

## Minutes of the BCS IRSG Annual General Meeting

10 October 2020

By Zoom Video Conference

### Present

Stefan Ruger [SR] (Chair), John Tait [JT] (Minutes), Ingo Frommholz [IF] (Treasurer), Steve Zimmerman, Andrew MacFarlane, Haiming Liu, Martin White, Shettima Lewan, Paul M Smith, Jochen Leidner, Tony Russell-Rose, Avazeh Ghanbarian, Joao Magalhaes

The meeting opened at 19:00

#### 1. Welcome from the Chair

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 2. Minutes of Previous Annual General Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2019 were approved unanimously, and there were no matters arising.

#### 3. Committee Member Reports

##### 3.1. Chairs report

The chair reported that the group had been involved with organising the following events in 2019/20: the TALMIRI Workshop at the University of Bedfordshire, in September 2019; Search Solutions in London in November 2019; the European Conference on Information Retrieval (ECIR), scheduled for Lisbon in April 2020 and the International Conference on the Theory of Information Retrieval (ICTIR) scheduled for Stavanger in September 2020. Sadly the latter two events had to be held as online only events due to the COVID-19 situation. Particular thanks needs to go to the ECIR 2020 organisers who managed to run an extremely successful event despite the short notice to move from in person to online operation, and the novelty of the situation in which they found themselves.

The group also hoped to support a one day workshop on Fairness and Bias in IR in Glasgow in March 2020, but unfortunately this had to be postponed because of the COVID situation, and has still yet to take place.

Finally the group provided some financial support for student participation in CLEF 2020, which was also held entirely online due to COVID-19.

ECIR 2021, scheduled to take place in Lucca, Italy, will be an online only event.

The group continues to organise the award of the Microsoft BCS/BCS IRSG Karen Sparck Jones Award. The 2019 winner was Chirag Shah of the University of Washington. The 2020 winner will be announced in December. The chair thanked Microsoft Research, Cambridge for their continuing support for the award.

Unfortunately there were no Industry Awards at Search Solutions 2019, but it was hoped to revive this scheme in 2020.

Finally on prizes, the group is also one of the partners in the Tony Kent Strix Award which is organised by The UK eInformation Group (UKeiG), part of the CILIP, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. The 2019 winner was Prof. Ingemar J. Cox of University College London.

An innovation this year was the introduction of the ECIR Industry Impact Awards, sponsored by

Signal AI, awarded through a competition organised by the Group. The Best Industrial Impact Paper Award went to: “Generation of Synthetic Query Auto Completion Logs” by Unni Krishnan, Alistair Moffat, Justin Zobel and Bodo Billerbeck; and the Industrial Impact Paper Honorable Mention went to “Answering Event-Related Questions over Long-term News Article Archives.” Jiexin Wang, Adam Jatowt, Masatoshi Yoshikawa and Michael Färber.

The chair noted the continuing importance of the Group’s Newsletter “Informer”, which has an updated editorial aim: “to present IR developments and achievements in as broad a range as possible of search applications, and to balance academic and practitioner interests”. He thanked Martin White (the Editor), and also Steve Zimmerman and Tony Russell-Rose who support Martin behind the scenes.

Finally the chair noted this year proposals to run two future years of ECIR (2022 and 2023) had been called for. This was due to potential organisers complaining the gap between being awarded the conference and it taking place was too short. After lengthy deliberations the committee had decided to award ECIR 2022 to Stavanger (University of Stavanger) and ECIR 2023 to Dublin (Dublin City University).

### 3.2. Treasurers Report

A detailed report was presented by the Treasurer.

Briefly the group generated an income of £5,920 and had expenditure of £5,857 giving a surplus of £63, not including the Karen Sparck Jones award which is accounted for separately.

The situation for 2020/2021 is very uncertain, with significant cuts in the operational budget from BCS central funds, and a likely reduction in income from Search Solutions to online format. However, the BCS may provide additional funds for e.g. student participation in conferences, but this is subject to application and approval centrally.

### 4. Elections

A Call for Nominations for the Chair, the Secretary the Treasurer, and two members of the committee was issued in August. Udo Kruschwitz was nominated as Chair by Stefan Rueger and John Tait. No nominations were received for Secretary. Ingo Frommholz (nominated by Udo Kruschwitz, seconded by Stefan Rueger) was the nominated as Treasurer, and Haiming Liu (nominated Stefan Rueger, seconded John Tait) as Membership Secretary. No other nominations were received by the due date.

Therefore Udo Kruschwitz was elected unopposed as Chair, and Haiming Liu as Membership Secretary. Exceptionally Ingo Frommholz was elected for a third term as Treasurer, and the outgoing chair thanked him for agreeing to continue to serve in this important role.

This meant the committee (with terms in brackets) was now:

### **Officers**

Chair: Udo Kruschwitz (2022)  
Vice Chair: Vacant  
Secretary : Vacant  
Treasurer: Ingo Frommholz (2022)  
Membership Secretary: Haiming Liu (2022)

### **Members**

- Stefan Rueger (past chair, 2021)
- Frank Hopfgartner (2021)
- Andy MacFarlane (2021)
- Dyaa Albakour (2021)
- Steve Zimmerman (2021)
- João Magalhães (ECIR 2020)<sup>1</sup>
- Fabrizio Sebastiani (ECIR 2021)<sup>2</sup>

The chair thanked the outgoing members of the committee: Craig Macdonald; Yashar Moshfeghi; John Tait; Martin White (co-opted for partial year); Jochen Leidner (co-opted for partial year); Philipp Mayer-Schlegel (as ECIR 2019 rep); for their contributions.

### **5. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 19:44 (London).

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<sup>1</sup> Automatically co-opted.

<sup>2</sup> Automatically co-opted.