

Field Report

From February 2020 until August 2020, I had the opportunity to work with highly acknowledged researchers from the Center of Intelligent Information Retrieval (CIIR), which is a research institution at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The research facility has been publishing various acclaimed work in the field of Natural Language Processing (NLP). Although I already had an extensive interest in the contemporary developments in NLP, working at the CIIR made it possible to expand my knowledge in this field.

In the beginning, I was able to be part of the CIIR community. I was able to have meetings with a various number of members of the research facility, to get different opinions on my work and how I should approach it. I was also able to attend seminars by prestigious speakers from well-known universities or companies like Bloomberg. This short period of time already improved my knowledge in this field.

However, since March 2020, my stay in Amherst was overshadowed by the events caused by the Covid-19 situation. After spring break, the campus was shut down for all students and all employees, which did not have an urgent reason to be on the campus. Therefore, I was forced to work from remote from my flat in Amherst (Hadley). Due to that, most of my roommates left the shared flat and from that moment on, I was living on my own. From that point on, all my meetings, as well as the seminars, have been held remotely via ZOOM. Although the meetings have been less personal, it was still possible to discuss the main progress of my work and how I might fortify it further. However, there seemed to be fewer seminars and although the hosts of the seminars which I participated were highly qualified, the seminars to which I was personally able to attend left a stronger impression on me.

After the campus closed, I had to do my work, not from a workstation at the CIIR, rather than from my Laptop remote from home. Although this workflow was not as convenient as working in the office, I was still able to make solid progress on my work. It was also possible to stronger combine work with activities like sport after lunch, which usually not possible in an ordinary work environment. For short periods of time, this might have even increased my productivity during this time. However, considering a longer period, I am convinced that I would be much more productive if I had the option of the work in the office.

After the Covid-19 situation in Europa was once again getting significantly worse in July 2020, I decided to return to Austria and finish my work there. Working in Austria made my work a bit more inconvenient since I now had a big-time shift between the meetings, which made it more complicated to make appropriate meetings for both sides. Also, working remotely from Austria lead to a stronger latency in the internet connection, which made the work more troublesome.

I hope that the next researches that receive the Marshall Plan Scholarship are able to work within the usual circumstances. Despite that, I think working on my work in the U.S.A with the Marshall Plan Scholarship was a beneficial experience for my technical understanding of this field of research and I think I would be able to create a work on a similar technical level without it.

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UMassAmherst

College of Information
& Computer Sciences

Center for Intelligent Information Retrieval

140 Governors Drive
Amherst, MA 01003-9264

Phone: 413-545-0463
Fax: 413-545-1789
URL: ciir.cs.umass.edu

September 17, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to confirm that Florian Gwechenberger, as a Visiting Scholar within the Center for Intelligent Information Retrieval in the College of Information and Computer Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, was in contact with campus personnel on the dates listed on the attached timeline document.

If you need more information on Mr. Gwechenberger's visit, please contact me at jean@cs.umass.edu or via phone at 1-413-545-6310.

Sincerely,

Jean C. Joyce

Jean C. Joyce
Administrative Director,
Center for Intelligent Information Retrieval
College of Information
University of Massachusetts Amherst