

## ACL-IJCNLP 2021 Theme Track: NLP for Social Good (NLP4SG)

Following the success of the ACL 2020 Theme track, we are happy to announce that ACL-IJCNLP 2021 will have a new theme, with the goal of stimulating discussion about the role of NLP in the society.

The application of Artificial Intelligence to provide positive social impact has been an important topic in recent years. However, to date, this has not been a topic highlighted at the ACL main conference. For ACL-IJCNLP 2021, we seek to reverse this by putting a spotlight on papers which discuss and reflect on the topic of *NLP for Social Good* as well as *how NLP could potentially cause or be used for social harm*. We invite researchers to submit position, opinion, modeling, and resource papers on the following topics:

- Defining “NLP for Social Good” and in which ways NLP can improve people's lives in various dimensions
- Known issues, unaddressed harms, and potential damages that NLP can cause on society (e.g., political polarization, privacy issues)
- Discussions of how NLP research can make both positive and negative impacts and novel approaches to foster the former while mitigating the latter
- Quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the social impact of NLP research
- Ways in which NLP practitioners can partner with practitioners from other fields to develop socially impactful research and applications
- Applications of NLP for addressing socially relevant problems such as health, education, and other areas covered by (and not limited to) the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Please note that the paper should provide evidence of the methodology applied to a real-world setting. At the least, one should simulate the real-world setting that the system is meant to improve.

- Reflecting on the NLP community's current progress for solving real-world, socially impactful problems and how to make meaningful changes toward that goal over the foreseeable future
- Discussions of how heavily aligned NLP research *should be* with real-world topics regarding social good.

We anticipate having a special session for this theme at the conference and a best Thematic Paper Award in addition to the traditional Best Paper Awards.

### **What are the types of contributions?**

We welcome contributions in various forms and scopes. It can be an opinion or discussion piece that reflects upon the progress made either in the broader area or in a specific topic area. It can be a conceptual or empirical study that provides an in-depth look at state-of-the-art approaches and enables a better understanding of the pros and cons of these approaches. It can also be a visionary proposal that calls for new directions, methodologies, or evaluations to push the boundaries. These are just a few ideas! Any theme-related contribution you think is relevant and good for the community to know, we would like to see it!

### **What is the difference between a theme paper and a regular paper?**

A regular paper also has discussions on the limitations of state-of-the-art, but it often addresses a specific problem with detailed solutions and evaluations. A theme paper provides a better understanding of a class of related problems or approaches and provides a holistic analysis and view which may not be apparent by looking at each problem/solution individually. You do not need to present new solutions and results in a theme paper.

For example, while “Ethics and NLP” and “NLP Applications” are areas for regular research papers, the theme track instead defines another kind of paper which could be an opinion or a position paper that could potentially address one or more areas.

On the submission form, authors will choose the Theme as the primary or secondary track for their paper, and then Program Chairs and Senior Area Chairs will determine the most appropriate track for reviewing the submission.

### **What is the review process?**

We will have a theme track managed by two senior ACs and several ACs. The authors are expected to self-claim the “special theme” track during submission. As a paper may address a specific topic area, the authors can also choose to specify a related topic area so that reviewers from that area can be drawn to review the paper. A separate review form and instructions will be given to the reviewers. The decision will be made based on the value added to help the community understand where we are and where we should be heading to.

### **What are the presentation forms?**

Accepted papers will be presented either orally or as a poster. We anticipate having a special oral session dedicated to the theme.