

**Towards A Diverse, Inclusive, Accessible and Equitable
AAAI International Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM):
ICWSM's 2024 DEI Report**

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Abstract

The AAAI International Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM) is the premier interdisciplinary conference for computational and social scientific research about social media and the interactive Internet. Each year, the conference brings together hundreds of scholars from across the globe to share papers, posters, demonstrations, workshops, and tutorials that advance state-of-the-art theories and methods for understanding human behavior online. Building on the inaugural diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) report published in 2021, this document reflects an effort to revive this critical form of reporting in order to 1) retain and publicly share a record of the efforts made and 2) to show areas of strengths and weaknesses in these efforts for future iterations of the conference. Unique efforts in 2024 served two sets of goals: fostering diversity and inclusivity, and enhancing research impact and accountability. Efforts aimed at improving diversity and inclusivity included the development of a Global Initiative that brought six scholars from the Global South to the conference in person to develop papers with senior ICWSM community members, the creation of a student volunteering and mentorship program, additional funds to increase diversity at the conference through student travel scholarships, and a virtual JoinICWSM event that provided information about the conference and the community to scholars in the Global South. Efforts to enhance research impact and accountability included improving ICWSM's standings in a conference rankings benchmark, a Special Issue of the Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media that encouraged participation from social scientists, the improvement of documenting and reporting research ethics through the introduction of a research ethics checklist, and an improvement in reviewing practices through a post-submission checklist. Here, we reflect on these additions, as well as more broadly on the DEI-related vision of the conference created in 2021.

Note: As this document is intended as a (mostly) stand-alone reporting tool, rather than a publication, it contains some language that is directly shared with previous iterations of the report, see Nurse et al.¹ (2021).

¹ Nurse, J.R.C., Vargas, F., Hassan, N., Wang, D., Andriotis, P., Ghenai, A., ... & Welles, B. F. (2021). Towards A Diverse, Inclusive, Accessible and Equitable AAAI International Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM).

A debt of gratitude is therefore required for the authors of this previous work who were not involved in the 2024 report: Francielle Vargas, Naeemul Hassan, Dakuo Wang, Panagiotis Andriotis, and Amira Ghenai.

1. Introduction

The AAAI International Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM) is the premier interdisciplinary conference for computational and social scientific research about social media and the interactive Internet. Each year, the conference brings together hundreds of scholars from across the globe to share papers, posters, demonstrations, workshops, and tutorials that advance state-of-the-art theories and methods for understanding human behavior online. At the same time, we invite scholars to reconnect with old friends and collaborators and build new connections with one another. ICWSM, like all academic conferences, is a fundamentally human experience, rich with opportunity and also vulnerable to the oversights and biases that prevent some from feeling fully included in our community.

This report is part of a broader effort to identify our oversights and biases and make them explicit so that, together as an intellectual community, we can work to eliminate them. ICWSM has always been committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, but like many academic conferences it has been limited in its capacity to document and reflect on those efforts and their potential impacts. In 2021, led by General Chair Jason R.C. Nurse, members of the ICWSM community created the first DEI reporting document to try to address this issue. Also in 2021, a number of DEI efforts were added to the conference, including convening a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council, transparently documenting DEI efforts, and tracking improvements year over year. In 2024, these efforts continued, with the addition as well of several new initiatives reviewed below in Sections 3 and 4. As in 2021, this report, intended as an annual reporting mechanism, serves to further the community's DEI goals.

1.1 The Council

ICWSM DEI Council consists of the DEI Council Chair, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Chair(s), Global Equity Chair(s), Accessibility Chair(s), and the conference General Chair, with support from the Organizing and Steering Committees. The DEI Council is assembled annually by the General Chair and DEI Council Chair through an open call for nominations, with an eye on assembling a diverse committee. Committee members serve one-year terms and are eligible for reappointment in subsequent years. The General Chair is appointed annually by the ICWSM Steering and the DEI Council chair is appointed every two years by the ICWSM Steering Committee. While the General Chair becomes a member of the Steering Committee after their term, the DEI Chair sits on the Steering Committee for the duration of their position.

2. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at ICWSM

2.1 Introduction

Diversity is vital to any organization's success. We apply the framework offered by D'Ignazio and Klein² (2020, pp. 18) in thinking about diversity as a continuum invoking *content*, *form*, and *process*. A conference that is diverse in content would be more inclusive in terms of subject matter, e.g., by reporting on data from diverse contexts. Diversity in form would offer diverse perspectives in how computational social science is communicated, and which issues are raised to the forefront. Finally, diversity in processes would involve the building of

² D'Ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2020). Data feminism. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

“participatory, inclusive processes of knowledge production”³ (D’Ignazio & Klein, 2020 pp. 18), e.g., by involving people from diverse backgrounds in the organization and steering committees of the conference. At ICWSM, we approach diversity by focusing on creating an environment that is inclusive and welcoming of individuals with a wide range of backgrounds, characteristics, and experiences. This includes demographic diversity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation, as well as geographic diversity, diversity in ability, disciplinary diversity, and diversity in organizational roles. This information has not been regularly collected about ICWSM participants, authors, or organizing committee members. In the first version of ICWSM’s DEI report,⁴ the authors reviewed the past 14 years of paper author data to establish a rough baseline of diversity at ICWSM. We refer the reader to the previous report for these details, here we present only statistics for ICWSM 2024.

2.2 ICWSM Authors

We manually identified the gender, sector, discipline, and geographic region of the authors of papers written in 2024 using the same procedures from the 2021 report. More specifically, as in 2021, assessments were based on authors’ public profiles (social media, websites, etc.) as well as meta-data from the papers. In particular, we made use of author names and the `nomquamgender` python package⁵ to aid in identifying gender presentation of authors. These identifications are imperfect and incomplete (notably, we did not attempt to identify authors’ race). In 2021, it was recommended that the conference move to an approach where authors and attendees provide this information on a voluntary basis. Organizers were not able to complete this in 2024, and thus maintain the recommendation for 2025 and beyond.

In the 2021 report, it was noted that men, women, and non-binary authors represented nearly 75%, 25%, and less than 1% of all ICWSM authors, respectively. In 2024, men represented 71% of all authors, with women and non-binary individuals representing the remaining 28% and (less than) 1%, respectively.

Authors from the Global South also remain underrepresented at ICWSM. The 2021 report revealed that through 14 years of the conference, “approximately 60% of ICWSM papers were published by authors from North America, followed by Europe (~25%), Asia (~12%), South America (~2%) and Oceania (~1%),” and that “[n]o papers by authors based in Africa have been published at ICWSM.” In 2024, 57% of authors had primary affiliations with institutions based in North America, followed by Europe (24%), Asia (14%), Oceania (2%), the Middle East (2%), and South America (0.5%). Critically, the 2024 team took steps to address these disparities that we hope will prove fruitful in the coming years of the conference, see Section 3 for details.

Finally, with respect to discipline, over 75% of authors in the first 14 years of the conference were computer scientists, “followed by disciplines in the Social Sciences (~10%), and rarely disciplines in the Arts, Humanities, Cognitive Science, and/or Engineering.” In 2024, we were unable to identify primary disciplines of authors, but again took steps to remedy known disparities; see Section 4.3 for details.

³ *ibid*, pp. 18

⁴ Reference in Footnote 1

⁵ Van Buskirk, I., Clauset, A., & Larremore, D. B. (2023, June). An open-source cultural consensus approach to name-based gender classification. In *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* (Vol. 17, pp. 866-877).

2.3 ICWSM Registrants

Table 1. Participant Details for ICWSM Events since 2018.

Year	Location	N. Participants (Workshop Only)	N. Countries Represented
2018	Stanford, CA, USA	330 (72)	25
2019	Munich, Germany	251 (28)	32
2020	Virtual	341 (110)	25
2021	Virtual	481 (136)	36
2022	Atlanta, GA, USA and Virtual	392 (78)	33
2023	Limassol, Cyprus	202 (29)	26
2024	Buffalo, NY, USA	335 (46)	31

We also analyzed basic geographic data from participants. Table 1 presents this information for years from 2018-2024. Participants in 2024 drew from countries including Ghana, South Africa, Singapore, and Grenada.

2.4 ICWSM Organizing Committee

Using the same methodology as for authors, we analyzed the demographic composition of the 2024 ICWSM Organizing Committee. With respect to the Program Chairs and General Chair, 60% were female. The General Chair and two Program Chairs work in the United States, one in Europe, and one in Southeast Asia. Overall, the 2024 ICWSM Organizing Committee contained 11 women (39%) and only three (8%) individuals from institutions outside of the U.S. and Europe. Future iterations of the conference should aim to expand the global boundaries of the organizing committee, while keeping in mind that it is necessary to weigh both the costs and benefits associated with each unique position on the committee for individuals at different points in their academic careers. We address this point in Section 5 below.

3. Global Access and Accessibility at ICWSM

3.1 Accessibility

Accessibility seeks to ensure that all individuals, regardless of physical, mental, or technical limitations, can engage with ICWSM systems, devices, and events. Accessibility has always been a priority of ICWSM and particularly, at our annual conferences. The first 13 ICWSM conferences through 2019 were held in facilities that provided physical accessibility accommodations for those with limited mobility. Additional accommodation to address audio, visual, or motor accessibility needs were also made on an ad-hoc basis as requested. These requests and accommodations have not been well tracked or documented. Moving forward,

tracking requests and the respective actions taken would allow for the organizing/steering committees to better anticipate the needs of the community and plan such that future requests are proactively addressed. Below, we provide a list of specific steps that we implemented to increase the accessibility of the conference.

To improve upon prior years' efforts to support those with accessibility requirements, at ICWSM 2021 organizers used the registration page of the conference to request accessibility requirements (such as requesting sign language interpretation, CART caption services, before the close of early registration). ICWSM 2024 was conducted at a facility that provided physical accommodations that have been considered in prior iterations of the conference, but did not, due to oversight, make use of the accessibility questionnaire used in 2021. It is critical that future iterations of the conference continue to strive for increased accessibility and where possible, make use of materials introduced in previous ICWSM conferences.

3.2. The ICWSM-Global Initiative

Premier AI and computational social science (CSS) conference venues, such as ICWSM, consistently suffer from a lack of diversity among researchers from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). For ICWSM specifically, this paucity is problematic, since many of the problems studied by this community are global; e.g., information access, mis-/dis-/mal-information, mental health, online sentiment, etc., many of which are directly impacted by AI technology. This inequity within ICWSM represents a critical disconnect between the research community and society, as these problems are studied by researchers, journalists, and other stakeholders in LMICs, but results from these studies are difficult to disseminate among ICWSM/AAAI audiences. Barriers to this representation are varied, but the largest barriers appear to be a lack of 1) financial resources to attend and 2) social connections with senior members of the ICWSM community. To address these issues, this year saw the inaugural edition of ICWSM-Global, an initiative to connect researchers at LMIC-based institutions with senior members of the ICWSM community, provide financial support for these LMIC-based researchers to attend the conference, and establish longer-term social connections to ensure a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive research community.

A key gap in supporting cross-country relationships with researchers and AI practitioners in LMICs is the scarcity of partnership-building resources and opportunities that bring together stakeholders from different countries and regions. For example, few computational tools and research efforts tend to account for drastic differences in the scales of information production, socio-cultural differences, and audience sizes across countries, making it difficult for local practitioners to apply research, results, and tools broadly shared in Western CCS conferences. Further, few organizations are available to support in-person international collaboration and bridge-building opportunities that are necessary to facilitate a sustainable and equitable research community around AI, especially pertaining to AI's role in local/regional information environments. Regional organizations may bring together practitioners across Africa or Latin America, but few organizations connect stakeholders across Asian, Latin American, and African countries with each other and with those in the US/Europe. Hence, a core outcome of ICWSM-Global is the development and strengthening of a collaboration network for both in-person and online engagement across these regions

and stakeholders to further the research and development of trustworthy AI in the online information space.

For this first year of ICWSM-Global, a key set of outcomes and outputs include match-making, developing partnerships, and assessing the needs among LMIC stakeholders. Beyond 2024, we aim for ICWSM-Global to become a recurring workshop event, meant to provide a space for LMIC researchers in the ICWSM community to collectively share knowledge, expertise, tools, and experiences with the broader ICWSM community and achieve stronger engagement therein. Beyond facilitating connections, we envision a working group that allows LMIC partners to identify gaps in available resources and prioritize needs leading up to the next ICWSM-Global workshop in ICWSM 2025. For ICWSM-Global 2024, we engaged in the following activities:

- Activity 1: Inviting ICWSM-Global Applicants from a Global Community. The ICWSM-Global organizing committee reached out to multiple stakeholder communities, academic institutions, and civil society organizations across Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. This invitation asked for a brief summary of the research project the applicant would like guidance and collaborating in publishing at ICWSM and CVs for applicants' research teams. This call went out in the fall of 2023, and we received 10 applicants, four from Africa, four from Latin America, one from Asia, and one from North America. From this set of 10, we selected five applicants to award with ICWSM-Global financial support and partnership with an ICWSM-Global mentor selected from the core ICWSM community.
- Activity 2: In-Person Workshop at ICWSM. As our workshop's core goal was to build relationships across stakeholders in LMICs, we developed a workshop with activities and presentations to stimulate future collaborations. These activities culminated in a brainstorming session to prioritize for the next iteration of this workshop. In total, this workshop included four of the five ICWSM-Global partners, four of the five ICWSM-Global mentors, the organizing committee, representation from a funder organization, and several ICWSM community members. Desired outcomes from this activity were to introduce ICWSM-Global participants to each other in person, provide a specific venue for ICWSM community members to come and engage with ICWSM-Global partners, and allow for these partners to share their research with the ICWSM community and make new connections.
- Activity 3: Regular Touchpoints at ICWSM. During the actual ICWSM 2024 conference, to stimulate and support collaboration and engagement among ICWSM-Global partners and the core ICWSM community, the ICWSM-Global organizers met with these partners every day during the poster sessions. During these meetings, we discussed and strategized on which ICWSM presenters and authors would benefit from introductions to ICWSM-Global partners. Outcomes from these meetings were meant to complement Activity 2 connecting ICWSM-Global partners to ICWSM community members after seeing the main conference presentations and posters.
- Activity 4: Drafting a Report on ICWSM-Global Outcomes. Following ICWSM-Global 2024, we are drafting a retrospective report to support continued collaboration and matchmaking between the core ICWSM community and (potential) LMIC community members. This report will be circulated to funders, the ICWSM editorial board, and the ICWSM 2025 organizing committee.

To assess our performance and level of success for this initiative, we have identified the following indicators:

1. Number of volunteer mentors from the ICWSM community.
2. Number of applications submitted to ICWSM-Global.
3. Number of participants invited to the ICWSM-Global workshop.
4. Number of countries represented at the ICWSM-Global workshop.
5. Number of participants attending the ICWSM-Global workshop.
6. Number of papers submitted to ICWSM from ICWSM-Global partners.
7. Number of new collaborations among network and workshop participants.
8. Funds raised for supporting ICWSM-Global 2024.

Metrics for indicators 6 and 7 will be finalized in January 2025. Targets for these indicators are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Indicators for ICWSM-Global 2024

Indicator	Target Value for 2024	Actual Value
1	30	15
2	15	10
3	5	5
4	5	3
5	5	4
6	5	TBD
7	3	TBD
8	USD \$25,000	USD \$20,000

The ICWSM community acknowledges and greatly appreciates the support for the ICWSM-Global event provided by the Media Ecosystems Analysis Group (MEAG).⁶

3.3. The JoinICWSM Event

As a means to open up to researchers and communities from non-WEIRD countries, we organized for the first time the JoinICWSM Event. The event had the goal to introduce the conference to communities across the globe that tangentially work in the field of computational social science, nonetheless they prefer to publish in venues of focused communities (e.g. political science, communication science, HCI, etc.). Equally as important, the event had as a second goal to explain the conference research areas and publication process to individuals who are not necessarily familiar with western conferences, in order to broaden participation from different research cultures across the globe.

⁶ <https://www.mediaecosystems.org/>

To this end, we created a new role in DEI, called ICWSM ambassadors, who are members of our communities and are location specific, and had the responsibility to mentor any interested parties from local communities that attended the JoinICWSM in how to apply and participate in ICWSM. The list of ambassadors for 2024 included Tunazzina Islam, Lynnette Ng, Shady Elbassuoni, Manoel Horta Ribeiro, Ingmar Weber, Kiran Garimella, and Moonis Ali.

For the organization of the event, we reached out to numerous communities of interest across the globe. For this, we used curated emailing lists (available upon request), as well as advertisements for the event on Twitter and LinkedIn. The structure of the event itself included a presentation of the DEI initiatives of the conference, the scope of ICWSM as described by the General Chair, part of the ambassadors presenting research typical to ICWSM, and a long Q&A session where attendees could inquire about how to attend ICWSM with a Program Committee Chair. Overall, the event had more than 20 participants, lasted approximately an hour and was a success given its first time of implementation.

The value of the first iteration of the event was to set the blueprint for larger events in the future, which can attract new members in our communities. To achieve this, it is encouraged to:

- Expand outreach prior to the events to find interested individuals. This includes extending mailing lists, advertising on more platforms, and reaching out to communication hubs of other research communities (HCI, Political Science, Communication Science, etc.).
- Repeatedly and consistently advertise the event. People have a short attention span and register without showing up. It is important to follow up with individuals, and develop further incentives that can increase participation (e.g. attendance certificates.)
- Develop the role of DEI ambassador further. Responsibilities can go beyond the JoinICWSM event, and include the advertisement of the conference CfP to local communities systematically.
- Accommodate time-zones. This year the event took place at 3 CET. It could be helpful to have JoinICWSM events at different times, so that people can join comfortably across the globe.
- Place the event strategically within the year, so that participants have the time to prepare their manuscripts for submission at a forthcoming ICWSM CFP.

4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at ICWSM

ICWSM 2024 incorporated DEI efforts throughout the organization and implementation of the conference, and incorporated the following effort documented in the 2021 report. Specifically:

- Virtual registration for individuals from World Bank Tier 2 and 3 countries. We had 10 registrants, although it was observed anecdotally that participation was limited during the conference itself.
- Scholarships directed towards students from historically underrepresented groups in the United States. New in 2024 was a conference grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) that specifically funded participation from these students. Using this grant, in addition to funding from AAI, 28 students (20 domestic to the United

States) received scholarships that paid for registration, and 19 students received travel support (11 within the United States).

- We actively sought keynote speakers that expanded the viewpoints expressed. Of particular note is the conference's first keynote from the Asia-Pacific region: Crystal Abidin, an anthropologist from The Curtin University in Australia, was the conference's final keynote speaker.
- The Adamic-Glance Distinguished Young Researcher Award was once again awarded.
- The inclusion of DEI Chairs and Global Equity Chairs on the Organizing Committee

We encourage the reader to view the 2021 report from Nurse et al. (2021)⁷ for additional details on these continuing initiatives (e.g. the Adamic-Glance Award). Here, we instead document the additional changes we developed for ICWSM 2024.

4.1 Creation of a Student Volunteering Program and Undergraduate Student Participation Day

ICWSM 2024 featured two new programs intended to introduce (prospective) future members of the ICWSM community to the conference. With funding provided by the NSF, the Institute for AI and Data Science at the University at Buffalo,⁸ and TechBuffalo,⁹ ten undergraduate students joined the first day of the conference, when tutorials, workshops, and the Data Challenge took place. Students were paired throughout the day with a senior member of the community, who was tasked with welcoming them to events and making them feel comfortable. Students also learned about local job opportunities in the technology industry through TechBuffalo.

ICWSM also featured a new student volunteering program for all 28 graduate students who received funding to attend the conference from the NSF or AAI. Students received volunteering t-shirts and helped to organize the conference events. Students also participated in a lunchtime mentoring session with senior members of the ICWSM community. As a condition of their scholarship, students were requested to fill out an optionally anonymous feedback form on their experience at the conference. Of the 28 students, 21 responded to the survey. Demographically, of those students, 7 self-reported as female, one as non-binary, and the rest male. Students drew from an international pool, the majority of students (13 out of 21) when asked to provide their salient identities, opted to provide a national identity. Highlights of this evaluation included the following:

- Perhaps surprisingly, students who opted to answer a question on their views on the volunteering unanimously agreed that the volunteering experience, while somewhat disorganized, was useful.
- Eighteen of the 21 respondents also shared that they received an adequate level of mentorship during the conference.
- Students shared several ways that they feel the conference experience could be improved; one highlight was the need for companies to have a presence at the conferences (N=4), and more streamlined volunteering responsibilities.

⁷ Reference in Footnote 1

⁸ <https://www.buffalo.edu/ai-data-science.html>

⁹ <https://www.techbuffalo.org/>

5 Research Impact and Accountability for ICWSM

5.1 ICWSM A Ranking in CORE

In many countries of the world, the reputation of a conference plays a crucial role in various academic and research-related decisions. When applying for research funding, grants, or tenure, faculty members and researchers often need to demonstrate the impact and quality of their work. Publications in highly ranked conferences are viewed as a testament to the researcher's expertise and the importance of their contributions. An A ranking by CORE signifies a high standard of peer review and the dissemination of influential research, which can substantially bolster a researcher's profile in funding applications and tenure reviews. Additionally, in tenure cases and funding mandates, the reputation of the conferences where faculty members publish their work is frequently scrutinized.

With these factors in mind, a team of ICWSM community members petitioned the Computing Research and Education Association of Australasia, CORE, to award ICWSM with an A ranking in its benchmarking of STEM conferences worldwide. An A ranking for ICWSM can help researchers clearly articulate the value and impact of their work. Securing an A ranking also positively affects the conference's outreach and inclusivity, particularly for underserved communities. An elevated ranking attracts a broader and more diverse group of participants that are eligible for institutional support. The enhanced reputation can also lead to increased funding and sponsorship opportunities, allowing ICWSM to offer scholarships, travel grants, and other support mechanisms. This facilitates greater participation from researchers who might otherwise be unable to attend, thereby enriching the conference with diverse perspectives and ideas. This also helps in building a more inclusive research community and promoting collaboration across different disciplines and regions. Ultimately, an A ranking by CORE creates a virtuous cycle where the conference continues to improve in quality and reputation, further enhancing its appeal to top-tier researchers, leading to higher-quality submissions and presentations.

The following indicators of impact were compiled as part of the ICWSM committee's application to the CORE review panel:

1. Number of high-quality research papers published in ICWSM.
2. Number of citations and H-index of papers published in ICWSM.
3. Number of top researchers and keynotes participating in ICWSM.
4. Number of interdisciplinary collaborations fostered through ICWSM.
5. Number of participants attending ICWSM.
6. Number of countries represented by participants at ICWSM.
7. Number of new methodologies and frameworks introduced at ICWSM.
8. Funds raised for supporting ICWSM initiatives.
9. Number of workshops, panels, and tutorials held at ICWSM.
10. Number of diversity, ethics, and integrity policies adopted and implemented by ICWSM.

We reported that 10 among the top 20 researchers in "Computational Social Science," as indicated in the "top 20 in Google Scholar list" column, who have a median h-index of 98.5, have one or more publication and a median of 5 publications in the Proceedings of the ICWSM. Furthermore, of the top thirty-four area leaders in computational social science, assessed according to a combination of Google Scholar's citation

leaderboard, publication record in the field, and h-indices (considering only those with a h-index above 45, as recommended by CORE), twenty-one (with a median h-index of 86) had previously published in ICWSM. The committee made a strong case, as a result of which ICWSM is now listed as a CORE-A conference.

5.2 Special Issue of *JQD:DM*

In order to broaden the disciplinary diversity of ICWSM and build bridges between scholarly communities engaging in the study of digital media, ICWSM partnered this year with the Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media (*JQD:DM*). *JQD:DM* is the leading outlet for quantitative descriptive work related to digital media in the social sciences. Critically, authors of *JQD:DM* papers were required to present their work at the conference itself, in person.¹⁰ It provides needed space for careful quantitative descriptions of the ever expanding and evolving digital media spaces in a world where human behavior increasingly plays out online. Recognizing that conferences and publications are the currency of academic advancement but are regarded differently across fields, this partnership provided both journal space and physical space for strengthening our interdisciplinary community.

In total, this inaugural issue featured 8 articles published in *JQD:DM* and presented at ICWSM. The issue aimed to highlight the diversity of the field and included papers representing a diversity of data sources, methods, and contributions. Lead authors included 3 women and 5 men, were at varied career stages (PhD student: 3 authors, postdoctoral fellow or other researcher: 3, faculty: 2) and came from 3 different countries (US: 6 authors, Netherlands: 1, Germany: 1). The issue also engaged three guest editors: 1 woman, 1 man, and 1 non-binary person.

This unique cross-disciplinary collaborative effort should continue to bring together digital media researchers from diverse backgrounds. To further broaden future participation, organizers and special issue editors can leverage social media and their personal and institutional networks to promote the special issue. This includes announcing the opportunity and sharing the articles featured in the issue. It is hoped that this approach will lead to an increase in contributions from non-Western countries and regions.

5.3 The ICWSM paper checklist

The ICWSM 2024 Program chairs introduced a new pre-submission checklist for authors to include at the end of their manuscript submissions. The pre-submission checklist, known as the paper checklist, aims to promote a culture of rigor, transparency, and ethical responsibility in the research published at ICWSM. It was adapted from several reputable sources, including the NeurIPS 2023 guidelines (NeurIPS 2021; Ashurst et al. 2020)¹¹, the

¹⁰ One group of authors ultimately opted out of these guidelines after the Special Issue had been published, but before the conference. While in general we would hope that authors respect the “rules of the road” (and in general did), it is recommended that future organizers consider this and ensure conference participation before publication.

¹¹ NeurIPS 2021 Paper Checklist Guidelines.

<https://neurips.cc/Conferences/2021/PaperInformation/PaperChecklist>

Ashurst, C.; Anderljung, M.; Prunkl, C.; Leike, J.; Gal, Y.; Shevlane, T.; and Dafoe, A. 2020. A guide to writing the NeurIPS impact statement. Centre for the Governance of AI. URL:

<https://perma.cc/B5R8-2B9V>.

NLP reviewing checklist by Benotti et al.¹² (2023), and the consensus-based transparency checklist by Aczel et al.¹³ (2020), principles of FAIR data¹⁴ and the Datasheets for Datasets concept introduced by Gebru et al.¹⁵ (2021).

The paper checklist serves three main functions in the review process. Firstly, it aims to ensure a higher standard of scientific quality by prompting authors to address specific methodological and ethical questions, and foster transparency by requiring detailed disclosures about the research process. Secondly, it aims to aid reviewers and readers in assessing the validity and reliability of findings. Lastly, it aims to align ICWSM with best practices from leading conferences, promoting responsible research conduct and supporting a fair and effective review process. The checklist broadly comprises the following dimensions:

1. Research Validity and Integrity
 - a. Ensuring research advances science without violating social norms.
 - b. Accurate reflection of contributions in abstracts and introductions.
 - c. Appropriate methodological approaches and addressing potential data biases.
2. Transparency and Reproducibility
 - a. Detailed descriptions of work limitations and potential societal impacts.
 - b. Steps taken to prevent or mitigate negative outcomes.
 - c. Adherence to ethical guidelines.
3. Theoretical Rigor
 - a. Clear statements of assumptions and justifications for theoretical results.
 - b. Consideration of competing hypotheses and alternative explanations.
 - c. Relating results to existing literature and discussing implications.
4. Machine Learning Experiments
 - a. Inclusion of code, data, and instructions for reproducibility
 - b. Specification of training details and reporting of error bars.
 - c. Description of compute resources used and justification of evaluation methods.
5. Asset Use and Curation
 - a. Citation of creators and mention of asset licenses for existing assets.
 - b. Inclusion of new assets, discussion of data consent, and ensuring datasets are FAIR.
6. Human Subjects and Crowdsourcing
 - a. Inclusion of participant instructions and screenshots.
 - b. Description of potential participant risks, IRB approvals, and compensation details.
 - c. Discussion of data storage, sharing, and de-identification methods.

¹² Benotti, L.; Fort, K.; Kan, M.-Y.; and Tsvetkov, Y. 2023. Understanding Ethics in NLP Authoring and Reviewing. In *Proceedings of the 17th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Tutorial Abstracts*, 19–24.

¹³ Aczel, B.; Szaszi, B.; Sarafoglou, A.; Kekecs, Z.; Kucharsk`y, `S.; Benjamin, D.; Chambers, C. D.; Fisher, A.; Gelman, A.; Gernsbacher, M. A.; et al. 2020. A consensus- based transparency checklist. *Nature human behaviour*, 4(1): 4–6.

¹⁴ FORCE11. 2020. The FAIR Data principles. <https://force11.org/info/the-fair-data-principles/>.

¹⁵ Gebru, T.; Morgenstern, J.; Vecchione, B.; Vaughan, J. W.; Wallach, H.; Iii, H. D.; and Crawford, K. 2021. Datasheets for datasets. *Communications of the ACM*, 64(12): 86–92. NeurIPS. 2021.

5.4 The ICWSM SPC checklist

The ICWSM 2024 Program chairs also adapted a post-submission checklist, known as the SPC checklist from other premier conferences, to better manage and track the large volume of incoming manuscripts in every submission cycle. On the one hand, the PC chairs have instituted regular, post-submission-deadline calls for ICWSM authors to sign up as reviewers, where they are included in the reviewer pool if deemed eligible, thereby improving and diversifying the reviewer pool. On the other hand, many prolific authors of ICWSM papers are students with little research experience, who may inadvertently slip into a reviewer role without appropriate domain expertise.

Therefore, a key motivator of the SPC checklist is to ensure that the set of reviewers that is diverse in experience, background, and qualification, yet appropriate to help in the fair and comprehensive evaluation of the submissions to which they are assigned. Additionally, SPCs can ensure that reviewers with the appropriate domain or cultural knowledge are assigned to papers in their expertise and to accurately assess papers situated in a context.

Broadly, the SPCs identify and report conflicts of interest or potential desk rejects; for instance, in cases where the papers are incorrectly formatted, not anonymous, partially plagiarized, or may comprise unacknowledged text generated from a generative pre-trained (GPT) model. The SPCs also ensure that the authors have completed their checklist, as well as that the paper has 3-4 relevant and diverse reviewers assigned.

Including the SPC checklist has helped to flag cases where authors may have inadvertently self-plagiarized, papers may be inappropriate and thus early desk rejects, and where a closer ethical review may have been required. Considering the diversity of the reviewer pool has also helped improve the quality of feedback and the assessment of qualitative research papers. Finally, it has helped ensure that research from underrepresented groups or regions receives equitable consideration.

Moreover, the SPC checklist has supported identifying papers that, while currently weak, show potential and could benefit from mentorship instead of outright rejection. This approach aims to improve the quality of future submissions and foster a supportive environment that encourages learning and growth among researchers. Ultimately, the SPC checklist aims to contribute to a more inclusive, equitable, reciprocal, and high-quality review process.

5. Planning for the Future and Reflecting on Prior Plans

ICWSM has made significant inroads in achieving our vision of a Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive intellectual community. However, much work remains. Nurse et al. (2021)¹⁶ list out a set of recommendations for future ICWSM conferences. In the interest of accountability, (our interpretation of) the core recommendations from their report are listed above in Table 3, alongside the efforts we made to address these recommendations. As is clear from the table, much work remains to be done.

¹⁶ Reference in Footnote 1

Table 3. Prior Recommendations from Nurse et al. (2021) and their (lack of) implementation at ICWSM 2024.

Type	Concrete Recommendation Quoted from Nurse et al. (2021)¹⁷	Relevant Actions Taken for ICWSM 2024
Data	Expand options for self-reporting [demographic information] that may inform the overall organization of the conference	None
Data	Adding a Data Chair to future Organizing Committees	None
Conference Organization	Include a broad conceptualization of “computational social science for development” in the scope of ICWSM	None
Conference Organization	Continue to provide financial support for underrepresented and/or minority researchers	See Sections 3.2 and 4.1 of this report
Conference Organization	Build a vibrant and diverse ... community by expanding the options to participate	See Sections 3.3, 4.1, and 4.2 of this report
Conference Organization	Create regional ICWSM chapters that are affiliated with the conference but also hold local research events	See Section 3.3 of this report
Conference Organization	Highlight AAAI Code of Conduct	Done during Opening Remarks
Conference Programming	Engage with more women, non-binary, people of color, and/or international keynote speakers	3 (of 3) Female keynotes; one non-U.S./Euro centric speaker
Conference Programming	Continue the series of excellent DEI-focused panels	Not addressed, due to considerations with respect to timing (See Section 5.4 below)
Conference Programming	Cater more to an international audience by exploring the potential for panels and social events that are not only in English	Limited, but see Section 3.3
Conference Programming	Continue to live stream signature programming (Keynotes, Special Panels) at different times of day	None
Conference Programming	Implementation of a set of accessibility guidelines for paper submissions which authors should abide by.	None
Global Outreach	Expand international participation and prioritize building an international profile.	See Sections 3.2, 3.3, 4.3 of this report

¹⁷ Reference in Footnote 1

Finally, in addition to these prior recommendations, we pose six of our own informed by the work done during planning for ICWSM 2024:

- **Incorporating Diverse, Local Students and Organizations** - While expanding globally remains a critical challenge for ICWSM, we also believe that the conference can serve as an important catalyst for building community around computational social science in diverse populations within the local areas that the conference is held in. In particular, there is some evidence that applied computing attracts a more diverse STEM-oriented population of students,¹⁸ encouraging participation from both K-12 students and undergraduates, funded ideally by local tech organizations, is a low-cost way to expose a new generation of diverse students to a relevant area of computing research. We therefore recommend that a formal role be established for Local Chairs that involves organizing such opportunities on the first day of the conference.
- **Consistent Funding for Initiatives that Expand Opportunities in the Global South** - While ICWSM 2024 featured a number of novel approaches to creating participation in the Global South, funding challenges will quickly emerge in continuing such events. We therefore recommend that ICWSM, perhaps in collaboration with AAI, create ways for members of the community who are provided with complementary registrations to donate those complementary registrations to participants of the ICWSM-Global Initiative.
- **Creating a Year-round, World-wide ICWSM Community** - ICWSM occurs only once per year, but the work for creating a globally inclusive community must continue year-round. We therefore recommend that additional organizing positions be created on a two-year appointment basis for the “ICWSM Global Ambassador” positions that were established as a part of the JoinICWSM event outlined above. Further, the JoinICWSM event is a one-hour, virtual event that has a limited participation bar for both those in the ICWSM community and those looking to join it. We recommend continuation of the program throughout the year, as recommended in Section 3.3 above.
- **Improving and Extending Student Volunteering and Mentoring** - We recommend that ICWSM continues to grow the student volunteering and mentoring programs started at ICWSM 2024, with a particular eye on creating shared identity mentoring spaces for traditionally underrepresented students. These events could be as simple as shared, designated spaces at lunch time.
- **Continue to expand and refine the Ethics Requirement for ICWSM papers** - We recommend continued discussion on the development of the ICWSM Paper Ethics Checklist.
- **Reconsider the Challenges and Benefits Associated with Being a Member of the Organizing Committee (OC) and Senior Program Committee (SPC)** - Roles on both the OC and the SPC have been greatly impacted by major new developments in the world and research community that have exacerbated the necessary time commitment, including but not limited to: rolling review cycles, cannibalism and competition with other core A/A* venues (as implied by sometimes unstable attendee numbers), and increasing volumes of papers making close quality supervision difficult. Some of these have been accounted for via increasingly

¹⁸ LaBerge, N., Wapman, K. H., Morgan, A. C., Zhang, S., Larremore, D. B., & Clauset, A. (2022). Subfield prestige and gender inequality in computing. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2201.00254*.

straining the existing channels of communications, but significant consideration needs to be given to how to address these challenges to 1) constrain time commitments and/or 2) provide appropriate compensation, monetary or otherwise, for the inevitable increase in time that will come. Considerations might include additional full-time support from AAAI, ways of extending and/or formalizing institutionalize memory, and better onboarding processes. This is a DEI issue because service roles are often taken up by individuals from marginalized backgrounds, and if there is a limited return on these time investments, we are further exacerbating existing inequalities.

- while keeping in mind that it is necessary to weigh both the costs and benefits associated with each unique position on the committee for individuals at different points in their academic careers. We address this point in Section 5 below.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Organizing Committee at ICWSM 2024 chose to have minimal opportunities for hybrid participation. This decision did not come lightly; the majority of discussions on conference organization focused on this topic. Ultimately, however, we concluded that we believed that, given limited time and resources, we would tailor efforts to ensuring that we could provide the most diverse, equitable, and inclusive in-person conference that we were able to. This, of course, has a number of downsides that should not be ignored, and that are laid out in some detail in the report by Nurse et al. (2021).¹⁹ However, we feel that as a community, we should aim to move more towards a more year-round commitment to global inclusivity, which allows for a number of more virtual-only participation settings that provide a more even footing for participation, allowing in-person events to potentially focus more heavily on maximizing the number of in-person participants from the Global South through novel funding opportunities than creating a hybrid experience. We encourage future conference organizers, and the Steering Committee, to think deeply about this year-round perspective moving forward.

5.5 Conclusion

DEI efforts at ICWSM 2024 received significant support from an incredible array of community members, from the students who engaged in volunteering all the way up to the members of the conference organizing committee who drove a number of new and significant initiatives. We as a team are grateful of the work done and look forward to continued efforts in the future to make ICWSM an ever-more diverse, inclusive, and equitable community.

¹⁹ Reference in Footnote 1