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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

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