Report on the 5th Workshop on Reducing Online Misinformation through Credible Information Retrieval (ROMCIR 2025) at ECIR 2025

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Abstract

The 5th Workshop on Reducing Online Misinformation through Credible Information Retrieval (ROMCIR 2025) was held as part of the Satellite Events of the 47th European Conference on Information Retrieval (ECIR 2025). The Workshop provided a vibrant forum for researchers and practitioners to discuss innovative methods for improving access to accurate information and tackling the widespread issue of information disorder in the contemporary digital landscape. The challenge of online misinformation is inherently multifaceted. It spans a broad spectrum of information sources—including Websites, social media posts, and automatically generated content—and cuts across diverse platforms and domains. These include, but are not limited to, fake news detection, retrieval of trustworthy content—particularly in the health domain—and techniques for reducing the spread of propaganda. A particularly timely theme that gained prominence in this edition of ROMCIR was the growing influence of generative AI models, such as Large Language Models (LLMs). Discussions began to highlight both the risks posed by LLMs in unintentionally amplifying misinformation, and their potential to enhance Information Retrieval Systems (IRSs) when properly guided and constrained. Within this rich and evolving context, a variety of approaches to the challenge of accessing truthful and verifiable information were explored. The keynote speech and the research contributions presented at this year's Workshop primarily focused on several key themes: the use of crowdsourcing to mitigate misinformation; the interplay between misinformation and LLMs, in particular related to fact-checking and rumor verification; and the societal implications of misinformation, particularly its impact on children.

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Website: https://romcir.disco.unimib.it/.

1 Introduction

In the July 1983 issue of The New York Times,[1] American historian Daniel J. Boorstin remarked on the computerization of libraries as follows:

> *Technology is so much fun but we can drown in our technology. The fog of information can drive out knowledge.*

Approximately four decades later, its relevance arguably exceeds its original significance. The rise of Web 2.0 technologies has triggered a profound process of disintermediation in the creation and dissemination of online content within the Social Web. This shift has introduced well-documented challenges, including information overload [Bawden et al., 1999; Khaleel et al., 2020] and the rapid spread of misinformation [Chen et al., 2023], which hinder users in retrieving information that is truly valuable and aligned with their needs [Viviani and Pasi, 2017; Pasi and Viviani, 2020]. In parallel, recent advances in generative AI models—particularly Large Language Models (LLMs)—have introduced new and pressing risks. These models can produce human-like text that, despite its fluency, may lack factual accuracy and reliability [Kojima et al., 2022; Monteith et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2023].

Against this backdrop, the ROMCIR Workshop aims to investigate and develop *Information Retrieval* (IR) approaches that promote access to relevant and trustworthy information. A central focus is the broader phenomenon of information disorder, which encompasses a wide range of harmful content—from unintentionally misleading information due to ignorance or cognitive bias, to the deliberate spread of falsehoods, whether manually created or algorithmically amplified [Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017; Pratelli et al., 2024]. This challenge is further intensified by structural features of the digital environment, such as filter bubbles and echo chambers, which reinforce users' pre-existing beliefs and limit exposure to diverse perspectives [Bozdag and Van Den Hoven, 2015; Del Vicario et al., 2016; Villa et al., 2021; Mattei et al., 2022; Pratelli et al., 2023; Impicciché and Viviani, 2024].

Tackling information disorder is inherently complex. It involves the analysis of heterogeneous content types, dissemination platforms, and user intentions. Emerging AI-related concerns further complicate this landscape. These include the explainability of search results [Anand et al., 2023; Upadhyay et al., 2023; Upadhyay and Viviani, 2025], the evaluation of truthfulness in user-generated content [Viviani and Pasi, 2017; Soprano et al., 2021], the potential of crowdsourcing as a verification tool [La Barbera et al., 2024], and the responsible integration of generative models within IR systems [Cabitza et al., 2022; Najork, 2023].

Another critical dimension is the protection of data confidentiality, particularly in unstructured data contexts [Livraga and Viviani, 2019; Livraga et al., 2023] and framed within IR applications [Cassani et al., 2024], where LLMs may play a transformative yet delicate role [Herranz-Celotti et al., 2025]. In light of these developments, designing effective and reliable experimental evaluation paradigms for IR systems becomes not only necessary but foundational to progress in this domain [Lioma et al., 2017; Suominen et al., 2021].

[1] https://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/08/us/working-profile-helping-the-library-of-congress-fulfill-its-mission.html

2 Aim and Topics of Interest

Within the ECIR conference, the ROMCIR Workshop addressed a broad range of topics related to online misinformation and trustworthy Information Retrieval. These topics spanned various types of content (e.g., Web pages, news articles, reviews, medical data), platforms (e.g., social media, microblogs, Q&A systems), and user goals (e.g., detecting falsehoods, retrieving truthful information). In addition, the Workshop engaged with emerging AI-related challenges, such as the explainability of search results, the evaluation of truthfulness in AI-generated content, and the integration of generative models to enhance *Information Retrieval Systems* (IRSs). Accordingly, the topics of interest for ROMCIR 2025 included, but were not limited to:

- Access to and retrieval of truthful information;
- Bot, spam, and troll detection;
- Computational fact-checking;
- Credibility and truthfulness assessment of online documents;
- Crowdsourcing for credibility and truthfulness assessment of information;
- Detection of disinformation, misinformation, and bias;
- Evaluation strategies for assessing information truthfulness;
- Generative models and truthfulness assessment of information;
- Human-in-the-loop approaches for misinformation detection;
- Information polarization in online communities and echo chambers;
- Identification and analysis of propaganda;
- Retrieval of credible and truthful information;
- Security, privacy, and their relation to information truthfulness;
- Societal reactions to misinformation;
- Sentiment analysis and stance detection;
- Trust and reputation in information ecosystems.

3 Keynote Speech

As part of the Workshop, a keynote speech was delivered by Prof. *Stefano Mizzaro* on the use of crowdsourcing to combat misinformation.

Title. *The Truth of Crowds? On Using Crowdsourcing Against Misinformation.*

Abstract. The phenomenon of misinformation spreading can be explored from many different angles. One key countermeasure is fact-checking, i.e., the process of verifying facts. This involves several activities, with a critical one being the assessment of the truthfulness of the examined information. Traditionally, this task has been performed by expert journalists within established organizations. However, the vast volume of misinformation has created a pressing need to scale up truthfulness assessment. To address this challenge, various approaches have been proposed, including automated classification methods based on Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Deep Learning. Another promising approach is crowdsourcing. Indeed, leveraging the so-called wisdom of crowds by outsourcing truthfulness assessment to a diverse

crowd of non-expert workers could be the right compromise between the effectiveness of expert evaluations (accurate but slow) and the efficiency of automated methods (fast but less accurate). In this presentation, I will share my seven-year journey of research into using crowdsourcing for identifying misinformation. Starting from early efforts, I will summarize the experiments conducted, the results obtained, and the lessons learned. Finally, I will discuss potential directions for future research.

Short Bio.[2] Stefano Mizzaro is a full professor at the Department of Mathematics, Informatics, and Physics of the University of Udine. He has been working for more than 30 years on Information Retrieval, mainly focusing on effectiveness evaluation. More recently he has also worked on crowdsourcing, Artificial Intelligence, and misinformation assessment. On these topics he has published more than 150 scientific papers in national and international venues, he has received some grants and awards, and he is currently coordinating the national project "MoT – The Measure of Truth: An Evaluation-Centered Machine-Human Hybrid Framework for Assessing Information Truthfulness".

4 Submissions

The ROMCIR 2025 Workshop received 12 submissions, of which 6 were accepted, resulting in an acceptance rate of 50%. The authors of the accepted submissions were affiliated with universities from five different countries, including Germany, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. This year, submissions particularly focused on the issues of: (*i*) combating misinformation, (*ii*) misinformation and children, and (*iii*) LLMs and misinformation [Kruschwitz et al., 2025b].

Concerning research issue (*i*), two *short papers* were accepted. The two works tackle the misinformation issue from complementary angles: the authoritativeness of sources, explainability, and user engagement. In particular, Aspromonte et al. [2025] introduce a domain-agnostic framework for *Automated Fake News Detection* (AFND) that leverages LLMs and dynamic search engine integration to verify claims against authoritative sources. Emphasizing explainability and regulatory compliance (e.g., the EU Digital Services Act), the system offers multilingual and multimodal capabilities and achieves high performance across benchmark datasets such as Politifact and Liar, demonstrating the effectiveness of knowledge enhancement. Viola [2025] investigates how linguistic and cultural factors influence user engagement with misinformation on social media. Analyzing over 5,000 multilingual tweets about the HPV vaccine, their research uncovers language-specific patterns in sentiment and topic-driven engagement, highlighting that responses to misinformation vary significantly across cultural contexts. Together, these works advance both technical and sociocultural approaches to understanding and combating online misinformation.

Concerning research issue (*ii*), the two *full papers* accepted explore the intersection of information disorder and children's online experiences, addressing both conceptual foundations and empirical observations. In particular, Chakrabarti et al. [2025] present a systematic literature review on how children interact with misleading information across digital platforms. The work highlights the specific challenges children face due to their distinct cognitive and behavioural traits and examines both technological and human-centred solutions aimed at mitigating the effects of

[2] https://users.dimi.uniud.it/~stefano.mizzaro/

misinformation. The review identifies key research gaps and proposes future directions to better support children in navigating digital content safely and effectively. Complementing this perspective, Schnober and Sprenger [2025] provide an empirical analysis of what Dutch children are exposed to when using Google Search. By annotating a random sample of real-world queries and analyzing search result pages and their sources, the study uncovers patterns related to content quality, transparency, and commercial intent. It introduces a replicable methodology for assessing the visibility and relevance of Web content for specific audiences and raises important questions about the adequacy of general-purpose search engines for young users. Together, these works contribute valuable insights into how children access, interpret, and are potentially influenced by online information, emphasizing the need for tailored Information Retrieval strategies and tools.

Concerning research issue (*iii*), the two *full papers* accepted advance the field of automated fact-checking and rumor verification through the use of LLMs and evidence-based reasoning. In particular, Alia and Khan [2025] focus on bilingual rumor verification on platform X (formerly Twitter), leveraging trusted authority accounts as evidence sources. By retrieving relevant tweets using SBERT and BM25, and applying a fine-tuned XLM-RoBERTa model to assess stance toward the rumor, the system aggregates stance labels to determine rumor veracity. The approach, tested in both English and Arabic, achieves competitive performance, highlighting the underexplored potential of authoritative timelines in verifying online claims. Sahitaj et al. [2025] evaluate LLM-based *Automated Fact-Checking* (AFC) across multiple claim labeling schemes (binary to five-class), using over 17,000 real-world claims from PolitiFact. Through structured verdict classification and justification generation, the study benchmarks the performance of different LLaMA-3 model sizes. Results show that larger LLMs outperform smaller ones in both classification and explanation tasks, with retrieval-augmented setups yielding consistent gains. The work also introduces TIGERScore as a reference-free metric to evaluate justification quality. Together, these papers showcase how multilingual and explainable AFC systems, grounded in external evidence, can improve the robustness and scalability of misinformation detection on dynamic platforms.

5 Past Editions

The first four editions of the ROMCIR Workshop, all co-located with the ECIR conference, led to fervent discussion and presentation of innovative work concerning a variety of open issues related to information disorder and IR. The first edition took place in online mode on April 1, 2021. The second edition took place both in person in Stavanger, Norway, and online, on April 10, 2022. The third edition took place in person in Dublin, Ireland, on April 2, 2023. The fourth edition took place in person in Glasgow, Scotland, on March 24, 2024.

The papers accepted at ROMCIR in its various editions have been published in the CEUR Workshop Proceedings [Saracco and Viviani, 2021; Petrocchi and Viviani, 2022, 2023, 2024; Kruschwitz et al., 2025a], which are freely accessible. Updated information on past and current ROMCIR editions can be found on the official Website.[3]

The Website also features additional materials, such as the slides from keynote speeches delivered during the various editions, as well as a series of "ROMCIR family photos" that we are pleased to share.

[3] https://romcir.disco.unimib.it/

6 Workshop Organization

The ROMCIR 2025 Organizing Team was composed of the following people, concerning their distinct roles, i.e., Workshop Chairs, Proceedings and Publicity Chairs, and Program Committee Members.

6.1 Workshop Chairs

Udo Kruschwitz.[4] He is a Professor of Information Science at the University of Regensburg, Germany. His main research interest is the interface between Information Retrieval and Natural Language Processing, with a focus on identifying and addressing toxic content and misinformation. He is particularly interested in projects that are aimed at transferring knowledge from academia into practical applications. He considers ECIR to be his scientific home. He served as general co-chair (2023), PC co-chair (2010), and organised several ECIR Industry Days as well as ECIR Workshops such as GamifIR and NewsIR. He is also actively involved in the British Computer Society's Information Retrieval Specialist Group, currently serving as its chair.

Marinella Petrocchi.[5] She is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Informatics and Telematics of the National Research Council (IIT-CNR) in Pisa, Italy, under the Trust, Security and Privacy research unit. She also collaborates with the Sysma unit at IMT School for Advanced Studies, in Lucca, Italy. Her field of research lies between Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, and Data Science. Specifically, she studies novel techniques for online fake news/fake accounts detection and automated methods to rank the reputability of online news media. She is the author of several international publications on these topics, and she usually gives talks and lectures on the topic. She serves as the CNR lead on the project Humane: *Holistic sUpports to inforMAtioN disordEr*, under the NRRP MUR program funded by the EU – NGEU.

Marco Viviani.[6] He is an Associate Professor at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Department of Informatics, Systems, and Communication (DISCo), Italy. He works in the Information and Knowledge Representation, Retrieval and Reasoning (IKR3) Lab. He has been a co-organizer of several special tracks and Workshops at international conferences and the general co-chair of MDAI 2019. He is an Associate Editor of Social Network Analysis and Mining and Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence – Natural Language Processing, an Area Editor (Web Intelligence and E-Services) of the International Journal of Computational Intelligence Systems, and a Guest Editor of several Special Issues in International Journals related to the problem of online information disorder. He is the UNIMIB Associate Investigator for the PRIN 2022 project KURAMi: *Knowledge-based, explainable User empowerment in Releasing private data and Assessing Misinformation in online environments*, funded under the European Union – Next Generation EU initiative, Mission 4, Component 2 (CUP: D53D23008480001). His main research activities include Social Computing, Information Retrieval, Text Mining, Natural Language Processing, Trust and Privacy, and User Modeling. On these topics, he has written several international publications.

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[5] https://www.iit.cnr.it/en/marinella.petrocchi/
[6] https://ikr3.disco.unimib.it/people/marco-viviani/

6.2 Proceedings and Publicity Chairs

- **John Bianchi**, IMT School for Advanced Studies, Lucca, Italy
- **Gregor Donabauer**, University of Regensburg, Regensburg, Germany
- **Luca Herranz-Celotti**, University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy

6.3 Program Committee Members

- **Ipek Baris Schlicht**, Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain
- **David Corney**, Full Fact, UK
- **Gregor Donabauer**, University of Regensburg, Germany
- **Ralf Krestel**, ZBW – Leibniz Information Centre for Economics & Kiel University, Germany
- **Ema Kusen**, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria
- **Marcelo Mendoza**, Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, Chile
- **Maria Soledad Pera**, TU Delft, Netherlands
- **Preslav Nakov**, Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence, United Arab Emirates
- **Fabio Pinelli**, IMT Lucca, Italy
- **Manuel Pratelli**, CNR–IIT Pisa, Italy
- **Theresia Veronika Rampisela**, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- **Chiara Renso**, CNR–ISTI Pisa, Italy
- **Daisy Romanini**, CNR–IIT Pisa, Italy
- **Giulio Rossetti**, CNR–ISTI Pisa, Italy
- **Paolo Rosso**, Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain
- **Serena Tardelli**, University of Pisa and CNR–IIT Pisa, Italy

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