
FROM THE CHAIR

This past February, I was privileged to be part of a three-day workshop called SWIRL, a workshop that looked into the future of Information Retrieval and proposed a number of exciting research directions, challenge areas, and project ideas. The workshop participants assembled an exciting list of ideas and wrote them up into a report of more than 30 pages. The report appears in this issue of the *Forum* and I hope you will give it a thorough reading. Though I suspect it will be particularly good material for graduate students looking for thesis areas or early career researchers looking to start new projects, even established researchers will certainly find interesting ideas scattered throughout the report.

In the previous newsletter, I reported that the survey from summer 2011 indicated support from the IR community for using reserve funds to increase student travel support. As a trial, SIGIR has provided a modest level of funding for the North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad, a contest that encourages high school students to work on linguistic and logic puzzles. At the business meeting, the SIGIR Executive will propose a process for extending this funding more broadly. Of course, SIGIR continues to fund travel to the SIGIR conference itself. We are also exploring ways to extend that support to conferences SIGIR co-sponsors, but in a way that is fair to all sponsors.

I hope most of you noticed the ACM Turing Centenary Celebration (<http://turing100.acm.org>) that SIGIR has partially sponsored. As a sponsor, SIGIR received support for a handful of students to travel to the event. In addition, we are assured that all of the talks and panels at the event will be available on-line afterward for those who could not make it.

For those interested in history more recent than Turing, the SIGIR “museum” has recently been updated with new content. This site (<http://sigir.org/museum/contents.html>) includes copies of papers, books, and reports from the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. The files are scans of the original documents, so are often quite large, but they can be interesting reading. (Ever checked to see how the often-used Rocchio feedback model was defined? Take a peek at Rocchio’s thesis.) The SIGIR Executive is also interested in your ideas for projects that could be undertaken to make the most of the data.

I hope that you are planning to attend SIGIR 2012, to be held in Portland, Oregon, this August. In addition to an excellent technical program, this year’s conference includes the announcement of the next Salton Award recipient, an award presented every three years to someone making significant and sustained contributions to the field. Looking forward, the SIGIR 2013 conference is scheduled to be in Dublin, Ireland. In 2014 the conference will be in Gold Coast, Australia. The 2015 venue will be announced at the business meeting in Portland. SIGIR is currently requesting bids for 2016, open to locations within Europe and Africa. It will have been in Dublin (2013), Geneva (2010), Amsterdam (2007), Sheffield (2004), Tampere (2002), and Athens (2000). If you’re interested in hosting SIGIR in 2016 or want to encourage someone else to host it, start planning now. SIGIR welcomes proposals for locations at its business meeting. See <http://sigir.org/bid.html> for details.

SIGIR is also sponsoring JCDL 2012 in Washington, D.C. (June), CIKM 2012 in Maui, Hawaii (October-November), and WSDM in Rome, Italy (February 2013). I hope that you are able to attend and/or submit your work to any or all of these conferences.

As always, please touch base with me or any other member of the executive if you have any issues that you feel should be discussed at the business meeting. If you wish to help with any of the SIGIR work, please let us know. In particular, the nomination process for the next SIGIR Executive committee will be starting in a few months and your involvement will be greatly appreciated.

James Allan
chair_sigir@acm.org