

Letter from the Chair

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Greetings SIGIR Members! The new Executive Committee (**Ryen White**, Vice Chair; **Carsten Eickhoff**, Treasurer; **Laura Dietz**, Secretary; and **Ben Carterette**, Past Chair) is completing its first year of service. This year was an interesting year, as we emerge from the Covid times with new challenges.

Post-Covid, the economy has changed and the cost of putting on conferences has increased substantially, while attendance is still reduced for various reasons (people less able to travel due to health and visa concerns). We would like to keep the cost of attending the conference affordable for everyone, and avoid policies that increase the cost to authors to help conferences break even. As a community we have some choices to make, because although the SIG is currently financially healthy, it cannot sustain losses year on year. Choosing less expensive locations will reduce the overall venue cost, in addition to generally lower costs for hotel rooms, restaurants, flights, etc. Increasing local events on a smaller scale reduces environmental impact, in addition to providing an affordable gathering.

This year, **Tetsuya Sakai** and **Paul Thomas** graciously volunteered to serve as the first sustainability chairs, looking for ways the SIG can reduce environmental costs. By far our biggest environmental impact is from members' travel to events, however these events are hugely important for research and for career progression, especially for newer researchers. Tetsuya and Paul will therefore start with mitigating the environmental cost of putting on the conferences, by asking conference bidders and organisers to include an estimated carbon budget, as well as a plan to reduce emissions (such as by reducing travel and by selecting providers with an eye on pollution). In the medium term they plan to encourage environmentally thoughtful IR research, by working on review criteria and rewards for "greener" research, and looking for less polluting ways to participate in the community. Please reach out to Tetsuya or Paul with any ideas and suggestions.

In the interest of less polluting ways to exchange ideas, a new initiative, proposed by **Suzan Verberne** and **Ebrahim Bagheri**, is a series of Virtual Forums on topics related to SIGIR. The proposal was submitted in January, endorsed by many in the community, and enthusiastically supported by the Executive Committee. As part of the planning, organizers reached out to SIGIR China, Student groups, Women in IR groups, SIGIR Japan and others. During ECIR, they presented the Virtual Forum to the community and received feedback. The planning is in progress, with a steering committee chosen, chaired by Suzan. The first sessions will be announced on social media, IRList, and on the sigir.org website.

In the coming year, we look forward to the launch of the Virtual Forum, and the integration of sustainability best practices. We will launch a new sigir.org website, highlighting upcoming

events, and members of the SIGIR community. The coming year will continue focus on reducing the cost of conference attendance, and ramp up plans for improving the peer review process.

We would like to thank the volunteers who are the backbone of SIGIR. In addition to the folks mentioned above, we would like to thank **Alistair Moffat**, who chairs the SIGIR Academy, Awards Chairs **Hannah Bast** and **Gianluca Demartini**, recently joined by **Mark Sanderson**. We would also like to thank **Rob Capra** who is chairing the Early Career Research Awards committee, **Maria Maistro** and **Qingyao Ai** who joined **Jiixin Mao** as Student Affairs Chairs, **Sole Pera** who is serving as Student Travel Chair, and **Bhaskar Mitra** who is the Community Relations Coordinator, the point of contact for folks who want to set up a meeting or gathering at one of the conferences. We would like to also thank volunteers who are continuing to serve the community in their roles: DEI Chairs **Hussein Suleman** and **Suzan Verberne**, **Nazli Goharian** as the Women in IR chair, **Nattiya Kanhabua** and **Guido Zuccon** continue as the Information Directors, **Donna Harman** as the SIGIR Historian, SIGIR Forum Editors **Tirthankar Ghosal**, **Josiane Mothe**, and **Julian Urbano**. As always, if you are interested in volunteering, please let the Executive Committee know.

Vanessa Murdock
Chair, ACM SIGIR Executive Committee