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Advances in Information Retrieval

43rd European Conference on IR Research, ECIR 2021
Virtual Event, March 28 – April 1, 2021
Proceedings, Part I

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ISSN 0302-9743 ISSN 1611-3349 (electronic)
Lecture Notes in Computer Science
ISBN 978-3-030-72112-1 ISBN 978-3-030-72113-8 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-72113-8>

LNCS Sublibrary: SL3 – Information Systems and Applications, incl. Internet/Web, and HCI

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Preface

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to ECIR 2021, the 43rd edition of the annual BCS-IRSG European Conference on Information Retrieval.

ECIR 2021 was to be held in Lucca, Italy, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic emergence and the travel restrictions enforced worldwide, the conference was held entirely online. ECIR 2021 started on March 28 with a day of (full-day and half-day) tutorials, plus the Doctoral Consortium. The main conference took place in the three days that followed (March 28 – April 1). The technical program of the main conference included three exciting keynote talks, one per day: the first was presented by Francesca Rossi (IBM), the second by Ahmed Hassan Awadallah (Microsoft AI Research), as the winner of the BCS/Microsoft/BCS IRSG Karen Spärck Jones Award 2020, and the third by Ophir Frieder (Georgetown University). The technical program also consisted of research papers by contributors from Europe and the rest of the world. In total, 488 papers were submitted across all tracks, from 53 different countries. The program committees for the various tracks decided to accept 145 papers in total; the final scientific program thus included 50 full papers (a 24% acceptance rate), 39 short papers (25% acceptance rate), 15 demonstration papers (48% acceptance rate), and 11 reproducibility papers (52% acceptance rate). As in the previous edition, the technical program also included 12 “lab” (i.e., shared task) boosters from the CLEF 2021 conference, and the presentation of selected papers published in the 2020 issues of the Information Retrieval Journal. Symmetrically, the authors of a selection of ECIR 2021 papers will be invited to submit an extended version for publication in a special issue of the journal.

The last day of the conference (April 1) was devoted to 5 workshops and an exciting Industry Day. The workshops dealt with important topics such as algorithmic bias in search and recommendation (BIAS workshop), bibliometric-enhanced information retrieval (BIR workshop), conversational systems (MICROS workshop), online misinformation (ROMCIR workshop), and narrative extraction from texts (Text2Story workshop). This year the Industry Day was focused on the experience of Ph.D. interns in industrial contexts, and showcased success stories and positive experiences of former Ph.D. interns and former Ph.D. mentors. All submissions were peer reviewed by at least three international Program Committee members to ensure that only submissions of the highest quality were included in the final program. The acceptance decisions were further informed by discussions among the reviewers for each submitted paper, led by a senior Program Committee member or one of the track chairs. The accepted contributions covered the state of the art in IR: deep-learning-based information retrieval techniques, use of entities and knowledge graphs, recommender systems, retrieval methods, information extraction, question answering, topic and prediction models, multimedia retrieval, etc. In keeping with tradition, the ECIR 2021 program saw a high proportion of papers with students as first authors, and a balanced mix of papers from universities, public research institutes, and companies.

Putting everything together was hard teamwork. We want to thank everybody involved in making ECIR 2021 an exciting event. First and foremost, we want to thank our Program Chairs Djoerd Hiemstra and Marie-Francine (Sien) Moens for chairing the selection of the full papers. Many thanks also to the Short Papers Chairs Josiane Mothe and Martin Potthast, who managed not only the short paper submissions but also the CLEF papers submissions; to the Tutorials Chairs Richard McCreadie and Alejandro Moreo; to the Workshops Chairs Lorraine Goeuriot and Nicola Tonellotto; to the Reproducibility Track Chairs Maria Maistro and Gianmaria Silvello; to the Demo Chairs Nattiya Kanhabua and Franco Maria Nardini; to the Doctoral Consortium Chairs Claudio Lucchese and Guido Zuccon; to the Industry Day Chairs Roi Blanco and Fabrizio Silvestri; to the Sponsorship Chair Nicola Ferro; and to the Test-of-Time Award Chair Gabriella Pasi. Special thanks go also to our Publicity Chair Andrea Esuli and to our Proceedings Chair Ida Mele. All of them went to great lengths to ensure the high quality of this conference. Quite aside from the people who held chairing roles, lots of other people contributed to the scientific success of ECIR 2021: many thanks to the members of the Senior Program Committee, to the members of the Program Committees of the various tracks, to the mentors of the Doctoral Consortium Committee, and to all those who reviewed, in any capacity, full papers, short papers, reproducibility papers, tutorial and workshop proposals, and demo papers. Last but not least, we would like to thank all the members of the local organizing team at the National Research Council of Italy; in order to keep the registration fees as low as possible, no professional conference organization company was called in to help, which meant that this team took 100% of the organization upon them. We would thus like to thank our three Local Organization Chairs Cristina Muntean, Marinella Petrocchi and Beatrice Rapisarda. Thanks also to (in alphabetic order) Silvia Corbara, Andrea Esuli, Ida Mele, Alessio Molinari, Alejandro Moreo, Vinicius Monteiro de Lira, Franco Maria Nardini, Andrea Pedrotti, Nicola Tonellotto, Roberto Trani, and Salvatore Trani, for helping in various phases of the organization. They all invested tremendous efforts into making ECIR 2021 an exciting event by helping to create an enjoyable online and offline experience for authors and attendees. It is thanks to them that the organization of the conference was not just hard work, but also a pleasure. Finally, we would like to give heartfelt thanks to our sponsors and supporters: Bloomberg (platinum and best paper awards sponsor), Amazon, eBay, Google (gold sponsors), Textkernel (silver sponsor), Springer (test-of-time paper award sponsor), and Signal (industry impact award sponsor). We also gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the ACM Special Interest Group on Information Retrieval (ACM SIGIR) and of the ECIR 2020 organizers. We thank them all for their support and contributions to the conference, which allowed us to ask a low fee to paper authors only and to keep the registration free for all other attendees. Thanks also to the National Research Council of Italy, to the IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca, to the British Computer Society's Information Retrieval Specialist Group (BCS-IRSG), and to the AI4Media project, for supporting our organizational work.

We hope you enjoy these proceedings of ECIR 2021!

March 28 to April 1, 2021

Raffaele Perego
Fabrizio Sebastiani

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Tavares, Diogo
Tempelmeier, Nicolas
Tonello, Nicola
Trani, Roberto
Truchan, Hubert
Venturini, Rossano
Vötter, Michael
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Contents – Part I

Full Papers

Stay on Topic, Please: Aligning User Comments to the Content of a News Article	3
<i>Jumanah Alshehri, Marija Stanojevic, Eduard Dragut, and Zoran Obradovic</i>	
An E-Commerce Dataset in French for Multi-modal Product Categorization and Cross-Modal Retrieval	18
<i>Hesam Amoualian, Parantapa Goswami, Pradipto Das, Pablo Montalvo, Laurent Ach, and Nathaniel R. Dean</i>	
FedeRank: User Controlled Feedback with Federated Recommender Systems	32
<i>Vito Walter Anelli, Yashar Deldjoo, Tommaso Di Noia, Antonio Ferrara, and Fedelucio Narducci</i>	
Active Learning for Entity Alignment	48
<i>Max Berrendorf, Evgeniy Faerman, and Volker Tresp</i>	
Exploring Classic and Neural Lexical Translation Models for Information Retrieval: Interpretability, Effectiveness, and Efficiency Benefits.	63
<i>Leonid Boytsov and Zico Kolter</i>	
Coreference Resolution in Research Papers from Multiple Domains	79
<i>Arthur Brack, Daniel Uwe Müller, Anett Hoppe, and Ralph Ewerth</i>	
How Do Simple Transformations of Text and Image Features Impact Cosine-Based Semantic Match?	98
<i>Guillem Collell and Marie-Francine Moens</i>	
An Enhanced Evaluation Framework for Query Performance Prediction.	115
<i>Guglielmo Faggioli, Oleg Zendel, J. Shane Culpepper, Nicola Ferro, and Falk Scholer</i>	
Open-Domain Conversational Search Assistant with Transformers.	130
<i>Rafael Ferreira, Mariana Leite, David Semedo, and Joao Magalhaes</i>	
Complement Lexical Retrieval Model with Semantic Residual Embeddings	146
<i>Luyu Gao, Zhuyun Dai, Tongfei Chen, Zhen Fan, Benjamin Van Durme, and Jamie Callan</i>	

Classifying Scientific Publications with BERT - Is Self-attention a Feature Selection Method?	161
<i>Andres Garcia-Silva and Jose Manuel Gomez-Perez</i>	
Valuation of Startups: A Machine Learning Perspective	176
<i>Mariia Garkavenko, Hamid Mirisaei, Eric Gaussier, Agnès Guerraz, and Cédric Lagnier</i>	
Disparate Impact in Item Recommendation: A Case of Geographic Imbalance	190
<i>Elizabeth Gómez, Ludovico Boratto, and Maria Salamó</i>	
You Get What You Chat: Using Conversations to Personalize Search-Based Recommendations	207
<i>Ghazaleh H. Torbati, Andrew Yates, and Gerhard Weikum</i>	
Joint Autoregressive and Graph Models for Software and Developer Social Networks	224
<i>Rima Hazra, Hardik Aggarwal, Pawan Goyal, Animesh Mukherjee, and Soumen Chakrabarti</i>	
Mitigating the Position Bias of Transformer Models in Passage Re-ranking	238
<i>Sebastian Hofstätter, Aldo Lipani, Sophia Althammer, Markus Zlabinger, and Allan Hanbury</i>	
Exploding TV Sets and Disappointing Laptops: Suggesting Interesting Content in News Archives Based on Surprise Estimation	254
<i>Adam Jatowt, I-Chen Hung, Michael Färber, Ricardo Campos, and Masatoshi Yoshikawa</i>	
Label Definitions Augmented Interaction Model for Legal Charge Prediction	270
<i>Liangyi Kang, Jie Liu, Lingqiao Liu, and Dan Ye</i>	
A Study of Distributed Representations for Figures of Research Articles	284
<i>Saar Kuzi and ChengXiang Zhai</i>	
Answer Sentence Selection Using Local and Global Context in Transformer Models	298
<i>Ivano Lauriola and Alessandro Moschitti</i>	
An Argument Extraction Decoder in Open Information Extraction.	313
<i>Yucheng Li, Yan Yang, Qinmin Hu, Chengcai Chen, and Liang He</i>	
Using the Hammer only on Nails: A Hybrid Method for Representation- Based Evidence Retrieval for Question Answering	327
<i>Zhengzhong Liang, Yiyun Zhao, and Mihai Surdeanu</i>	

Evaluating Multilingual Text Encoders for Unsupervised Cross-Lingual Retrieval	342
<i>Robert Litschko, Ivan Vulić, Simone Paolo Ponzetto, and Goran Glavaš</i>	
Diagnosis Ranking with Knowledge Graph Convolutional Networks	359
<i>Bing Liu, Guido Zuccon, Wen Hua, and Weitong Chen</i>	
Studying Catastrophic Forgetting in Neural Ranking Models	375
<i>Jesús Lovón-Melgarejo, Laure Soulier, Karen Pinel-Sauvagnat, and Lynda Tamine</i>	
Extracting Search Tasks from Query Logs Using a Recurrent Deep Clustering Architecture	391
<i>Luis Lugo, Jose G. Moreno, and Gilles Hubert</i>	
Modeling User Search Tasks with a Language-Agnostic Unsupervised Approach	405
<i>Luis Lugo, Jose G. Moreno, and Gilles Hubert</i>	
DSMER: A Deep Semantic Matching Based Framework for Named Entity Recognition	419
<i>Yufeng Lyu and Jiang Zhong</i>	
Predicting User Engagement Status for Online Evaluation of Intelligent Assistants	433
<i>Rui Meng, Zhen Yue, and Alyssa Glass</i>	
Drug and Disease Interpretation Learning with Biomedical Entity Representation Transformer	451
<i>Zulfat Miftahutdinov, Artur Kadurin, Roman Kudrin, and Elena Tutubalina</i>	
CEQE: Contextualized Embeddings for Query Expansion	467
<i>Shahrazad Naseri, Jeffrey Dalton, Andrew Yates, and James Allan</i>	
Pattern-Aware and Noise-Resilient Embedding Models	483
<i>Mojtaba Nayyeri, Sahar Vahdati, Emanuel Sallinger, Mirza Mohtashim Alam, Hamed Shariat Yazdi, and Jens Lehmann</i>	
TLS-Covid19: A New Annotated Corpus for Timeline Summarization.	497
<i>Arian Pasquali, Ricardo Campos, Alexandre Ribeiro, Brenda Santana, Alípio Jorge, and Adam Jatowt</i>	
A Multi-task Approach to Neural Multi-label Hierarchical Patent Classification Using Transformers	513
<i>Subhash Chandra Pujari, Annemarie Friedrich, and Jannik Strötgen</i>	

Weakly-Supervised Open-Retrieval Conversational Question Answering	529
<i>Chen Qu, Liu Yang, Cen Chen, W. Bruce Croft, Kalpesh Krishna, and Mohit Iyer</i>	
A Deep Analysis of an Explainable Retrieval Model for Precision Medicine Literature Search.	544
<i>Jiaming Qu, Jaime Arguello, and Yue Wang</i>	
A Transparent Logical Framework for Aspect-Oriented Product Ranking Based on User Reviews.	558
<i>Firas Sabbah and Norbert Fuhr</i>	
On the Instability of Diminishing Return IR Measures.	572
<i>Tetsuya Sakai</i>	
Studying the Effectiveness of Conversational Search Refinement Through User Simulation	587
<i>Alexandre Salle, Shervin Malmasi, Oleg Rokhlenko, and Eugene Agichtein</i>	
Causality-Aware Neighborhood Methods for Recommender Systems.	603
<i>Masahiro Sato, Janmajay Singh, Sho Takemori, and Qian Zhang</i>	
User Engagement Prediction for Clarification in Search	619
<i>Ivan Sekulić, Mohammad Aliannejadi, and Fabio Crestani</i>	
Sentiment-Oriented Metric Learning for Text-to-Image Retrieval.	634
<i>Quoc-Tuan Truong and Hady W. Lauw</i>	
Metric Learning for Session-Based Recommendations	650
<i>Bartłomiej Twardowski, Paweł Zawistowski, and Szymon Zaborowski</i>	
Machine Translation Customization via Automatic Training Data Selection from the Web.	666
<i>Thuy Vu and Alessandro Moschitti</i>	
GCE: Global Contextual Information for Knowledge Graph Embedding	680
<i>Chen Wang and Jiang Zhong</i>	
Consistency and Coherency Enhanced Story Generation.	694
<i>Wei Wang, Piji Li, and Hai-Tao Zheng</i>	
A Hierarchical Approach for Joint Extraction of Entities and Relations	710
<i>Siqi Xiao, Qi Zhang, Jinquan Sun, Yu Wang, and Lei Zhang</i>	
A Zero Attentive Relevance Matching Network for Review Modeling in Recommendation System	724
<i>Hansi Zeng, Zhichao Xu, and Qingyao Ai</i>	

Utilizing Local Tangent Information for Word Re-embedding. 740
 Wenyu Zhao, Dong Zhou, Lin Li, and Jinjun Chen

Content Selection Network for Document-Grounded
Retrieval-Based Chatbots 755
 Yutao Zhu, Jian-Yun Nie, Kun Zhou, Pan Du, and Zhicheng Dou

Correction to: Machine Translation Customization via Automatic Training
Data Selection from the Web C1
 Thuy Vu and Alessandro Moschitti

Author Index 771

Contents – Part II

Reproducibility Track Papers

Cross-Domain Retrieval in the Legal and Patent Domains: A Reproducibility Study	3
<i>Sophia Althammer, Sebastian Hofstätter, and Allan Hanbury</i>	
A Critical Assessment of State-of-the-Art in Entity Alignment	18
<i>Max Berrendorf, Ludwig Wacker, and Evgeniy Faerman</i>	
System Effect Estimation by Sharding: A Comparison Between ANOVA Approaches to Detect Significant Differences	33
<i>Guglielmo Faggioli and Nicola Ferro</i>	
Reliability Prediction for Health-Related Content: A Replicability Study	47
<i>Marcos Fernández-Pichel, David E. Losada, Juan C. Pichel, and David Elswailer</i>	
An Empirical Comparison of Web Page Segmentation Algorithms	62
<i>Johannes Kiesel, Lars Meyer, Florian Kneist, Benno Stein, and Martin Potthast</i>	
Re-assessing the “Classify and Count” Quantification Method	75
<i>Alejandro Moreo and Fabrizio Sebastiani</i>	
Reproducibility, Replicability and Beyond: Assessing Production Readiness of Aspect Based Sentiment Analysis in the Wild	92
<i>Rajdeep Mukherjee, Shreyas Shetty, Subrata Chattopadhyay, Subhadeep Maji, Samik Datta, and Pawan Goyal</i>	
Robustness of Meta Matrix Factorization Against Strict Privacy Constraints	107
<i>Peter Muellner, Dominik Kowald, and Elisabeth Lex</i>	
Textual Characteristics of News Title and Body to Detect Fake News: A Reproducibility Study	120
<i>Anu Shrestha and Francesca Spezzano</i>	
Federated Online Learning to Rank with Evolution Strategies: A Reproducibility Study	134
<i>Shuyi Wang, Shengyao Zhuang, and Guido Zuccon</i>	

Comparing Score Aggregation Approaches for Document Retrieval with Pretrained Transformers	150
<i>Xinyu Zhang, Andrew Yates, and Jimmy Lin</i>	

Short Papers

Transformer-Based Approach Towards Music Emotion Recognition from Lyrics	167
<i>Yudhik Agrawal, Ramaguru Guru Ravi Shanker, and Vinoo Alluri</i>	
BiGBERT: Classifying Educational Web Resources for Kindergarten-12 th Grades	176
<i>Garrett Allen, Brody Downs, Aprajita Shukla, Casey Kennington, Jerry Alan Fails, Katherine Landau Wright, and Maria Soledad Pera</i>	
How Do Users Revise Zero-Hit Product Search Queries?	185
<i>Yuki Amemiya, Tomohiro Manabe, Sumio Fujita, and Tetsuya Sakai</i>	
Query Performance Prediction Through Retrieval Coherency	193
<i>Negar Arabzadeh, Amin Bigdeli, Morteza Zihayat, and Ebrahim Bagheri</i>	
From the Beatles to Billie Eilish: Connecting Provider Representativeness and Exposure in Session-Based Recommender Systems	201
<i>Alejandro Ariza, Francesco Fabbri, Ludovico Boratto, and Maria Salamó</i>	
Bayesian System Inference on Shallow Pools	209
<i>Rodger Benham, Alistair Moffat, and J. Shane Culpepper</i>	
Exploring Gender Biases in Information Retrieval Relevance Judgement Datasets	216
<i>Amin Bigdeli, Negar Arabzadeh, Morteza Zihayat, and Ebrahim Bagheri</i>	
Assessing the Benefits of Model Ensembles in Neural Re-ranking for Passage Retrieval	225
<i>Luís Borges, Bruno Martins, and Jamie Callan</i>	
Event Detection with Entity Markers	233
<i>Emanuela Boros, Jose G. Moreno, and Antoine Doucet</i>	
Simplified TinyBERT: Knowledge Distillation for Document Retrieval	241
<i>Xuanang Chen, Ben He, Kai Hui, Le Sun, and Yingfei Sun</i>	
Improving Cold-Start Recommendation via Multi-prior Meta-learning	249
<i>Zhengyu Chen, Donglin Wang, and Shiqian Yin</i>	
A White Box Analysis of ColBERT	257
<i>Thibault Formal, Benjamin Piwowarski, and Stéphane Clinchant</i>	

Diversity Aware Relevance Learning for Argument Search.	264
<i>Michael Fromm, Max Berrendorf, Sandra Obermeier, Thomas Seidl, and Evgeniy Faerman</i>	
SQE-GAN: A Supervised Query Expansion Scheme via GAN	272
<i>Tianle Fu, Qi Tian, and Hui Li</i>	
Rethink Training of BERT Rerankers in Multi-stage Retrieval Pipeline	280
<i>Luyu Gao, Zhu Yun Dai, and Jamie Callan</i>	
Should I Visit This Place? Inclusion and Exclusion Phrase Mining from Reviews	287
<i>Omkar Gurjar and Manish Gupta</i>	
Dynamic Cross-Sentential Context Representation for Event Detection.	295
<i>Dorian Kodelja, Romaric Besançon, and Olivier Ferret</i>	
Transfer Learning and Augmentation for Word Sense Disambiguation	303
<i>Harsh Kohli</i>	
Cross-modal Memory Fusion Network for Multimodal Sequential Learning with Missing Values	312
<i>Chen Lin, Joyce C. Ho, and Eugene Agichtein</i>	
Social Media Popularity Prediction of Planned Events Using Deep Learning	320
<i>Sreekanth Madisetty and Maunendra Sankar Desarkar</i>	
Right for the Right Reasons: Making Image Classification Intuitively Explainable	327
<i>Anna Nguyen, Adrian Oberföhl, and Michael Färber</i>	
Weakly Supervised Label Smoothing.	334
<i>Gustavo Penha and Claudia Hauff</i>	
Neural Feature Selection for Learning to Rank	342
<i>Alberto Purpura, Karolina Buchner, Gianmaria Silvello, and Gian Antonio Susto</i>	
Exploring the Incorporation of Opinion Polarity for Abstractive Multi-document Summarisation.	350
<i>Dominik Ramsauer and Udo Kruschwitz</i>	
Multilingual Evidence Retrieval and Fact Verification to Combat Global Disinformation: The Power of Polyglotism.	359
<i>Denisa A. Olteanu Roberts</i>	

How Do Active Reading Strategies Affect Learning Outcomes in Web Search?	368
<i>Nirmal Roy, Manuel Valle Torre, Ujwal Gadiraju, David Maxwell, and Claudia Hauff</i>	
Fine-Tuning BERT for COVID-19 Domain Ad-Hoc IR by Using Pseudo-qrels.	376
<i>Xabier Saralegi and Iñaki San Vicente</i>	
Windowing Models for Abstractive Summarization of Long Texts	384
<i>Leon Schüller, Florian Wilhelm, Nico Kreiling, and Goran Glavaš</i>	
Towards Dark Jargon Interpretation in Underground Forums	393
<i>Dominic Seyler, Wei Liu, XiaoFeng Wang, and ChengXiang Zhai</i>	
Multi-span Extractive Reading Comprehension Without Multi-span Supervision	401
<i>Takumi Takahashi, Motoki Taniguchi, Tomoki Taniguchi, and Tomoko Ohkuma</i>	
Textual Complexity as an Indicator of Document Relevance.	410
<i>Anastasia Taranova and Martin Braschler</i>	
A Comparison of Question Rewriting Methods for Conversational Passage Retrieval	418
<i>Svitlana Vakulenko, Nikos Voskarides, Zhucheng Tu, and Shayne Longpre</i>	
Predicting Question Responses to Improve the Performance of Retrieval-Based Chatbot.	425
<i>Disen Wang and Hui Fang</i>	
Multi-head Self-attention with Role-Guided Masks	432
<i>Dongsheng Wang, Casper Hansen, Lucas Chaves Lima, Christian Hansen, Maria Maistro, Jakob Grue Simonsen, and Christina Lioma</i>	
PGT: Pseudo Relevance Feedback Using a Graph-Based Transformer	440
<i>HongChien Yu, Zhuyun Dai, and Jamie Callan</i>	
Clustering-Augmented Multi-instance Learning for Neural Relation Extraction	448
<i>Qi Zhang, Siliang Tang, Jinquan Sun, Yu Wang, and Lei Zhang</i>	
Detecting and Forecasting Misinformation via Temporal and Geometric Propagation Patterns	455
<i>Qiang Zhang, Jonathan Cook, and Emine Yilmaz</i>	

Deep Query Likelihood Model for Information Retrieval	463
<i>Shengyao Zhuang, Hang Li, and Guido Zuccon</i>	
Tweet Length Matters: A Comparative Analysis on Topic Detection in Microblogs	471
<i>Furkan Şahinuç and Cagri Toraman</i>	
Demo Papers	
repro_eval: A Python Interface to Reproducibility Measures of System-Oriented IR Experiments.	481
<i>Timo Breuer, Nicola Ferro, Maria Maistro, and Philipp Schaer</i>	
Signal Briefings: Monitoring News Beyond the Brand	487
<i>James Brill, Dyaa Albakour, José Esquivel, Udo Kruschwitz, Miguel Martinez, and Jon Chamberlain</i>	
Time-Matters: Temporal Unfolding of Texts	492
<i>Ricardo Campos, Jorge Duque, Tiago Cândido, Jorge Mendes, Gaël Dias, Alípio Jorge, and Célia Nunes</i>	
An Extensible Toolkit of Query Refinement Methods and Gold Standard Dataset Generation	498
<i>Hossein Fani, Mahtab Tamannaee, Fattane Zarrinkalam, Jamil Samouh, Samad Paydar, and Ebrahim Bagheri</i>	
CoralExp: An Explainable System to Support Coral Taxonomy Research. . . .	504
<i>Jaiden Harding, Tom Bridge, and Gianluca Demartini</i>	
AWESSOME: An Unsupervised Sentiment Intensity Scoring Framework Using Neural Word Embeddings	509
<i>Amal Htaït and Leif Azzopardi</i>	
HSEarch: Semantic Search System for Workplace Accident Reports	514
<i>Emrah Inan, Paul Thompson, Tim Yates, and Sophia Ananiadou</i>	
Multi-view Conversational Search Interface Using a Dialogue-Based Agent	520
<i>Abhishek Kaushik, Nicolas Loir, and Gareth J. F. Jones</i>	
LogUI: Contemporary Logging Infrastructure for Web-Based Experiments . . .	525
<i>David Maxwell and Claudia Hauff</i>	
LEMONS: Listenable Explanations for Music recOmmeNder Systems	531
<i>Alessandro B. Melchiorre, Verena Haunschmid, Markus Schedl, and Gerhard Widmer</i>	

Aspect-Based Passage Retrieval with Contextualized Discourse Vectors	537
<i>Jens-Michalis Papaioannou, Manuel Mayrdorfer, Sebastian Arnold, Felix A. Gers, Klemens Budde, and Alexander Löser</i>	
News Monitor: A Framework for Querying News in Real Time	543
<i>Antonia Saravanou, Nikolaos Panagiotou, and Dimitrios Gunopulos</i>	
Chattack: A Gamified Crowd-Sourcing Platform for Tagging Deceptive & Abusive Behaviour	549
<i>Emmanouil Smyrnakis, Katerina Papantoniou, Panagiotis Papadakos, and Yannis Tzitzikas</i>	
PreFace++: Faceted Retrieval of Prerequisites and Technical Data	554
<i>Prajna Upadhyay and Maya Ramanath</i>	
Brief Description of COVID-SEE: The Scientific Evidence Explorer for COVID-19 Related Research	559
<i>Karin Verspoor, Simon Šuster, Yulia Otmakhova, Shevon Mendis, Zenan Zhai, Biaoan Fang, Jey Han Lau, Timothy Baldwin, Antonio Jimeno Yepes, and David Martinez</i>	
CLEF 2021 Lab Descriptions	
Overview of PAN 2021: Authorship Verification, Profiling Hate Speech Spreaders on Twitter, and Style Change Detection: Extended Abstract	567
<i>Janek Bevendorff, BERTa Chulvi, Gretel Liz De La Peña Sarracén, Mike Kestemont, Enrique Manjavacas, Ilia Markov, Maximilian Mayerl, Martin Potthast, Francisco Rangel, Paolo Rosso, Efstathios Stamatatos, Benno Stein, Matti Wiegmann, Magdalena Wolska, and Eva Zangerle</i>	
Overview of Touché 2021: Argument Retrieval: Extended Abstract	574
<i>Alexander Bondarenko, Lukas Gienapp, Maik Fröbe, Meriem Beloucif, Yamen Ajjour, Alexander Panchenko, Chris Biemann, Benno Stein, Henning Wachsmuth, Martin Potthast, and Matthias Hagen</i>	
Text Simplification for Scientific Information Access: CLEF 2021 SimpleText Workshop	583
<i>Liana Ermakova, Patrice Bellot, Pavel Braslavski, Jaap Kamps, Josiane Mothe, Diana Nurbakova, Irina Ovchinnikova, and Eric San-Juan</i>	
CLEF eHealth Evaluation Lab 2021	593
<i>Lorraine Goeuriot, Hanna Suominen, Liadh Kelly, Laura Alonso Alemany, Nicola Brew-Sam, Viviana Cotik, Darío Filippo, Gabriela Gonzalez Saez, Franco Luque, Philippe Mulhem, Gabiella Pasi, Roland Roller, Sandaru Seneviratne, Jorge Vivaldi, Marco Viviani, and Chenchen Xu</i>	

LifeCLEF 2021 Teaser: Biodiversity Identification and Prediction Challenges	601
<i>Alexis Joly, Hervé Goëau, Elijah Cole, Stefan Kahl, Lukáš Pícek, Hervé Glotin, Benjamin Deneu, Maximilien Servajean, Titouan Lorieul, Willem-Pier Vellinga, Pierre Bonnet, Andrew M. Durso, Rafael Ruiz de Castañeda, Ivan Eggel, and Henning Müller</i>	
ChEMU 2021: Reaction Reference Resolution and Anaphora Resolution in Chemical Patents.	608
<i>Jiayuan He, Biaoyan Fang, Hiyori Yoshikawa, Yuan Li, Saber A. Akhondi, Christian Druckenbrodt, Camilo Thorne, Zubair Afzal, Zenan Zhai, Lawrence Cavedon, Trevor Cohn, Timothy Baldwin, and Karin Verspoor</i>	
The 2021 ImageCLEF Benchmark: Multimedia Retrieval in Medical, Nature, Internet and Social Media Applications.	616
<i>Bogdan Ionescu, Henning Müller, Renaud Péteri, Asma Ben Abacha, Dina Demner-Fushman, Sadid A. Hasan, Mourad Sarrouti, Obioma Pelka, Christoph M. Friedrich, Alba G. Seco de Herrera, Janadhip Jacutprakart, Vassili Kovalev, Serge Kozlovski, Vitali Liauchuk, Yashin Dicente Cid, Jon Chamberlain, Adrian Clark, Antonio Campello, Hassan Moustahfid, Thomas Oliver, Abigail Schulz, Paul Brie, Raul Berari, Dimitri Fichou, Andrei Tauteanu, Mihai Dogariu, Liviu Daniel Stefan, Mihai Gabriel Constantin, Jérôme Deshayes, and Adrian Popescu</i>	
BioASQ at CLEF2021: Large-Scale Biomedical Semantic Indexing and Question Answering	624
<i>Anastasia Krithara, Anastasios Nentidis, Georgios Paliouras, Martin Krallinger, and Antonio Miranda</i>	
Advancing Math-Aware Search: The ARQMath-2 Lab at CLEF 2021	631
<i>Behrooz Mansouri, Anurag Agarwal, Douglas W. Oard, and Richard Zanibbi</i>	
The CLEF-2021 CheckThat! Lab on Detecting Check-Worthy Claims, Previously Fact-Checked Claims, and Fake News	639
<i>Preslav Nakov, Giovanni Da San Martino, Tamer Elsayed, Alberto Barrón-Cedeño, Rubén Míguez, Shaden Shaar, Firoj Alam, Fatima Haouari, Maram Hasanain, Nikolay Babulkov, Alex Nikolov, Gautam Kishore Shahi, Julia Maria Struß, and Thomas Mandl</i>	
eRisk 2021: Pathological Gambling, Self-harm and Depression Challenges. . .	650
<i>Javier Parapar, Patricia Martín-Rodilla, David E. Losada, and Fabio Crestani</i>	

Living Lab Evaluation for Life and Social Sciences Search Platforms - LiLAS at CLEF 2021	657
<i>Philipp Schaer, Johann Schaible, and Leyla Jael Castro</i>	

Doctoral Consortium Papers

Automated Multi-document Text Summarization from Heterogeneous Data Sources	667
<i>Mahsa Abazari Kia</i>	
Background Linking of News Articles	672
<i>Marwa Essam</i>	
Multidimensional Relevance in Task-Specific Retrieval	677
<i>Divi Galih Prasetyo Putri</i>	
Deep Semantic Entity Linking	682
<i>Pedro Ruas</i>	
Deep Learning System for Biomedical Relation Extraction Combining External Sources of Knowledge	688
<i>Diana Sousa</i>	

Workshops

Second International Workshop on Algorithmic Bias in Search and Recommendation (BIAS@ECIR2021)	697
<i>Ludovico Boratto, Stefano Faralli, Mirko Marras, and Giovanni Stilo</i>	
The 4 th International Workshop on Narrative Extraction from Texts: Text2Story 2021	701
<i>Ricardo Campos, Alipio Jorge, Adam Jatowt, Sumit Bhatia, and Mark Finlayson</i>	
Bibliometric-Enhanced Information Retrieval: 11th International BIR Workshop	705
<i>Ingo Frommholz, Philipp Mayr, Guillaume Cabanac, and Suzan Verberne</i>	
MICROS: Mixed-Initiative ConveRsatiOnal Systems Workshop	710
<i>Ida Mele, Cristina Ioana Muntean, Mohammad Aliannejadi, and Nikos Voskarides</i>	

ROMCIR 2021: Reducing Online Misinformation Through Credible Information Retrieval	714
<i>Fabio Saracco and Marco Viviani</i>	
Tutorials	
Adversarial Learning for Recommendation	721
<i>Vito Walter Anelli, Yashar Deldjoo, Tommaso Di Noia, and Felice Antonio Merra</i>	
Operationalizing Treatments Against Bias - Challenges and Solutions	723
<i>Ludovico Boratto and Mirko Marras</i>	
Tutorial on Biomedical Text Processing Using Semantics.	724
<i>Francisco M. Couto</i>	
Large-Scale Information Extraction Under Privacy-Aware Constraints	726
<i>Rajeev Gupta and Ranganath Kondapally</i>	
Reinforcement Learning for Information Retrieval	727
<i>Alexander Kuhnle, Miguel Aroca-Ouellette, Murat Sensoy, John Reid, and Dell Zhang</i>	
IR from Bag-of-words to BERT and Beyond Through Practical Experiments: An ECIR 2021 Tutorial with PyTerrier And OpenNIR	728
<i>Sean MacAvaney, Craig Macdonald, and Nicola Tonellotto</i>	
Search Among Sensitive Content	730
<i>Graham McDonald and Douglas W. Oard</i>	
Fake News, Disinformation, Propaganda, Media Bias, and Flattening the Curve of the COVID-19 Infodemic	731
<i>Preslav Nakov and Giovanni da San Martino</i>	
Author Index	733