

Preface from the NTCIR-16 General Chairs

Welcome to the Sixteenth NTCIR Conference (NTCIR-16 Conference).

NTCIR is a series of collective evaluation efforts designed to enhance research on diverse information access technologies, including, but not limited to, cross-language and multimedia information access, question-answering, text mining and summarisation, with an emphasis on East Asian languages such as Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, as well as English. Launched in the late 1997 NTCIR has attracted hundreds of research groups from well over 20 different countries and regions. Each NTCIR conference concludes the researchers' efforts over the course of 18 months or so, in the form of official results and future work items.

The first NTCIR Conference was held in the summer of 1999, consecutively with the IREX Workshop, another shared task evaluation on Information Retrieval and Extraction. Since then, a wide variety of tasks have been conducted through NTCIR, more than 220 researchers involved in the organizations, more than 1,100 teams participated in NTCIR task(s) and 5,098 research groups currently use NTCIR Test Collection(s) for their research (as of March 2022).

NTCIR-16 plays host to ten tasks as listed below. These are coordinated in parallel by some forty task organizers, who operate under the central coordination of the program co-chairs, Takehiro Yamamoto and Zhicheng Dou.

[Core Tasks]

- Data Search 2 (Data Search 2)
- Dialogue Evaluation 2 (DialEval-2)
- Investor's and Manager's Fine-grained Claim Detection (FinNum-3)
- Lifelog Access and Retrieval (Lifelog-4)
- QA Lab for Politics Information-3 (QA Lab-PoliInfo-3)
- We Want Web 4 with CENTER (WWW-4)

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[Pilot Tasks]

- Reading Comprehension for Information Retrieval (RCIR)
- Real document-based Medical Natural Language Processing (Real-MedNLP)
- Session Search (SS)
- Unbiased Learning to Ranking Evaluation Task (ULTRE)

NTCIR conference is a venue for task participants and organizers to discuss the official task results, open problems and future task designs. The NTCIR-16 Conference is operated by the NTCIR-16 Organizing Committee and the National Institute of Informatics (NII). We are very grateful to National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT), Inoue Foundation for Science, and Kayamoti Foundation Informational Science Advancement, for their generous support.

We also thank the following organizations and people for their understanding of the project and for providing substantial support in various forms: For Real-MedNLP, MedTxt-RR Track and annotation were supported by Y's READING inc. and JST AIP-PRISM, Japan. MedTxt-CR Track was supported by KEEPHA project of JST, AIP Trilateral AI Research, Grant Number JPMJCR20G9, Japan.

We are grateful to the Program Committee of NTCIR-16, and to the NTCIR-16 task organizers and their affiliated institutions. In addition, several of the NTCIR-16 task organizers served as the editors of this volume and/or provided feedback on the papers submitted by the participants. Many of the task participants volunteered to help with the dataset creation, and we appreciate their great contribution to this community-based activity. We would like to express our gratitude to Tetsuya Sakai, who prepared a dense tutorial on evaluation of information access technologies, and keynote speakers of the NTCIR-16 conference: Chengxiang Zhai, Ellen Voorhees, and Falk Scholer. Moreover, we are grateful for Rhonda Clark and all the team members in Virtual Chair for their substantial support to run a virtual conference. Last but certainly not least, we would like to thank the people who worked behind the scenes—especially Madoka Ishioroshi, Tomoko Ohsuga, Kiyoko Shinohara, and Yuka Kawada for their continued effort throughout the course of the NTCIR-16.

NTCIR-16 continues the structure introduced at NTCIR-10 with multiple general co-chairs and program co-chairs, and with tasks coordinated by task organizers with an optional seed funding from NTCIR.

The Center for Dataset Sharing and Collaborative Research (DSC) was launched in NII in April 2015, to encourage the close collaboration with various data providers and enhance the research based on the dataset including NTCIR. This center provides a solid foundation for NTCIR activities.

We are especially grateful that participants and organizers could work through under this difficult environment. We sincerely hope that all participants will enjoy presenting and discussing their research results at the NTCIR-16 conference, socializing on the virtual conference platform and that it serves as an opportunity for new research collaborations.

We would like to thank all the participants, organizers and contributors, and would like to think and envision a fruitful enhanced next 10 years and future together with all of you in the NTCIR/EVIA community.

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