FROM THE CHAIR

As I write this note, the papers, posters, demonstrations, tutorials, and workshops have all been chosen for SIGIR 2011 in Beijing, China, and registration is getting started. By the time the *Forum* is published, JCDL 2011 will be happening in Ottawa, Canada, submissions will be under review for CIKM 2011 in Glasgow, Scotland, and researchers will be preparing their papers for WSDM 2012 in Seattle, Washington. On top of those SIGIR-sponsored conferences, there are numerous workshops and conferences that SIGIR supports or advertises. The research activity within Information Retrieval has become so widespread and vibrant that you may be surprised at the number of events happening. Take a look at http://sigir.org/events where more than 30 events are listed for 2011 alone.

Looking forward, the SIGIR 2012 conference is scheduled to be in Portland, Oregon. In 2013 it will be in Dublin, Ireland. The 2014 venue will be announced at the business meeting in Beijing. SIGIR is currently preparing the bidding process for 2015, open to venues within the Americas. It will have been in Portland (2012), Boston (2009), Seattle (2006), Salvador (2005), Toronto (2003), and New Orleans (2001). If you're interested in hosting SIGIR in 2015 or want to lobby someone else to host it, start thinking about logistics. SIGIR welcomes presentations about potential venues at the SIGIR business meeting in Beijing. Watch http://sigir.org or the IR mailing list for further details.

Only vaguely related to conference venues, I have become increasingly concerned at the cost of some of the field's research conferences. I raised this point in the previous issue of the *Forum* and have been talking extensively with chairs of other ACM SIGs. High-cost conferences are common in a few SIGs, though nearly all of them have become concerned and started to search for ways to reduce costs. Most people are particularly concerned about the cost of student registrations that can easily rise to more than US$1,250 for a student trying to maximize the value of the meeting by attending a workshop, a tutorial, and the conference itself. The SIGIR organization provides student travel grants to defray some costs for students who are *presenting* at the SIGIR conference, but that does nothing to help students who aim to attend research conferences and workshops for exposure, education, and networking.

The SIGIR executive and conference chairs have been considering a range of ideas to reduce costs. Do we need expensive banquets at memorable locations? Does the wider availability of "4G" phone networks mean wireless internet access is no longer needed? Can coffee breaks be simpler? Is it acceptable to skip continental breakfasts and conference lunches? Is it still reasonable that all registrations must include expensive events such as banquets and receptions? Is it feasible and affordable to provide video feeds of conference presentations?

Do you object strongly to any of those ideas? Do you think that it's time for some of them to happen? Do you have other ideas – perhaps borrowed from other conferences – that might reduce costs? Moreover, can any of these ideas be implemented without harming the quality and energy of the conferences? A cheap conference is a great idea… unless no one wants to attend. Please contact me or any other member of the SIGIR executive with your thoughts.

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