Addressing Gender Inequality

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The SIGIR'19 Women in IR session, co-organized by Nazli Goharian and Suzan Verberne, took place on July 23 and was attended by well over 200 participants. After giving attribute to Laura Dietz, one of the co-founders who had initiated the Women in IR session in 2014 and organized it annually, the session started with a keynote by Mounia Lalmas sharing her experiences on the path she took towards learning, confronting challenges, and professional advancements. Next we had a panel comprised of panelists from both academia and industry discussing gender inequality.

Despite of the Equal Pay Act [1], based on various reports from universities, such as the Harvard Crimson [2] and The Daily Orange [3], and from other publications such as Inside Higher Ed [4], the Chronicle of Higher Education [5], and the Pew Research [6], the gender gap is an existing problem. We provided some published statistics on gender inequality in pay and in leadership roles in academia and industry and then raised the following questions for discussion:

- What must be done about this gender gap in academia? In industry?
- Shall this be fought locally in each institute? Are there organizations such as ACM that can play a role at least for CS departments?
- Do men and women behave differently in their job interviews and bargaining point?

Much discussion transpired, but no definitive conclusions were drawn. The session concluded with all hoping that actual action is taken to improve the status quo. Recommendations included the promotion of salary transparency; some universities and organizations currently lack salary transparency and at times even forbid it. Transparency leads to awareness, hopefully resulting in minimizing pay differential of men and women in the same position. Another recommendation was to promote females towards STEM education, eventually increasing the number of female in technology. We intend to continue the Women in IR session in ECIR and SIGIR 2020.

References

[1] US Equal Employment Opportunity https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/fs-epa.cfm
[2] The Harvard Crimson, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/4/24/fas-pay-gap-2019/
[3] The Daily Orange http://dailyorange.com/2018/02/unsurprised-faculty-react-report-showing-women-professors-earn-less-average-men-syracuse-university/
[4] Inside Higher Ed, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/15/gender-pay-gap-persists-higher-education-administrators
[5] The Chronicle of Higher Education, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Gender-Pay-GapPersists-Across/239553
[6] Pew Research:https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/03/22/gender-pay-gap-facts/