Message from the technical program chairs and the program coordinator

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Message from the Technical Program Chairs and the Program Coordinator

It is our great pleasure to give you a quick insight on the program of the 27th ACM International Conference on Multimedia, which we hope you will find as exciting as we did when designing it. We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight specific aspects of the paper selection and program construction process that we feel are important to share with you.

We received this year a record-breaking number of 1,275 submissions for the main conference tracks, covering all areas and subareas of multimedia as well as, sometimes, neighbor research topics. The high number of submissions and the diversity of the contributions result in a program of exceptional scientific quality, with an overall acceptance rate of 27%, which we hope covers the wide diversity of the multimedia field, ranging from the system perspective to the user perspective, obviously not forgetting content, which constitutes the multimedia material that unites us all.

The field of multimedia is today more than ever in dire need for a clear definition of its scope at the frontier of computer systems, signal processing, machine learning, databases, computer vision, language and audio processing, virtual reality, human-computer interfaces, and much more. The Technical Program Chairs, in collaboration with the General Chairs and the Program Coordinator, proposed a definition in which a contribution to the multimedia field is "expected to involve more than a single modality, or [...] to be related to the challenge of how people interpret and use multimedia". This translates into a division of the field in four main themes, each further subdivided into three areas. In alphabetical order, the Engagement theme groups areas related to how users engage with multimedia material: What emotions or social signals are conveyed or induced? How to search and browse efficiently? How can we gain insight from large multimedia collections? The Experience theme focuses on the user experience when engaging with multimedia material: What interaction and quality of experience? How can we better understand art and cultural material? What applications can be designed and how? The System theme is devoted to the mechanisms and frameworks for building large-scale multimedia applications: How can we improve system components? How can we transport and deliver multimedia content efficiently? What mechanisms for data management and indexing? And finally, the Understanding theme is about machines analyzing and interpreting content with an emphasis on a multimodal perspective: How can we combine multiple modalities? How do vision and language interact? How to process different modalities for a new interpretation? ?

For each of the 12 areas, a number of Area Chairs were nominated with the goal of steering and monitoring the review process, with area chairs acting as meta-reviewers. Secondary Area Chairs were available to provide a second opinion on the reviews and meta reviews of each paper. Area Chairs proposed reviewers, controlled review quality, steered the discussion among reviewers, proposed recommendations and finally made decisions during the final physical Technical Program Committee (TPC) meeting held in Amherst, USA on 16-17 June 2019, co-located this year with the ACM Multimedia Systems conference. The location and timing of the conference was a deliberate attempt to break the recent tradition of holding the meeting at the ACM International Conference on Multimedia Retrieval as a positive signal to support other satellite communities to ACM Multimedia. Nominations of the ACs were done based on a mix of call for volunteers and of invitation to ensure representativeness and diversity. In total, 98 ACs served the TPC and we would like here to heartily thank them for their invaluable contribution in striving for a fair review process.

In total, we received 1,275 submissions from which 26 were withdrawn due to being out of scope after nomination by ACs and unanimous final decision by the TPC chairs. We adhered strictly to the definition of the multimedia field that we adopted in the call and in the reviewer guidelines.

We also did significant area re-allocation prior to review to enforce consistency within areas and ensure that similar papers could be easily compared. After manually removing duplicates and papers without a reasonable abstract or title, 936 papers were considered first for the review process. All of the 936 remaining submissions were assigned to at least 3 reviewers under the supervision of an area chair and were given the opportunity of rebuttal to enable review adjustment and discussion among reviewers. The paper review was conducted in a double-blind manner. 37 papers were brought to the attention of the author's advocate, of which 12 papers were judged by the author's advocate to require amendments to the reviews. On the few occasions that the author's advocate was invoked, he made sure that all submissions were fairly treated, possibly requesting additional or more elaborated reviews. Last but not least, all papers within an area were compared and discussed during the TPC meeting before final decisions were collegially made by the TPC.

The whole process ran for almost 10 months and mobilized a large part of our community, with a total of 758 reviewers, whose names are listed in the proceedings, in addition to the 98 area chairs. We take this opportunity to thank them all for their commitment to the community and for their constructive comments.

The program highlights the final selection of best paper candidates. A long list of initial candidates was proposed by the area chairs on a per area basis and cross-checked against nominations made by reviewers. The final selection was made jointly by the TPC chairs, program coordinator and GCs to highlight excellent examples of multimedia research according to our conference scoping guidelines.

As a conclusion, we would like to open the debate on the definition of the perimeter of our multimedia community. We obviously do not claim that the definition and area division that we adopted this year are perfect: Both can certainly be improved and adjusted before we reach a consensus among the community. We were encouraged, however, that those who did express confusion were satisfied after discussion and further elaboration of the scope of the conference. We are therefore very positive about the step this takes towards establishing clearer boundaries for the community in order to improve cohesion and also unique innovations. The fact that we had to re-allocate a fair number of submissions to different areas clearly shows that we haven't reached the consensus yet. Neither have we achieved a clear delimitation and definition of the areas that constitute our field of research. Reaching this consensus is probably a difficult path, with its load of frustrations. But we also firmly believe that it is more than ever necessary to walk down that path today and hope that the work achieved for ACM Multimedia 2019, together with an in-depth analysis of the submissions and final contributions, is a first step in the right direction.

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