

Chair's Letter

Ben Carterette
Senior Research Manager at Spotify
carteret@acm.org

Dear IR community,

I'm writing a brief letter this time, as I prepare for the holidays with my family, including our new baby girl born just two days after the SIGIR 2020 conference closed. The virtual conference was a success, with over a thousand paid registrations from around the world, as well as several thousand additional viewers within China—Gregory Hinton's keynote had nearly 3,000 unique views! A huge thank you and congratulations to the organizers: General Chairs Jimmy Huang, Yi Chang, Xueqi Cheng, and Yiqun Liu, and Program Chairs Vanessa Murdock, Jaap Kamps, and Ji-Rong Wen. Pivoting to an online conference that was accessible to the world-wide community was not an easy task, and I commend the organizers for their dedication to making it possible.

SIGIR 2020 was ACM SIGIR's first virtual event. Since then, we have had JCDL 2020, ICTIR 2020, CIKM 2020, and a special CHIIR 2020 online event, since CHIIR (planned to be in Vancouver, Canada) had to be canceled as one of the first conferences scheduled just as North America began to be hit hard by coronavirus. Many thanks to the organizers of these events: for JCDL 2020, Ruhua Huang, Dan Wu, and Gary Marchionini; for ICTIR 2020, Krisztian Balog and Vinay Setty; for CIKM 2020, Mathieu d'Aquin and Stefan Dietz; and for CHIIR 2020, Heather O'Brien, Rob Capra, Martin Halvey, and Orland Hoerber.

Many other allied conferences have also had virtual events now, so there is much knowledge to share about how to successfully run an online conference. Our upcoming conferences—WSDM 2021 and CHIIR 2021—will also be virtual. We are also now ready to announce that SIGIR 2021 will be a fully virtual conference as well. General Chairs Fernando Diaz, Chirag Shah, and Torsten Suel are hard at work planning for a great virtual event. Although it is disappointing that we will not see each other in person for another SIGIR conference, let us make the most of the opportunity to make our work and our community as accessible, inclusive, and equitable as possible. To this end, Vanessa Murdock will chair a new SIGIR committee for online event experiences.

As a COVID vaccine rolls out, I am optimistic that the light at the end of the tunnel is visible and we will soon be meeting again in person. In the meantime, happy holidays to all that celebrate during this time of year, good luck on your SIGIR 2021 submissions, and stay healthy and safe.

Best regard,

Ben Carterette Chair, ACM SIGIR Executive Committee