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FROM THE CHAIR …

Greetings,

I am honored to have been elected the Chair of SIGIR. I would like to start by thanking everyone who stood for office this past spring; being willing to help lead SIGIR is a substantial contribution itself. I also want to thank the past Executive Committee who worked hard to keep the organization vibrant and relevant. I am excited to be chairing the new Committee and working with an excellent group of volunteers dedicated to the same goal.

Later in this issue, Andrew has provided notes of the Annual Meeting held at SIGIR in Geneva this past summer. Please look them over and touch base with the Executive Committee if you have any thoughts about issues that you have strong feelings about (thank you to those of you who have already done so). There were three main topics of discussion at the meeting that are worth highlighting again:

1. *Cost of conferences*. Conference costs are rising for many IR conferences: an ACM member attending the conference, one tutorial, and one workshop paid about US$1,050 at SIGIR 2009, US$855 at SIGIR 2010, and US$1,200 at CIKM 2010. Student fees were lower, at about US$570, US$600, and US$890, respectively. Is it okay for conferences to cost this much, particularly for students? What *is* a reasonable conference cost? The banquet is often a surprisingly large portion of the conference cost; should it be dropped or made optional?
2. *Location of the SIGIR conference*. SIGIR rotates between the Americas, Europe/Africa, and Asia/Australia, so two of out three years the conference is not in your home region. SIGIR is hoping to coordinate with some of the other IR conferences to reduce the chances that they all bunch up in one region in a given year. Should SIGIR also consider creating regional conferences for years when SIGIR is held elsewhere? How would or should doing that impact existing regional conferences such as ECIR or AIRS?
3. *SIGIR reviewing*. SIGIR has become such a selective conference that many very good submissions cannot be accepted. Part of the fallout of that shift is that traditional and new reviewing problems may seem much more unfair than in the past.   The program committee of SIGIR 2011 is making a number of changes to the process to address perceived issues. One of the bigger changes is a stated goal of raising the acceptance rate and identifying ways to accommodate more full-length papers at the conference. Our past chair, Elizabeth Liddy, advocated for the same goal in the previous issue of the Forum. How will it help and how will it hurt? Are there other things in the reviewing process that should be addressed?

I am hoping to initiate a poll or survey of the membership to get some feeling of the community's reaction to these (and other) issues and will report on that in the next issue of the Forum and at the 2011 Annual Meeting in Beijing.

These continue to be exciting times for Information Retrieval researchers and practitioners. It is wonderful to see so much life, energy, and interest at SIGIR and other conferences sponsored by or in cooperation with SIGIR – including CIKM,ECIR, WSDM, and the many other events listed at http://sigir.org/events. And, of course, I look forward to seeing you all this coming July at the ACM SIGIR conference in Beijing, running July 24-28, 2011. Stay tuned to http://sigir2011.org for details and deadlines.

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