

Minutes of the BCS IRSG Committee Meeting

26 January 2021

Zoom Video Conference convened at 17:00 (London)

Present

Udo Kruschwitz [UK] (Chair), Steven Zimmerman [SZ] (Minutes), Ingo Frommholz [IF] (Treasurer), Andrew MacFarlane [AM], Haiming Liu [HL], João Magalhã [JM], Frank Hopfgartner [FH], Jochen Leidner [JL], Martin White [MW], Yashar Moshfeghi [YM], Krisztian Balog [KB]

1. Apologies

Fabrizio Sebastiani [FS], Stefan Ruger [SR]

1. Minutes of Previous IRSG Committee Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the 22 September 2020 were accepted as a true record.

2. Action arising (covered under appropriate agenda item where possible)

3.1 Actions for the previous meeting:

Action Number	Action	Action on
Sep 20.01	Make arrangements to move the IRSG committee list to the BCS service.	Moved forward (see pt 12)
Sep 20.02	Chair and secretary to draft feedback for each proposal and to resolve outstanding issues concerning the Stavanger bid.	Done
Sep 20.03	FS to convene a meeting with the task force volunteers (JM, JL, FS, IF, CM and YM) to identify options and preferences.	Item dropped
Sep 20.04	Provide DA and HL with material to update website to publicise SS2020.	Done
Sep 20.05	Draft call for online IR meetings.	Done

3. Other Matters Agreed by email

Co-opting of two members to the IRSG committee was proposed and communicated via email.

4. Chair's report

There was not much to report beyond what had been sent out via email since the last meeting.

One issue that appears to not have been sorted out yet was the invoicing of Signal AI for the ECIR new Research Impact Award. This is an agreement between Signal AI and BCS rather than the IRSG (an agreement similar to the KSJ Award). [UK] has been in touch with Kerry Wear who confirmed that this is now being looked at (both for ECIR 2021 and 2022).

Action Jan 26.01 [UK] to confirm with BCS that the Research Impact Award sponsored by Signal AI (and first awarded at ECIR 2021) is being organised by BCS as agreed.

A point was raised by former member Craig Macdonald about shorter and more frequent meetings for better strategy development of IRSG.

Action Jan 26.02 [UK] Udo to follow-up on meeting frequency.

Another issue that needed to be clarified was that of the agreement between IRSG and the Information Retrieval Journal (IRJ). The agreement needs to be made available to ECIR general chairs so that the agreement can be implemented (special session for selected IRJ papers and submission of selected ECIR papers for publication in IRJ).

Action Jan 26.03 [UK] Udo to discuss IRJ agreement status with [FS]

Action Jan 26.04 [SZ] To send IRJ agreement to [KB]

Action Jan 26.05 [MW/SZ] To set up repository with IRJ agreement and other documents that should be readily accessible to IRSG committee members

UK/MW raised a point during chair report about IRSG Website organisation, as it relates to availability of IRSG documents and administration of content

Action Jan 26.06 [MW] Organise a strategy group for the IRSG Website / Informer

5. Committee Membership and Roles

It was **agreed** that [JL] is to be co-opted as chair of the KSJ award

It was **agreed** that [MW] is to be co-opted as vice-chair of the IRSG committee

It was **agreed** that [YM] is to be co-opted as inclusion officer for the IRSG of the IRSG committee

It was **agreed** that [SZ] be transferred to the role of IRSG committee secretary from current committee member at large

6. ECIR 2020

[JM] provided a final summary email for ECIR 2020: ECIR2020 pending issues are all closed. Refunds were made to all authors. Contacts regarding Springer's open access had no follow-up. Funds were transferred to ECIR2021 (5000 euros). We will propose to organize ESSIR 2022 and support it with the remaining funds.

During the meeting, [JM] reported that discussions had taken place between him and immediate past chair [SR] and current chair [UK] to decide how to spend excess funds from ECIR. The option agreed on was to organise a major IR event in Portugal once the pandemic is over, and the obvious option was to sponsor ESSIR 2022 in Lisbon. The committee supported this idea.

Action Jan 26.07 [UK] To write a support letter for ESSIR, [JM] to determine what to include in this letter

7. ECIR 2021

[FS] updated the chair via email. All is going to plan. The assembled proceedings need to be delivered to Springer by Feb 14. Registrations are open, and are trickling in; registration fees are 150 EUR for authors (each paper, of any type, must correspond to one registration), free for all others; the idea of this fee model is to widen participation. Platforms have been booked (Whova, Zoom) or are in the process of being booked (Gathertown). The KSJ awardee has been contacted for a keynote; a second keynote speaker invited; a third keynote speaker in the process of being chosen. A panel on IR literature and open access is being set up by Djoerd Hiemstra. The budget is in order, sponsors acquired so far and predicted income from registration fees will cover predicted expenses. The IRJ EiCs have been contacted several days ago concerning IRJ papers to be presented at the conference, as yet unresponsive but will follow this up.

8. ECIR 2022 / 2023

○ 2022

From [KB]

PC Chairs set for full papers

Hoping for physical conference but planning for backup too. Hotel agreement allows for cancellation.

○ 2023

Nothing yet as a general co-chair of ECIR 2023 had not been co-opted to the committee yet.

9. Search Solutions 2020

Search Solutions 2020 took place online with a good turnout, an excellent range of speakers and it was considered a very good event overall. More details can be found in the latest issue of Informer.

Jan 26.08 [HL, IF] To sort out what to do with the recordings from the conference

Jan 26.09 [MW] To hand off slides/presentations to [IF] to get them posted on SS2020 site

10. Planning Search Solutions 2021

[MW] Had sent around the following proposal for Search Solutions 2021 prior to the IRSG committee meeting.

Delivering Search Solutions 2021

Martin White martin.white@intranetfocus.com

13 January 2021

Introduction

Search Solutions (with its associated tutorials programme) has developed into a high-profile search conference that is unique in balancing and sharing the experience of the research and practitioner communities. It has also become the major source of revenue for IRSG and our flagship UK event.

In 2020 IRSG was faced with running the conference and the tutorial as virtual events. Planning did not start until September. A team of IRSG Committee members, together with Tony Russell-Rose, worked on the development of the programme and the choice of delivery platform, and in the end a strong international programme of speakers was set up. To reach this point was not easy as there was no lead Committee member that had a responsibility for delivering Search Solutions, and as a result decision making was by consensus, a time-consuming process not entirely assisted (in my view) by the use of Slack as a collaboration platform.

Planning for 2021

It is going to be very important to maximise the revenue from Search Solutions 2021. Hopefully, it will be able to take place on-site in the UK (perhaps not necessarily London?) but that will mean that participation by speakers from outside the UK will involve travel costs. In a worse-case situation we may need to run the event virtually, or as a hybrid if we feel that Search Solutions would benefit from international contributions but international travel is not an option.

My proposal is that we start the process of planning the event starting with the IRSG Committee meeting on 26 January.

To support the planning I propose that IRSG sets up a Conference Sub-Committee with a remit to delivery both the Search Solutions event and the tutorial day. I would be willing to take on the Chair of the Conference Sub-Committee in my role as Vice-Chairman of the IRSG. The Sub-Committee would report to the IRSG Committee as a standing item on the agenda.

One of the reasons for starting the planning process in January is to that we can open up the Google Docs spreadsheet for speaker suggestions with immediate effect and encourage everyone on the IRSG Committee to join the Programme Panel in identifying potential speakers. Our aim should be to have the conference format and date agreed by May for inclusion in the Spring issue of Informer. This schedule is illustrative at this stage. Liaison with the Strix event would be important in planning the schedule.

We can then start to invite speakers and have some confirmed ready for promotion to start in early August with the Summer issue of Informer. Having the programme ready at this stage would also enable us to approach sponsors at a much earlier stage than we were able to last year.

Conference Sub-Committee and Programme Panel membership

I propose that the members of the Sub-Committee are

- Myself as Chair
- Ingo as Treasurer to set and monitor objectives for making a surplus
- Haiming (if she is willing) to manage the tutorial programme

I would also propose co-opting

- Charlie Hull, because of his conference and workshop experience and connections in the e-commerce and open-source sector
- Tony Russell-Rose, because of his past experience with Search Solutions and his connections in the research and professional search communities

Both Charlie and Tony have expressed a willingness to join the Sub-Committee if invited and both are regular attenders at the event so are aware of the ethos and scope of Search Solutions. We have also worked together on a range of projects over the years so we know our working style and aspirations for the success of Search Solutions are aligned.

I feel that this is quite large enough as a Sub-Committee but would value input from the IRSG Committee.

I would also propose that we set up a Programme Panel that has a focus on identifying speakers and tutorial presenters from the international community. As potential members, and just for illustration, I am thinking of Marianne Sweeny in the USA and Suzan Verberne from the Netherlands. As a reward we might give them complementary attendance at the event.

I would also propose including Fabrizio Sebastiani (ECIR 2021) and Krisztian Balog (ECIR 2022) on the Panel as they will be in a good position to identify speakers from presentations given in ECIR 2021 and preliminary work for ECIR2022.

As a next step, it was **agreed** upon that [MW] will setup a sub-committee to organise and run SS going forward along with a continuous programme committee

Jan 26.10 [MW] To setup Search Solutions sub-committee

It was agreed upon that search solutions 2021 be held on November 23rd/24th and the **action** to book BCS rooms for these dates was completed by [IF].

11. KSJ Award

[JL] reported that the judges selected Dr. Ahmed Hassan Awadallah, Principal Research Manager, Microsoft AI Research (Redmond, WA, USA), as the winner of the 2020 Karen Spärck Jones award. The winner has accepted the award. The trophy has been ordered, and [JL] has received and approved the proof.

[JL] also provided some background on the process. He had agreed with Microsoft a change of the protocol (if a Microsoft employee/connected candidate is nominated, no Microsoft employee/connected person shall be on the committee). It was possible to compose a diverse set of judges again. The nominations, however, lacked diversity, and that is something we need to address, e.g. to particularly approach minority communities (e.g. women in AI). We also discussed a concern some expressed namely that the award is sponsored and won by Microsoft employees "too often". Finally, several judges expressed a difficulty in ranking the nominees

because they did not know how to handle candidates with a "social science" (rather than NLP, IR) research focus.

There was also some discussion around the possible confusion between KSJ Award vs KSJ lecture.

Jan 26.11 [JL] Update Wiki page for the KSJ Award

Jan 26.12 [MW] Informer article to explain the difference between KSJ Award vs KSJ lecture

Jan 26.13 [JL] To ask for an update from ACL on association with the award

Point raised that in normal years, a cheque would have been handed to the award recipient during ECIR. This will not be possible this year

Jan 26.14 [JL] Will follow-up on the cheque matter and sort this out

12. Mailing Lists

Discussion around management of mailing lists. Carry over action from previous meeting. BCS has provided an option to manage committee list. Should we switch or stay with JISC?

[AF] would like to hand off the role of IR JISC List administrator

Action Jan 26.15: [HL/SZ] to come up with action plan regarding IRSG committee list to BCS and IR JISC list

13. IR Days

Discussion took place around support of various IR events. Given the near-term budget submission, it was **agreed** that we wish to provide support for the upcoming Fairness and Bias in Search event in Glasgow. [IF] is already in contact with the BCS requesting funding to support this event

Action Jan 26.16: [IF] to sort out funding to support the Fairness and Bias Workshop in Glasgow.

14. ICTIR Report

[FH] provided the following summary via email for ICTIR. Faegheh Hasibi is the new general chair of the conference and will support the PCs Yi Fang and Akiko Aizawa. The ICTIR papers will be published in the ACM DL one month after the SIGIR/ICTIR conference. To let conference attendees, access the accepted papers during the conference, we leverage arXiv.org (preprints).

15. Strix Award

Ian Ruthven has been announced as the winner of the 2020 Strix award and will give the 2021 lecture in November

Action Jan 26.17: [AM] will contact Strix committee to schedule presentation so as not to conflict with Search Solutions days. With an expressed desire to occur the day before/after Search Solutions 2021 [scheduled 23rd/24th].

16. Budget

Potential budget smaller than previous years again.

2021/22 Budget due in March

Action Jan 26.18: [IF] will compose a budget and send around via email to be agreed upon before the deadline submission.

17. Informer

MW sent out a flat plan for the year ahead regarding Informer plans.

MW will also address template issues in the previous mentioned Website strategy efforts he will lead

It was **agreed** that SZ [and future secretaries] will publish a short summary of IRSG committee meeting minutes for each issue

There was a brief discussion around contributions from more members

Action Jan 26.19: [UK] requested that [ALL] committee members consider contributing to Informer.

18. AOB

SZ raised a point about the document retention policy for minutes of meetings, AGM and other events.

Action Jan 26.20: [SZ] will contact BCS for recommendations/requirements around document retention.

19. Next Meeting

May 11th 2021 at 17:00 GMT

20. Actions Arising From Meeting

Action Number	Action	Action on
Jan 26.01	[UK] to query Signal AI about research impact award	UK
Jan 26.02	[UK] Udo to follow-up on meeting frequency	UK
Jan 26.03	[UK] to discuss IRJ agreement status w/ [FS]	UK, FS
Jan 26.04	[SZ] To send IRJ agreement to [KB]	SZ
Jan 26.05	[MW/SZ] To set up repository with IRJ agreement and other documents that should be readily accessible to IRSG committee members	MW, SZ
Jan 26.06	[MW] Organise a strategy group for the IRSG Website / Informer	MW
Jan 26.07	[UK] To write a support letter for ESSIR, [JM] to determine what to include in this letter	UK, JM
Jan 26.08	[HL, IF] To sort out what to do with the recordings from the conference	HL, IF
Jan 26.09	[MW] To hand off slides/presentations to [IF] to get them posted on SS2020 site	MW, IF

Jan 26.10	[MW] To setup Search Solutions sub-committee	MW
Jan 26.11	[JL] Update Wiki page for the KSJ Award	JL
Jan 26.12	[MW] Informer article to explain the difference between KSJ Award vs KSJ lecture	MW
Jan 26.13	[JL] To ask for an update from ACL on association with the award	JL
Jan 26.14	[JL] Will follow-up on the cheque matter and sort this out	JL
Jan 26.15	[HL/SZ] to come up with action plan regarding IRSG committee list to BCS and IR JISC list	HL/SZ
Jan 26.16	[IF] will contact BCS to see about available funding to support this event.	IF
Jan 26.17	[AM] will contact Strix committee to schedule presentation so as not to conflict with Search Solutions days. With an expressed desire to occur the day before/after Search Solutions 2021 [scheduled 23rd/24th].	AM
Jan 26.18	[IF] will compose a budget and send around via email to be agreed upon before the deadline submission.	IF
Jan 26.19	[UK] requested that [ALL] committee members create a contribution for informer.	ALL
Jan 26.20	[SZ] will contact BCS for recommendations/requirements around document retention.	SZ

Meeting Closed 19:02