



Association for
Computing Machinery

Advancing Computing as a Science & Profession

NEWS RELEASE

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ACM CONFERENCE SHOWCASES RESEARCH ON FAIRNESS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN ALGORITHMIC SYSTEMS

Interdisciplinary Conference Brings Together Scholars from Diverse Disciplines to Investigate and Tackle Issues in Socio-Technical Systems

New York, NY, February 25, 2021 – The 2021 [ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability and Transparency \(ACM FAccT\)](#), to be held virtually from March 3-10, brings together researchers and practitioners interested in fairness, accountability, and transparency in socio-technical systems. ACM FAccT provides a forum for research work in a variety of disciplines, including computer science, statistics, the social sciences and law. The work published at FAccT represents the cutting edge of practical applications of AI algorithms in hiring, policing, standardized test bias and privacy protection, among many other areas that impact daily life.

“FAccT is a leading venue for advancing the science of fairness and accountability of AI systems” according to General Co-chair Richard Zemel, co-founder of the Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence. “Last year, more than 600 academic researchers, policymakers and practitioners attended the conference. This year, we expect that number to double.”

The issues that the FAccT community centers in its work are more important than ever. This year’s conference takes place in the context of a worldwide reckoning with racism and other forms of injustice, in society generally and within the field of computing in particular. Such questions are not only a matter of personal and professional concern, but also a perennial focus of FAccT scholarship. In this light, there is especially welcome attention to insufficiently addressed issues in computing relating to anti-Blackness and the advancement of social justice in relation to design of computational systems.

“The most important themes we see emerging this year include scholarship on systemic racism and discrimination, use of AI in health and health inequities, and the growing demand for new forms of accountability around the world,” said ACM FAccT General Co-chair William Isaac, a senior research scientist with DeepMind. He added, “While we will miss gathering in person, moving online provides a way to lower barriers to conference participation and prioritize racial equity, diversity, inclusion, and climate justice.”

This year ACM FAccT introduced several innovative programs to increase participation in the conference by previously underrepresented groups including: offering significantly reduced conference registration prices for students and attendees from economically developing countries, and offering internet bandwidth and carers' grants to support attendees faced with greater personal and professional demands during the pandemic.

Added General Co-chair Madeleine Clare Elish, a senior research scientist with Google Research, "FAccT is changing what computer science conferences look like. Our aim is to be more interdisciplinary and open to different communities of scholarship and practice. Conference leaders and attendees represent a diverse range of perspectives, spanning not only computer science, social science and law but also academia, industry, civil society, and community organizing. This year's program reflects this diversity and presents investigations that not only extend current research but also investigate core assumptions and propose alternative designs, practices, and policies."

ACM FAccT 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Keynote Addresses

"Health, Technology, and Race"

Yeshimabeit Milner, *Founder & Executive Director of Data for Black Lives*

Discussant: Mary Gray, Senior Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research

Yeshimabeit Milner is the Founder & Executive Director of Data for Black Lives. She has worked since she was 17 behind the scenes as a movement builder, technologist and data scientist on a number of campaigns. She started Data for Black Lives because for too long she straddled the worlds of data and organizing and was determined to break down the silos to harness the power of data to make change in the lives of Black people. In two years, Data for Black Lives has raised over \$3 million, hosted two sold out conferences at the MIT Media Lab and has changed the conversation around big data & technology across the US and globally. As the founder of Data for Black Lives, her work has received much acclaim. Yeshimabeit is an Echoing Green Black Male Achievement Fellow, an Ashoka Fellow and joins the founders of Black Lives Matter and Occupy Wall Street in the distinguished inaugural class of Roddenberry Foundation Fellows. In 2020, Yeshimabeit was honored as a Forbes 30 under 30 social entrepreneur.

"In Praise of (Flawed) Mathematical Models"

Katrina Ligett, *Associate Professor of Computer Science at Hebrew University*

Discussant: Suresh Venkatasubramanian, Professor of Computer Science at University of Utah

Katrina Ligett is an Associate Professor of Computer Science at Hebrew University, where she is also a member of the Federmann Center for the Study of Rationality. Her work is in algorithms, particularly in data privacy, algorithmic fairness, algorithmic game theory, and online algorithms. She was previously an Assistant Professor of Computer Science and Economics at Caltech (2011-2017), and was a postdoctoral fellow in Computer Science at Cornell University (2009-2011). Prior to joining Caltech, Katrina received her PhD in computer science from Carnegie Mellon University in 2009. Katrina is a recipient of a NSF CAREER award and a Microsoft Faculty Fellowship. Katrina has been affiliated with

programs at the Simons Institute for Theoretical Computer Science at Berkeley, on Economics and Computation and on Algorithms and Uncertainty. She co-organized a Simons Institute program on Data Privacy in Spring 2019. Her research is funded in part by the Israeli Science Foundation (ISF), a Simons Foundation Collaboration grant, a grant from Georgetown University, and DARPA/US Air Force.

“Algorithms, Accountability and Journalism”

Julia Angwin, *Editor-in-chief and Founder of The Markup*

Discussant: Carly Kind, Director of The Ada Lovelace Institute

Julia Angwin is an award-winning investigative journalist and editor-in-chief of The Markup, a nonprofit newsroom that investigates the impacts of technology on society. Julia was a previously a senior reporter at the independent news organization ProPublica, where she led an investigative team that was a Finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in Explanatory Reporting in 2017 and won a Gerald Loeb Award in 2018. From 2000 to 2013, she was a reporter at The Wall Street Journal, where she led a privacy investigative team that was a Finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in Explanatory Reporting in 2011 and won a Gerald Loeb Award in 2010. In 2003, she was on a team of reporters at The Wall Street Journal that was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Explanatory Reporting for coverage of corporate corruption. She is also the author of *Dragnet Nation: A Quest for Privacy, Security and Freedom in a World of Relentless Surveillance* (Times Books, 2014) and *Stealing MySpace: The Battle to Control the Most Popular Website in America* (Random House, March 2009). She earned a BA in mathematics from the University of Chicago, and an MBA from the Graduate School of Business at Columbia University.

Plenary Panels

This year the conference is introducing plenary panel sessions to highlight key issues facing the field from disciplines and regions that have been historically underrepresented in the conference.

Machine Learning and Health Inequities during COVID. Panelists: Marzyeh Ghassemi (U of Toronto), Seda Gürses (TU Delft), and Inioluwa Deborah (Deb) Raji (Mozilla)

Relevance and Applicability of Causality for Algorithmic Fairness. Panelists: Kousuke Imai (Harvard), Issa Kohler-Hausmann (Yale), and Ricardo Silva (UCL)

Alternative Futures. Panelists: Sasha Costanza-Chock (MIT), Cori Crider (Foxglove), and Vidushi Marda (Article19)

Accepted Papers

For a complete list of research papers and posters which will be presented at the FAccT Conference, visit <https://facctconference.org/2021/acceptedpapers.html>

Accepted Tutorials

ACM FAccT Tutorials aims to introduce technical, policy, regulatory, ethical, or social science aspects of FAccT issues for a broad audience. The goal of tutorials, whether introducing methods, presenting a broad overview of an application domain, or a deep dive

on a case study, is to educate and broaden the perspective of our interdisciplinary community. For a complete list of tutorials which will be presented at the FAccT Conference, visit <https://facctconference.org/2021/acceptedtuts.html>

CRAFT Sessions

CRAFT, which stands for Critiquing and Rethinking Accountability, Fairness and Transparency, explicitly push the boundaries of FAccT as a field of study and a community of practice. These sessions bring together academics of all disciplines and people representing different communities of practice (including journalism, advocacy, activism, organizing, education, art, spirituality, public authorities) in the spirit of reflection and engagement. For a complete list of CRAFT sessions which will be presented at the FAccT Conference, visit <https://facctconference.org/2021/acceptedcraftsessions.html>

About ACM

[ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery](#), is the world's largest educational and scientific computing society, uniting computing educators, researchers and professionals to inspire dialogue, share resources and address the field's challenges. ACM strengthens the computing profession's collective voice through strong leadership, promotion of the highest standards, and recognition of technical excellence. ACM supports the professional growth of its members by providing opportunities for life-long learning, career development, and professional networking.