Laura Biester

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Education

University of Michigan — Ann Arbor, MI
Ph.D. in Computer Science and Engineering, Advisor: Rada Mihalcea — Expected 2023

University of Michigan — Ann Arbor, MI
M.S. in Computer Science and Engineering, GPA: 4.0 — May 2020

Carleton College — Northfield, MN
B.A. in Computer Science, GPA: 3.85 — June 2016

Publications

[†] joint first authorship

[1] **L. Biester**, C. Banea, and R. Mihalcea, "Building Location Embeddings from Physical Trajectories and Textual Representations", in *2020 AACL-IJCNLP*, Dec. 2020.

[2] **L. Biester**[†], K. Matton[†], J. Rajendran, E. Mower Provost, and R. Mihalcea, "Quantifying the Effects of COVID-19 on Mental Health Support Forums", in *1st Workshop on NLP for COVID-19 (Part 2) at EMNLP*, Nov. 2020.

Industry Experience

Pinterest — San Francisco, CA
Software Engineer — August 2016 - August 2018

- Database sharding strategies/implementation for advertiser data
- Inconsistency detection framework for distributed graph databases

Gumroad — San Francisco, CA
Software Engineering Intern — Summer 2015

- API to allow creators to track sales data
- Feature to auto-populate mp3 metadata
- Feature to allow users to display their gumroad site on their own domain

Teaching

- **Instructor of Record** at University of Michigan — Fall 2019, Fall 2020
  Discover Computer Science (EECS 198)
- **Prefect** at Carleton College — Spring 2014, Fall 2015, Winter 2016
  Mathematics of Computer Science (CS 202)
- **Prefect** at Carleton College — Winter 2015, Spring 2015
  Data Structures (CS 201)

Professional Activities

Conferences and Workshops Attended

- NLP COVID-19 Workshop at ACL — July 2020
  Flash talk: "Quantifying the Effects of COVID-19 on Mental Health Support Forums"
- NextProf Pathfinder — September 2019
  Workshop to prepare 1st and 2nd year PhD students in engineering to build a competitive CV for a career in academia.
- Midwest Speech and Language Days — May 2019
  Poster presented: "The Applicability of Embeddings to Location Time Series Data"

Reviewing

- Natural Language Processing and Computational Social Science Workshop — 2020

Volunteer Activities

- ECSEL+ Professional Development Chair — Fall 2020–Present
  As a board member of ECSEL+ (Ensemble of CSE Ladies+), organized practice prelim talks for students in CSE at the University of Michigan.
- AI4All Instructor — July 2020
  Taught Python programming to twenty high school students, with a focus on applications in artificial intelligence.
- AI4All Project Lead — July 2019
  Developed a NLP project and provided guidance for seven high school students as they learned Python and completed the project.
- Explore CS Research Organizer — Fall 2018–Winter 2019
  One of five organizers of the "Explore CS Research Program," which aims to introduce students from underrepresented backgrounds to computer science research. Reviewed applications, assigned faculty mentors to students, and answered ongoing questions from students.
- Student Departmental Advisor — Fall 2015–Spring 2016
  Chosen as one of two student departmental advisors at Carleton College by CS faculty. Advised students each term on picking classes, and organized a weekly "CS at the Tavern" social event.
- Lovelace Board Member and Chair — Winter 2015–Spring 2016
  Served as a member of the board of Carleton's women in CS group. Helped to organize weekly lab sessions, dinners, and Carleton's first diversity in CS workshop.

Skills

- **Programming Languages:** Python, Java, Ruby, Javascript
- **Data/Machine Learning:** PyTorch, SKLearn, Hadoop, Hive, SQL, HBase, Vitess
- **Web Technologies:** HTML, CSS, Ruby on Rails, Flask

Scholarships and Awards

- Phi Beta Kappa — 2016
- Magna Cum Laude — 2016
- Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers Engineering — 2015
- Grace Hopper Conference Scholarship Recipient — 2015
- Tapia Conference Scholarship Recipient — 2015