

Report on the 11th ACM SIGIR Conference on Human Information Interaction and Retrieval (CHIIR 2026)

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Abstract

The 11th ACM SIGIR Conference on Human Information Interaction and Retrieval (CHIIR 2026—pronounced “cheer”) was held in person from March 22–26, 2026, at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA, USA. CHIIR is a premier venue for research on user-centered approaches to the design and evaluation of systems for information access, seeking, retrieval, and use. The conference featured two keynote addresses, nine technical paper sessions, an industry panel, a poster and demonstration session, three tutorials, two workshops, a doctoral consortium, and a vibrant social program. This event report summarizes the conference organization, technical program, keynotes, social events, and awards. We also present our perspective on the impact and importance of CHIIR and include results from a post-conference survey that collected participant feedback on CHIIR this year. Our experience organizing the 2026 event left us confident that the CHIIR community remains vibrant and deeply engaged in shaping the future of information access and use for years to come.

CHIIRs! 

Date: 22–26 March 2026.

Website: <https://chiir2026.github.io>.

1 Introduction

The ACM SIGIR Conference on Human Information Interaction and Retrieval (CHIIR) is a multidisciplinary research meeting that invites submissions focused on user-centered approaches to designing and evaluating systems for information access, seeking, retrieval, and use. In addition to studies of interactive systems, information interaction, and retrieval, the conference encourages submissions from related communities including human-computer interaction, psychology, sociology, education, and ethnography. CHIIR’s single-track format ensures that all attendees

experience the same high-quality program, fostering deeper discussions and stronger community connections.

CHIIR 2026 was the 11th edition of the conference. The event took place from March 22–26, 2026, in Seattle, WA, USA, and was held entirely in person to enhance community building and foster meaningful scholarly discussion, attracting 116 registered participants. This year’s CHIIR was hosted by the University of Washington, co-sponsored by ACM SIGIR, and was supported by Microsoft and AMD.

Before diving into the specifics of this year’s conference, it is worth reflecting on the role that CHIIR plays. Despite its modest size, CHIIR consistently produces high-quality, focused contributions that punch well above their weight in Information Retrieval (IR) research and practice—often setting trends that later surface at larger venues such as the SIGIR conference.

2 The Role and Significance of CHIIR for the Broader Information Retrieval Community

IR as a scientific discipline was built, in large part, on a systems-centric foundation. The Cranfield experiments of the 1960s established precision and recall as the canonical measures of retrieval quality, and the Text Retrieval Conference (TREC) evaluation paradigm subsequently operationalized this tradition at scale: a system’s value was gauged by its ability to return relevant documents against a fixed test collection, largely independent of who asked the question, why they asked it, or what they ultimately did with the results [Voorhees and Harman, 2005]. This framework produced remarkable scientific progress and enabled meaningful system-to-system comparison. It also left a wide aperture: the human at the center of the retrieval act was, by design, abstracted away.

CHIIR fills that aperture. Founded in 2016 from the merger of the Information Interaction in Context (IliX) conference and the Human Computer Information Retrieval (HCIR) symposium—established in 2006 and 2007, respectively—CHIIR has, across eleven editions, maintained a principled commitment to restoring the human to the center of the IR equation. In doing so, it simultaneously serves four complementary functions within the broader IR ecosystem. It acts as a *corrective lens*, surfacing phenomena that system-level evaluation cannot detect—e.g., cognitive load, verification behavior, accessibility barriers, and trust—that profoundly shape whether retrieval is effective in practice. It serves as a *vanguard*, anticipating the questions that the field at large is now being forced to confront as Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems become the de facto interface between people and information. It functions as a *bridge*, importing theoretical and empirical apparatus from cognitive psychology, sociology, education, and human-computer interaction, enriching IR with methods and constructs that no single-discipline venue can supply. Finally, it serves as an *amplifier*, generating findings that improve system design in ways that purely offline evaluation would never surface.

The urgency of these contributions has sharpened considerably in the era of generative AI and agentic systems. As AI-mediated interfaces increasingly interpose themselves between users and information—generating answers rather than returning documents, acting on behalf of users rather than serving them passively—the questions CHIIR has long studied become not peripheral but prerequisite. Important questions include: How do users form, calibrate, and misplace trust in AI-generated outputs? Research presented at CHIIR 2026 addressed this directly: studies examined

researchers’ verification challenges with Large Language Models (LLMs) [Visani Scozzi et al., 2026], the effects of conversational agent personality on credibility perception [Byeon et al., 2026], and the propagation of biases in AI-generated content [Ermakova et al., 2026]. How do people learn—or fail to learn—when AI mediates the search process? Papers on search-as-learning examined the effects of goal-setting during generative AI-assisted information seeking [Urgo et al., 2026] and proposed frameworks for rethinking search systems as instructive interfaces [Elsweiler, 2026]. How does AI interact with the structural inequities of information access? CHIIR’s sessions on accessibility brought empirical grounding to questions about blind users’ online behavior [Prakash et al., 2026] and the integration of information systems into community and civic contexts [Kim et al., 2026]. These are not niche concerns—they are the central challenges of IR in the 2020s, and CHIIR has been doing the methodological groundwork for over a decade.

This trajectory is also legible across the conference’s history. The inaugural Test of Time Awards, presented for the first time at CHIIR 2026, illuminate two formative contributions: an empirical study of learning outcomes in Web search by Collins-Thompson et al. [2016]—work that anticipated the “search as learning” research agenda that now spans multiple major venues—and a theoretical framework for conversational search by Radlinski and Craswell [2017], which provided foundational scaffolding for a paradigm that now commands major attention at the SIGIR conference, the European Conference on IR, and beyond. That CHIIR papers from 2016 and 2017 are being recognized as having stood the test of time is not a matter of sentiment: it is evidence that the community identified consequential research directions before they became mainstream preoccupations.

The two keynotes at CHIIR 2026 crystallized this duality between corrective and anticipatory roles. Ben Shneiderman’s address on Human-Centered AI argued that generative AI, however impressive, risks embedding irresponsibility at scale without the design discipline that CHIIR-style research provides: interfaces must be comprehensible, controllable, and empowering rather than opaque and passive. Xin Luna Dong’s vision of persistent, permission-based personal memory systems—AI that remembers and reasons from a user’s lived experience—outlined a research frontier where the human context is not a nuisance variable to be controlled for, but the very substrate of effective assistance. Both keynotes, from very different vantage points, arrived at the same conclusion: the future of information access is inseparable from deep understanding of human cognition, behavior, and values. That understanding is CHIIR’s core competency.

Although CHIIR remains a deliberately focused community—116 registered participants in 2026, with a 35% acceptance rate across full and perspective papers reflecting genuine selectivity—its intellectual influence is disproportionate to its size. The questions it poses, the methods it validates, and the phenomena it documents find their way into the design of systems deployed at global scale. A community need not be large to be important; it needs to be rigorous, ahead of the curve, and willing to ask the questions that larger venues have not yet learned to pose. Across its first decade, CHIIR has demonstrated exactly that.

3 Conference Organization

CHIIR 2026 was organized by the following committee:

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- **General Chairs:** Chirag Shah (University of Washington, USA) and Ryen W. White (Microsoft, USA)
 - **Program Chairs:** Adam Fourney (Microsoft, USA), Carla Teixeira Lopes (University of Porto, Portugal), and Johanne R. Trippas (RMIT University, Australia)
 - **Short, Resource Papers & Demo Chairs:** Jiqun Liu (University of Oklahoma, USA) and Kelsey Uργο (University of San Francisco, USA)
 - **Doctoral Consortium Chairs:** Alexandra Papoutsaki (Pomona College, USA) and Vivien Petras (Humboldt University, Germany)
 - **Workshop & Tutorial Chairs:** Souvick Ghosh (San José State University, USA) and Hamed Zamani (University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA)
 - **Proceedings Chair:** Yashar Moshfeghi (University of Strathclyde, UK)
 - **Award Chairs:** Makoto Kato (University of Tsukuba, Japan) and Min Zhang (Tsinghua University, China)
 - **Test of Time Award Chairs:** Ian Ruthven (University of Strathclyde, UK) and Luanne Sinnamon (University of British Columbia, Canada)
 - **Sponsorship Chairs:** Michael Cole (LexisNexis, USA) and Udo Kruschwitz (University of Regensburg, Germany)
 - **Publicity Chair:** Negar Arabzadeh (University of California Berkeley, USA)
 - **Treasurer:** Orland Hoeber (University of Regina, Canada)
 - **Registration Chair:** Shanu Sushmita (Northeastern University, USA)
 - **Local Organizing Chairs:** Preetam Dammu and Mouly Dewan (University of Washington, USA)
 - **Student Volunteer Chairs:** Harshita Chopra and Kirandeep Kaur (University of Washington, USA)
 - **Webmaster:** Shawon Sarkar (University of Washington, USA)

4 Venue

As noted above, CHIIR 2026 was held on the campus of the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle, WA, USA. Founded in 1861, UW is one of the oldest public universities on the West Coast of the United States. Attendees were fortunate to visit the UW campus during the famous cherry blossom season.¹ Technical sessions were held in the Husky Union Building (HUB), while workshops, tutorials, and the doctoral consortium were held in the Information School and Allen Library. Social events were held at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture², the HUB Games area, and at the Conibear Shellhouse³—home of the UW rowing program celebrated in *The Boys in the Boat*, a bestselling book and George Clooney-directed film chronicling the UW crew’s journey to Olympic gold in 1936.

¹<https://www.washington.edu/cherryblossoms/>

²<https://www.burkemuseum.org/>

³<https://washingtonrowing.com/about/conibear-shellhouse/>

5 Technical Program

The CHIIR 2026 technical program was curated by Program Chairs Adam Fourney, Carla Teixeira Lopes, and Johanne Trippas, and Short, Resource Papers & Demo Chairs Jiqun Liu and Kelsey Urgo. The program included the following types of accepted contributions:

- **Full and Perspective Papers:** 27 papers presenting substantial, original research, or offering visionary or position-oriented perspectives (of 77 in total, 35% acceptance rate).
- **Short Papers:** 18 papers presenting preliminary findings, novel approaches, or focused studies (of 40 in total, 45% acceptance rate).
- **Demo and Resource Papers:** 18 papers showcasing interactive systems, tools, datasets, and other reusable resources for the community (of 26 in total, 69% acceptance rate).

The proceedings are published in the ACM Digital Library.⁴ The main conference program (running for three days) was organized into nine technical sessions covering topics such as cognitive factors, trust and misinformation, accessibility, conversational interactions, search as learning, narrative and multi-modality, information needs, cross-session search, and human-AI collaboration. A dedicated poster and demonstration session provided an interactive forum for attendees to engage directly with authors and explore working systems.

5.1 Industry Panel

An industry panel on the theme of *AI for IA* (Artificial Intelligence for Information Access) offered attendees a chance to hear directly from leaders in industry on their perspective on how AI is shaping IA now and will do so in the future. The panel was moderated by Leif Azzopardi (Microsoft / University of Strathclyde), and included the following panelists, who discussed challenges and opportunities at the intersection of AI, human-centered design, and IR:

- Aarti Choudhary, Chief Responsible AI Lead and Architect, AMD
- Dan Liebling, Staff Engineering Manager, Google Research
- Vanessa Murdock, Principal Scientist, AWS Responsible AI
- Milad Shokouhi, Distinguished Engineer, LinkedIn

5.2 Business Meeting

The CHIIR-It-Forward business meeting was held during the lunch break on the last day of the main conference program, providing an opportunity for the community to discuss the future direction of the conference, including strengthening connections with ACM SIGCHI, which has long been a cooperating partner (e.g., we discussed the CHIIR Steering Committee (SC) plans to organize a CHIIR-focused meetup at the CHI 2026 conference in Barcelona, Spain⁵). There was an exciting update from the organizers of CHIIR 2027, which will be held in Berlin, Germany, and Helsinki, Finland was revealed as the location for CHIIR 2028. Bids are now being accepted for CHIIR 2029; those interested should reach out to the CHIIR SC chair, Rob Capra.

⁴<https://dl.acm.org/doi/proceedings/10.1145/3786304>

⁵<https://sites.google.com/view/chiir-at-chi2026/home>

6 Keynotes

CHIIR 2026 featured two distinguished keynote speakers who brought complementary perspectives on human-centered AI and visual memory systems.

6.1 Keynote 1: Ben Shneiderman

Title: *Human-Centered AI: Supertools for Taking Control of Search*

Ben Shneiderman is an Emeritus Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Founding Director (1983–2000) of the Human-Computer Interaction Laboratory at the University of Maryland. He is a Fellow of the AAAS, ACM, IEEE, NAI, and the Visualization Academy, and a Member of the United States National Academy of Engineering. He has received six honorary doctorates and is the author of *Human-Centered AI* [Shneiderman, 2022], which won the Association of American Publishers 2023 PROSE Award for Computer and Information Systems.

In his keynote, Shneiderman described a new synthesis integrating AI technologies with Human-Computer Interaction to produce Human-Centered AI (HCAI). He argued that advocates of this synthesis design *supertools* that amplify, augment, and enhance human abilities while empowering people. Effective supertools build the user’s self-efficacy, support creativity, clarify responsibility, and promote social connections. He outlined foundational design principles suggesting comprehensible, predictable, and controllable user interfaces with compact control panels, clear sequences of action, abundant information display, and rapid exploration of alternatives.

Shneiderman emphasized that improved search tools will come from researchers who embrace human-centered approaches by giving users control over the scope of search, offering rich sets of options, and ranking/clustering search results. These strategies are especially important when using generative AI, which he described as “startlingly impressive, but alarmingly flawed.” The keynote recording is available on YouTube.⁶

6.2 Keynote 2: Xin Luna Dong

Title: *From Sight to Insight: Visual Memory for Smarter Assistants*

Xin Luna Dong is a Principal Scientist at Meta Wearables AI, where she leads Agentic AI efforts for building trustworthy and personalized assistants on wearable devices. She previously spent over a decade advancing knowledge graph technology, including the Amazon Product Graph and the Google Knowledge Graph. She is a Fellow of the ACM and IEEE, and has been recognized with the VLDB Women in Database Research Award and the VLDB Early Career Research Contribution Award.

Dong’s keynote envisioned a personal assistant that, with user permission, persistently remembers moments from daily life. She presented early work toward this goal, including *Pensieve*, a memory-based QA system that improves accuracy over state-of-the-art multimodal retrieval augmented generation baselines, and *VisualLens*, which infers user interests from casual photos, outperforming leading recommendation systems. She also shared initial results on efficient,

⁶<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFqV5oMmcQs>

event-triggered memory capture and compression, pointing to a broad landscape of research opportunities in building richer, more context-aware personal assistants.

7 Doctoral Consortium

The Doctoral Consortium (DC), held on the first day of the conference and chaired by Alexandra Papoutsaki (Pomona College) and Vivien Petras (Humboldt University), provided an outstanding opportunity for eight doctoral students working on user-centered approaches to information access, retrieval, and use to present and discuss their research with experienced researchers and peers in a seminar format.

8 Tutorials

Three half-day tutorials were also offered on the first day of the conference:

1. **Controlled Experimentation of Model Search Behaviour with Genie-Lab** (Hideo Joho, University of Tsukuba). This tutorial presented systematic methods for analyzing model search behavior in retrieval-augmented applications using an open experimental framework.
2. **Information Seeking in the Age of Agentic AI** (Preetam Dammu, University of Washington; Tanya Roosta, University of California Berkeley / Amazon). This tutorial equipped the CHIIR community with a practice-oriented methodology for designing and evaluating information-seeking agents, covering agent workflow design, trace-based evaluation rubrics, and hands-on case studies with open frameworks such as Perplexica and SearXNG.
3. **Simulation of Interactive Information Retrieval: A Guided Tour** (Saber Zerhoudi, University of Passau; Adam Roegiest, Zuva; Johanne R. Trippas, RMIT University). This tutorial provided a practical, hands-on introduction to user simulation at varying levels of complexity, from foundational statistical models to advanced LLM-driven frameworks.

9 Workshops

Two workshops were held on the final day of the conference:

1. **Workshop on Generative AI and Academic Search (GAI&AS)** (Yifan Liu, Jaime Arguello, Orland Hoeber, Chang Liu, Soo Young Rieh, and Luanne Sinnamon). This workshop examined opportunities and challenges in developing and using AI-powered academic search systems for research and higher education, addressing critical questions about search integrity, fairness, accountability, transparency, and ethics.⁷
2. **Workshop on Human-Centered Proactive and Personalized Agents for Interactive Information Access** (Kirandeep Kaur, Vinayak Gupta, Madhura Raju, Tanya Roosta, Grace Hui Yang, and Chirag Shah). This workshop explored how proactive AI agents

⁷<https://sites.google.com/view/chiir-gaias-workshop/home>

can assist without overriding agency, adapt without imposing assumptions, and anticipate without eroding trust, centering on the human experience of proactivity and personalization in interactive information access.⁸

10 Awards and Recognition

CHIIR 2026 presented awards for papers of various types (full, short, demo) published this year, introduced a new award for papers that have stood the test of time and had a lasting impact, and recognized reviewers who demonstrated exceptional commitment to the reviewing process.

10.1 Paper Awards

Makoto Kato (University of Tsukuba) and Min Zhang (Tsinghua University) served as Award Chairs, working with a selection committee to determine the recipients of awards for papers published at the conference this year. The following papers were selected for Best Paper, Best Short Paper, and Best Demo Paper awards.

10.1.1 Best Paper Awards

- **Best Paper:** “Can You Tell Me?” Designing Copilots to Support Human Judgement in Online Information Seeking, by Markus Bink, Marten Risius, David Elsweiler, and Udo Kruschwitz [Bink et al., 2026].
- **Best Paper Runner-up:** Does It Still Make Sense? Organizing and Summarizing Resources in Cross-Session Aggregated Search, by Milad Momeni and Orland Hoeber [Momeni and Hoeber, 2026].

10.1.2 Best Short Paper Awards

- **Best Short Paper:** Interest-Driven Search in AI-Mediated Information Environments: An Audio Diary Study, by Yujin Choi and Soo Young Rieh [Choi and Rieh, 2026].
- **Best Short Paper Runner-up:** Implicit Humanization in Everyday LLM Moral Judgments, by Hoda Ayad and Tanu Mitra [Ayad and Mitra, 2026].

10.1.3 Best Demo Paper Award

- **Best Demo Paper:** Result Assessment Tool (RAT): An Open-Source Toolkit for Conducting Studies based on Search Results, by Sebastian Sünkler, Kardelen Bilir, Tuhina Kumar, Oliver Koop, Sebastian Schultheiß, and Dirk Lewandowski [Sünkler et al., 2026].

⁸<https://proactive-chiir.github.io>

10.2 Inaugural Test of Time Awards

A notable milestone for the CHIIR series was the introduction of *Test of Time Awards* at CHIIR 2026. With ten prior CHIIR events in the rearview, the community could start to look back over a full decade—to early CHIIRs, starting in 2016—and recognize papers that have had lasting impact. Ian Ruthven (University of Strathclyde) and Luanne Sinnamon (University of British Columbia) served as the chairs for these awards, convening a selection panel to identify the winners. The following two papers were selected and recognized with test of time awards:

- **Test of Time 2016:** Assessing Learning Outcomes in Web Search: A Comparison of Tasks and Query Strategies, by Kevyn Collins-Thompson, Soo Young Rieh, Carl C. Haynes, and Rohail Syed [[Collins-Thompson et al., 2016](#)].
- **Test of Time 2017:** A Theoretical Framework for Conversational Search, by Filip Radlinski and Nick Craswell [[Radlinski and Craswell, 2017](#)].

10.3 Outstanding Reviewers

The Program Chairs identified a few individuals who went above and beyond during the CHIIR 2026 review process and received special recognition at the conference opening:

- Bogeum Choi
- Dagmar Kern
- Marijn Koolen
- Florian Meier
- Sachin Pathiyan Cherumanal
- Adam Roegiest

11 Social Events

CHIIR 2026 featured a rich social program designed to foster community building in memorable UW campus and Seattle venues:

- **Welcome Reception at the Burke Museum:** Attendees enjoyed an evening at Washington state’s oldest public museum, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, with access to all public galleries.
- **Fun and Games Night:** Following the Industry Panel, attendees gathered at the HUB Games area for an informal evening of bowling, billiards, pizza, and other fun activities.
- **“The Boys in the Boat” Tour and Social Dinner:** Attendees took a tour of the historic Conibear Shellhouse, home to UW’s rowing program, followed by a social dinner at the same venue.

12 Sponsorship

CHIIR 2026 was sponsored by ACM SIGIR (Special Interest Group on Information Retrieval), with additional industry sponsorship from Microsoft (Platinum) and AMD (Gold). The organizers gratefully acknowledge all sponsors for their generous support, which helped keep registration costs affordable and enabled student participation. For example, thanks to this support, student registration rates were lower than those of CHIIR 2018 in New Brunswick, NJ, USA (despite price inflation in the United States of around 30% since then).

13 Post-Conference Feedback

In an effort to continually improve the conference, we surveyed attendees about their experience. A post-conference survey was distributed to all registered participants, receiving 29 responses (a 25% response rate). Respondents included faculty (45%), students (34%), industry professionals (14%), and 7% other/unspecified. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive: 97% of respondents rated their overall experience a 4 or 5 out of 5 (mean 4.59), with equally strong scores for the technical program (mean 4.62) and organization and logistics (mean 4.41). Social events were well received (mean 4.24), as were the catering options (mean 4.00). Notably, 97% of respondents indicated they were likely or very likely to attend CHIIR again (mean 4.76), reflecting the enduring appeal of the conference.

When asked which sessions they found most valuable, paper presentations were the clear favorite (90%), followed by posters (55%), keynotes and social events (both 52%), and demos (34%). Open-ended responses consistently highlighted the welcoming community, the opportunities for networking and meaningful conversations, and the single-track format as strengths of the conference. Several first-time attendees noted how easy it was to connect with researchers sharing similar interests. Suggestions for improvement centered on food variety and labeling, providing more seating and tables during breaks and lunch, and communicating logistical details (e.g., poster orientation, presentation format) earlier. A few respondents expressed a desire for greater attendance and topical diversity in future editions.

14 Looking Ahead

The CHIIR community continues to grow and evolve, reflecting the increasing importance of understanding human information interaction in an era of rapidly advancing AI technologies. The 2026 edition showcased the community's breadth, from foundational cognitive studies and accessibility research to cutting-edge work on generative AI, conversational search, and agentic systems. We look forward to CHIIR 2027 in Berlin, Germany, and CHIIR 2028 in Helsinki, Finland, and encourage the SIGIR community to continue contributing to this vibrant venue. Those interested in staying connected to the CHIIR community can learn more at the CHIIR website⁹ and by joining the community mailing list.¹⁰

⁹<http://www.chiir.org>

¹⁰<https://tinyurl.com/chiirmail>

Beyond logistics, this moment calls for a broader imperative. As AI systems assume an ever-larger role in mediating human access to information—answering questions, summarizing documents, proactively surfacing knowledge, and acting as agents on users’ behalf—the stakes of getting the human-centered design correct have never been higher. The IR community writ large is now grappling with evaluation paradigms, trust frameworks, and accountability structures that CHIIR researchers have been developing, testing, and refining for over a decade. The challenge going forward is not simply to sustain CHIIR as a strong niche venue, but to ensure that its insights travel: into SIGIR program tracks and keynotes, into system design practice at the industry partners who generously support this conference, and into the graduate training pipelines that will produce the next generation of IR researchers. CHIIR is central to IR—it is increasingly its conscience and its compass. Keeping it vibrant, well-resourced, and connected to the broader ecosystem is, we would argue, one of the most consequential investments the SIGIR community can make.

Acknowledgments

Running a successful conference most certainly takes a village. The General Chairs would like to thank the entire organizing committee, the program committee members, the student volunteers, the local organizing team at UW, the CHIIR SC, and the ACM SIGIR Executive Committee for all their efforts in making CHIIR 2026 a success. We also thank UW for generously providing the campus venues and both industry sponsors—Microsoft and AMD—for their financial support. Special thanks go to the keynote speakers, Ben Shneiderman and Xin Luna Dong, for their inspiring talks, to the industry panelists for generously sharing their time and perspectives, and to all authors, reviewers, and attendees who contributed to a memorable conference.

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