

# Message from the ISMAR 2020 Science and Technology Program Chairs and *TVCG* Guest Editors

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ISMAR 2020 Science and Technology Program Chairs

In this special issue of *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics (TVCG)*, we are pleased to present the *TVCG* papers from the 19th IEEE International Symposium on Mixed and Augmented Reality (ISMAR 2020), which had been originally planned to hold in Recife/Porto de Galinhas, Brazil. In order to preserve the safety and well-being of all participants under the global pandemic of COVID-19, ISMAR 2020 will be held as a virtual conference between November 9 and 13, 2020. ISMAR continues the over twenty year long tradition of IWAR, ISMR, and ISAR, and is undoubtedly the premier conference for Mixed and Augmented Reality in the world.

There are 18 papers in this special issue, which were selected from 302 received submissions, for an acceptance rate of 5.96%.

As program chairs we aimed for the highest possible reviewing standards and conducted a decision process that aimed for final decisions in a fair, rigorous, and transparent way.

All papers were reviewed by the Science and Technology Program Committee (PC), which comprised 40 internationally renowned experts from the Asia-Pacific region, the Americas, and Europe. The program chairs also voted on paper decisions, so the PC had 44 voting members in total.

There was a single paper submission category, papers from 4 to 10 pages in length, plus as many pages of references as needed. All submissions underwent a review process that encompassed two reviewing stages, overseen by a coordinator from the PC. After PC members had declared their conflicts and provided their preferences, the program chairs assigned coordinators. For every PC member, as well as the program chairs, for every paper where they had a conflict of interest, both the reviewer assignments and reviewer names were hidden. Same as the last year, we used a double-blind process to allow for a fairer reviewing process. Thus, the external reviewers were not aware of the identity of the authors.

Before the reviewing began, we followed a desk rejection and a quick rejection process consistent with the policies of *TVCG*. This stage resulted in 27 early rejects.

During the first review cycle, each submission received at least four reviews, three external reviews and one review from a PC member. Each submission was assigned with a primary and a secondary reviewer from the pool of PC members. The role of the primary was to coordinate the handling of a submission and to assign two external reviewers from experts within the area of research of each submission. The role of the secondary required to assign one external reviewer. After the reviewing period, there was an eight-day window during which the primary was checking the review quality and asking for improvements of insufficient reviews or asking for additional reviews if required. After the review quality window, reviews went out to the authors, based on which the authors could provide rebuttal in five days. After receiving the rebuttal, reviewers of each submission, under the guidance of the coordinator, anonymously discussed the submission and attempted to reach a consensus decision.

The entire PC then convened for a two-day meeting, to discuss the remaining submissions, and for each one to come to a final decision. Due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, this meeting was held online. The entire PC met simultaneously over video links. Before this meeting, submissions were grouped into three categories: bulk accept, bulk reject and to be discussed. The category bulk accept included papers that had an overall rating above a defined threshold, no score below a defined threshold and none of the reviewers recommending a rejection. PC members were asked whether they agreed with the decision of bulk accept for these submissions. The bulk reject category consisted of submissions below a defined average score and no single score higher than a defined threshold. The category of papers that were discussed in the PC meeting consisted of the 52 remaining submissions for discussion. PC members were encouraged to raise papers for discussion at any time during the meeting.

During the meeting, after conflicted participants had left the virtual meeting room, the coordinator summarized the paper and the online discussion for the rest of the committee, and led the joint discussion. The final decision for each paper was determined by a majority vote of all remaining members of the PC. All conditionally accepted submissions were subject to a final reviewing cycle. In addition to the decision, during the meeting the PC determined the modifications that were deemed necessary for conditionally accepted papers to be accepted for publication. The set of papers recommended for conditional acceptance into *TVCG* was further approved by the *TVCG* board. For all conditionally accepted papers, the program chairs assigned a shepherd from the PC, either the paper's original coordinator or the secondary reviewer from the PC, to oversee the refinement process. The shepherd then checked whether the changes made were sufficient to warrant final acceptance. Based on this input, the program chairs made the final acceptance decisions.

Many individuals have contributed a great deal of time and energy towards making the technical program of ISMAR 2020 a success. We would like to thank the authors of all submitted papers and the members of the program committee. In total we had 444 external reviewers doing an average of 1.9 reviews and we would like to thank all of them for their many hours of hard work. We also wish to acknowledge James Stewart for his outstanding and timely support with the PCS review system. The program chairs would also like to thank the Publications Chairs Frank Guan and Xinxing Xia for collecting materials and assisting in the production of this special issue. We warmly thank the members of the ISMAR Steering Committee for their continuing active support. We also thank Klaus Mueller and Doug Bowman as *TVCG* liaisons for ISMAR, for support and advice with the *TVCG* papers, the General Chairs, Veronica Teichrieb, Henry Duh, João Paulo Lima and Francisco Simões for their support throughout the entire process and all of our ISMAR community members.