SIG volunteers we can extend that representation to South America, sub-Saharan Africa, and the wider Asia-Pacific region.

I want to extend sincere thanks to the previous committee: Diane Kelly, Chair; Jaap Kamps, Vice-Chair; Emine Yilmaz, Secretary; myself, Treasurer; and Charlie Clarke, Past Chair. I also want to thank volunteers who have stepped down or will be stepping down in the near future: Laura Dietz as Student Affairs Chair, Claudia Hauff and Craig Macdonald as SIGIR Forum editors, and Falk Scholer as Awards Chair. If you have any interest in volunteering for these roles, please read on—there's more information below. I'd also like to thank Maarten de Rijke for his leadership as Editor-in-Chief of ACM Transactions on Information Systems as his term comes to a close.

I was happy to see many of you—over one thousand of you!—at the SIGIR conference in Paris over the summer. The conference was a great success, thanks to the hard work of General Chairs Benjamin Piwowarski, Max Chevalier, and Eric Gaussier, and Program Chairs Yoelle Maarek, Jian-Yun Nie, and Falk Scholer. Even 42-degree heat (108 for those of us using a more “intuitive” scale) couldn't stop the IR research!

At the conference we unveiled the SIG's new logo and branding, including new vision and mission statements. This was an effort of the previous Executive Committee, along with a group of volunteers and Esther Smit, who facilitated an in-person meeting in Köln in April to revamp our SIG's branding, and who did the actual designs. The new logo and branding will be rolled out soon as part of a SIGIR website redesign!

I was also fortunate to be able to attend the 5th International Conference on the Theory of Information Retrieval (ICTIR) in Santa Clara, California in October. Yi Fang and Yi Zhang did an outstanding job running the conference on the beautiful campus of Santa Clara University, and Program Chairs James Allan and Krisztian Balog put together an excellent technical program. Many thanks to them for their efforts.

The next event on SIGIR's calendar is the 2nd ACM SIGIR/SIGKDD Africa School on Machine Learning for Data Mining and Search (AFIRM), which will be held in Cape Town in January. General Chairs Hussein Suleman and Tamer Elsayed, and Program Chairs Tanya Berger-Wolf, Fabrizio Sebastiani, and Maria Keet, are putting together a great event. I hope to see some of you there, and maybe some of you at WSDM immediately following that in Houston—perhaps I'll even see some of you at both!

Beyond our sponsored events, one of this Committee's first initiatives is taking steps to increase transparency about the Executive Committee's activities. Our meeting schedule and agenda is now public,¹ and our meeting minutes will soon be public as well. We are also taking suggestions from the community for agenda items for our meetings.² We want to hear from you!

¹In a Google Doc linked here: <http://bit.ly/SIGIR-EC-agenda>

²In a Google Form linked here: <http://bit.ly/SIGIR-EC-form>

And in the spirit of transparency, I will briefly mention a public plagiarism accusation leveled against a paper that appeared at SIGIR 2019. I wrote an open letter to the IR community regarding how seriously the ACM and SIGIR take plagiarism, falsification, and misrepresentation of all types. There's nothing more I can say at this time, but I encourage you to read it and get in touch if you have any doubts. You can find my letter in the SIG-IRList archives, on Medium³, or on my Twitter feed.⁴

I'd like to close with a plea to our community to consider inclusivity when planning events, forming organizing committees, writing author attendance and registration policies, and so on. The IR community is diverse in both its demographics and its research interests, and when everyone's voice can be heard, the work we do will be stronger. As a community we have worked hard to be inclusive of diversity, but we can always continue to improve.

When writing your conference registration and author attendance policies, think about people with less support for travel. When thinking about dates for events, consider other events that are regularly scheduled the same time of year. When thinking about invitations to organize or to attend events, think about who might be hoping to be called on, how you can include people that have not participated before, and how you can reach people you don't already know. Consider reaching out to the Executive Committee for suggestions as well—the committee and its volunteers represent a variety of communities, and would be happy to offer suggestions and advice.

For our part, in addition to initiatives by the previous Executive Committee to help reduce conference registration fees, we are increasingly turning towards open applications for volunteer positions. We have already put out an open call for SIGIR Forum editors,⁵ and soon will put out an open call for SIGIR Awards Chair. Can this model work beyond SIG leadership? Perhaps instead of holding events for which attendance is by invitation only, some number of places could be by open application. Instead of inviting people that you already know to help organize your event, consider reaching out to people with diverse networks for suggestions. In this way we can grow our community and make it stronger.

Once again, I'm looking forward to the next three years of working with the Executive Committee, our volunteers, our conference leaders, and everyone in the community.

Ben Carterette
Chair of the SIGIR Executive Committee
chair_SIGIR@acm.org

³<http://bit.ly/on-SIGIR-plagiarism>

⁴<http://twitter.com/BenCarterette>

⁵You may still apply using this Google Form: <http://bit.ly/SIGIR-Forum-app>