

ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting 2021: Secretary's Notes

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1 Opening Matters

The 2021 ACM SIGIR Annual Business Meeting took place twice during the week of SIGIR (July 11-15, 2021) to accommodate participants from different time zones. It was led by the chair of the SIGIR Executive Committee (EC), Ben Carterette.

The virtual meeting started with Ben thanking all volunteers for their work. Our volunteers are Nattiya Kanhabua, Guido Zuccon (both in the role of information directors), Barbara Poblete, Hussein Suleman, Suzan Verberne (all DEI chairs), Nazli Goharian, Hannah Bast (who lead Women in IR), Tirthankar Ghosal, Josiane Mothe, Julián Urbano (our Forum editors), Hannah Bast, Gianluca Demartini, Ryen White (our awards chairs), Jaime Arguello (the student travel awards chair), Jiaxin Mao, Andrew Yates (both as student affairs chairs), Nicola Ferro, Johanne Trippas (heading the artifact review committee) and Donna Harman (the SIGIR historian).

By now, we have had one full year of virtual events, starting at CHIIR 2020 which was supposed to take place in Vancouver, Canada in March 2020 but had to be canceled and held eventually in August 2020 as a virtual event. Every ACM SIGIR sponsored event has had at least one online event by now. This was made possible by organizers who were not afraid to try new things and put in a lot of effort to make their conferences accessible no matter the participants' timezones. ECIR 2020 taught us a lot about how to run a virtual conference. JCDL 2020 decided to delay and ended up taking place right after SIGIR 2020. SIGIR 2020 reported very strong attendance numbers. And here we are again—online—at SIGIR 2021.

2 Paper Awards

Next up were the paper awards of ICTIR (co-located with SIGIR) and SIGIR.

2.1 ICTIR 2021

ICTIR this year avoided the usual short/long paper categories but instead gave authors free range within a minimum (2) and maximum (9) page length plus references.

At ICTIR 2021, the **Best Paper Award** went to *ERR is not C/W/L: Exploring the Relationship Between Expected Reciprocal Rank and Other Metrics* by Leif Azzopardi, Joel Mackenzie and Alistair Moffat.

The **Best Student Paper Award** was awarded to *Effective and Privacy-preserving Federated Online Learning to Rank* by Shuyi Wang, Bing Liu, Shengyao Zhuang and Guido Zuccon.

Lastly, the student paper *The Impact of Entity Cards on Learning-Oriented Search Tasks* by Sara Salimzadeh, David Maxwell and Claudia Hauff received an **Honorable Mention**.

2.2 SIGIR 2021

At SIGIR, the **Best Paper Award** went to the work *Computationally Efficient Optimization of Plackett-Luce Ranking Models for Relevance and Fairness* by Harrie Oosterhuis—a very rare single-author best paper award!

The **Best Student Paper Award** was awarded to *Dynamic Modality Interaction Modeling for Image-Text Retrieval* by Leigang Qu, Meng Liu, Jianlong Wu, Zan Gao and Liqiang Nie.

The paper *Contextualized Offline Relevance Weighting for Efficient and Effective Neural Retrieval* by Xuanang Chen, Ben He, Kai Hui, Yiran Wang, Le Sun and Yingfei Sun received the **Best Short Paper Award**.

SIGIR 2021 also awarded three Honorable Mentions:

- *Follow the Prophet: Accurate Online Conversion Rate Prediction in the Face of Delayed Feedback* by Haoming Li, Feiyang Pan, Xiang Ao, Zhao Yang, Min Lu, Junwei Pan, Dapeng Liu, Lei Xiao and Qing He received a **Best Short Paper Honorable Mention**.
- *ReadsRE: Retrieval-Augmented Distantly Supervised Relation Extraction* by Yue Zhang, Hongliang Fei and Ping Li also received a **Best Short Paper Honorable Mention**.
- *Causal Intervention for Leveraging Popularity Bias in Recommendation* by Yang Zhang, Fuli Feng, Xiangnan He, Tianxin Wei, Chonggang Song, Guohui Ling and Yongdong Zhang received a **Best Paper Honorable Mention**.

2.3 SIGIR Test of Time

At SIGIR, the **Test of Time Award** recognizes research that has had long-lasting influence, including impact on a subarea of information retrieval research, across subareas of information retrieval research, and outside of the information retrieval research community. The winning paper is selected from the set of full papers presented at the main SIGIR conference 10-12 years before.

The 2021 ACM SIGIR **Test of Time Award** went to the SIGIR 2011 paper *Exploiting geographical influence for collaborative point-of-interest recommendation* by Mao Ye, Peifeng Yin, Wang-Chien Lee and Dik-Lun Lee. Here is what the awards committee said about the paper:

“This paper presents novel methods for point-of-interest recommendation for location-based social networks (Foursquare, Whrrl, etc.). This is an important and timely topic—at the time this was published, and it still is today. The paper has amassed over 1000 citations, considerably more than any of the other eligible papers, in the ten years since it was first published in 2011. For the past six full years, it has received over 100 citations per year and is on track to repeat this again in 2021. The paper

considers traditional social network and collaborative filtering features and the role of geographic influence (effectively POI proximity, both to users and to each other) in POI recommendation. The resultant unified framework fuses user preferences, social influence, and geographic influence for state-of-the-art POI recommendation. The paper also offers insights about the performance of certain features and algorithms, which can be useful for practitioners. Given the prevalence and reach of location-based social networks, the methods and the insights have significant practical implications.”

The 2021 ACM SIGIR **Test of Time Honorable Mention** went to *Portfolio theory of information retrieval* (SIGIR 2009) by Jun Wang and Jianhan Zhu. The awards committee says:

“The Portfolio Theory of Information Retrieval remains as important today as it was when it was accepted for SIGIR 2009. The paper recognizes key limitations in the probability ranking principle (PRP) and proposes to address these limitations by applying well established results from economic portfolio theory. Economic portfolio theory allows risk to be traded off against return. In much the same way that a person might diversify a portfolio of stocks in order to get a good return without incurring more risk than they can tolerate, the portfolio theory of information retrieval allows a search engine to trade relevance off against diversity to provide a better overall experience. Since modern ranking methods continue to focus primarily on the PRP, we could easily see this paper accepted for publication at SIGIR 2021, with only some modest updates to the experiments. Overall, it is a beautifully written paper, a model for a theoretically oriented SIGIR paper.”

3 SIGIR Academy

The newly formed ACM SIGIR Academy¹ honors and recognizes individuals who have made significant, cumulative contributions to the development of the field of IR in research innovation and/or service.

The inaugural inductees are: James Allan, Ricardo Baeza-Yates, Nicholas Belkin, Andrei Broder, Jamie Callan, William Cooper, W. Bruce Croft, Susan Dumais, Edward Fox, Ophir Frieder, Norbert Fuhr, Marti Hearst, Kalervo Järvelin, Thorsten Joachims, Noriko Kando, Diane Kelly, Michael Lesk, Yoelle Maarek, Alistair Moffat, Marc Najork, C. J. van Rijsbergen, Stephen Robertson, Tefko Saracevic, Ellen Voorhees and ChengXiang Zhai.

For the *Class of 2022* nominations are accepted until December 31, 2021.

4 Official Recognition for SIGIR Members

ACM’s most prestigious member grade (*ACM Fellow*) recognizes the top 1% of ACM members for their outstanding accomplishments in computing and information technology and/or outstanding service to ACM and the larger computing community. In 2020, James Allan became an ACM Fellow.

¹<https://sigir.org/awards/sigir-academy/>

Also in 2020, Carlos Castillo, Kevyn Collins-Thompson and Jianfeng Gao became *ACM Distinguished Members*. This members' grade recognizes those ACM members with at least 15 years of professional experience and 5 years of continuous Professional Membership who have achieved significant accomplishments or have made a significant impact on the computing field.

5 Treasurer's Report

SIGIR treasurer Min Zhang presented SIGIR's finances. Our finances are in a healthy state: a big part of the yearly expenses are student travel grants (in recent years more than \$200K across a number of sponsored conferences) which were way down due to all conferences moving online. While student travel grants still exist of course, they are used for conference registrations only which tend to be lower than in previous years. Overall, we have about half the expenses of last year. Our publication expenses are stable.

6 Conferences

The meeting continued with a report by Jimmy Huang about SIGIR 2020, the first virtual SIGIR conference. Attendance was at an all-time high with 1,500 attendees, 40% of whom were students.

Video reports by the two upcoming SIGIR conferences followed: SIGIR 2022 in Madrid, Spain is expected to be a hybrid event. SIGIR 2023 in Taipei, Taiwan is expected to take place as an in-person conference.

A bid for SIGIR 2024 in Cancun, Mexico was presented.

For 2025, SIGIR asks for bids from Europe, the Middle East or Africa. In 2026, SIGIR will be held in Asia-Pacific.

Ben pointed out that in light of COVID the schedule for conference bidding has been compressed to a two-year cycle.

Lastly, upcoming conferences were discussed: JCDL 2021 takes place online in September 2021 with CIKM 2021 following online in October. WSDM 2022 is expected to take place in Tempe, Arizona in February 2022. CHIIR 2022 will be in Regensburg in March and is currently planning for a hybrid event. ICTIR 2022 will be held at SIGIR 2022 on the workshop day.

7 sigir.org Redesign

The redesign of the SIGIR website² is in full swing. The designs created in the past year are currently being implemented.

8 SIGIR Forum

The new SIGIR Forum editors worked hard to get SIGIR Forum back on the ACM Digital Library—and with success. The Forum articles can now be found there as well.³ The editors

²<https://sigir.org/>

³<https://dl.acm.org/newsletter/sigir>

also created new easier-to-use L^AT_EX templates. With the redesign of `sigir.org` the SIGIR Forum will soon have a beautiful new home.

9 Audience Comments and Questions

During the last part of the business meeting the floor was opened to the audience. A number of suggestions were made and questions were raised:

- As a community we should think more about co-locating IR conferences (once they happen in-person again) to save travel costs and reduce our carbon footprint. There are concerns though: (i) this is likely to lead to fewer deadlines spread throughout the year; (ii) for some participants traveling for prolonged periods of time is not possible. If all conferences would opt for a hybrid model (instead either online or in-person), participants could choose how to attend each conference.
- *Where do we as a community stand in terms of open access?* In other research communities (NLP, ML) publications are open access and we put ourselves at a disadvantage by not being open access. This is an ongoing issue that the EC has been addressing with ACM for some time.
- *What is the future of the EC? Should more roles be added to it?*