
From the Chair...

Our main conference is in decline. This year SIGIR received only 342 full paper submissions and accepted 62, for an acceptance rate of 18%. We would have to go all the way back to 2004 to find a smaller SIGIR, where 58 papers were accepted from 267 submissions (22%). In contrast, back in 2004 SIGKDD, our close intellectual sibling, was not much larger than SIGIR, accepting 95 papers from 337 submissions. Last year, KDD 2015 accepted 160 papers from 819 submissions. Other related conferences experienced similar growth over these years, but around 2010 our growth stopped. We've been falling back every since.

We need to talk about the reasons. But it's certainly not a lack of interesting and impactful research problems. When I look around at our sibling conferences I see wonderful research that could easily find a home at SIGIR. This research is spread across conferences on machine learning, human computer interaction, recommender systems, big data, artificial intelligence, data mining, natural language processing, and other topics. We need to bring this research back home to the one major computer science conference that focuses on people interacting with information. It may be that we have become too closely associated with the search box and ten blue links, and we need to broaden ourselves back to encompass all information access problems.

One bright spot is the wonderful success of the first ACM SIGIR Conference on Human Information Interaction and Retrieval (CHIIR 2016) which was held in Chapel Hill, North Carolina on March 13-17. Over 140 researchers attended the conference to hear 23 full paper presentations and discuss 26 research posters. I thank everyone who helped organize the event, but I particularly thank Diane Kelly and Rob Capra, the General Chairs. Organizing a conference is difficult enough, but holding the first iteration of a brand new conference poses unique problems that they handled with aplomb. Feedback from the attendees was extremely positive, and I look forward to attending many iterations of CHIIR in future years.

This is my last message as Chair of our Executive Committee. As I write, elections are underway for a new Exec, which I will join as Past Chair at the end of June. I have very much enjoyed the last three years, especially chatting with our members and moving our various projects forward.

The current Exec has been a great group to work with. Thank you Yoelle, Diane, Jaap and James. It's been fun!

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