

## Research Interests

Explainable Recommendation, Recommender Systems, Large Language Models, Natural Language Generation

## Education

### Ph.D. of Computer Science

Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU)

Advisor: [Prof. Li Chen](#), Mentors: [Dr. Yongfeng Zhang](#) & [Dr. Ruihai Dong](#)

Aug. 2017 – Nov. 2022

- Thesis: *Natural Language Explanation for Recommendations and Beyond*
- Studied recurrent neural networks (RNN), Transformer and large language models (LLM) for recommendation explanation generation, and published 3 papers at CIKM'20, ACL'21 and TOIS
- Major research outcome integrated into a small eco-system [NLG4RS](#) for recommender systems-based natural language generation that includes benchmark datasets, evaluation metrics and representative models, and that has been widely adopted

### B.Eng. of Computer Science & B.Sc. of Mathematics

Shenzhen University (SZU)

Advisor: [Prof. Weike Pan](#)

Sep. 2013 – Jun. 2017

- Research on recommendation algorithms, especially collaborative filtering and matrix factorization

## Experiences

### Shenzhen University

Aug. 2025 – Present

Assistant Professor

Shenzhen, China

- Research on trustworthy issues of LLM-based recommender systems

### Hong Kong Baptist University

Aug. 2022 – Jul. 2025

Post-doctoral Research Fellow Advisor: [Prof. Li Chen](#), Mentor: [Dr. Yongfeng Zhang](#)

Hong Kong, China

- Supported by Hong Kong Research Grants Council (RGC) and Huawei
- Research on LLM-based recommendation

### Rutgers University

Feb. 2023 – Jun. 2023

Visiting Researcher Advisor: [Dr. Yongfeng Zhang](#)

New Brunswick, USA

- Published 1 paper about efficient LLM-based recommendation at CIKM'23

### Suishou Technology

Aug. 2016 – Nov. 2016

Intern Advisor: [Prof. Weike Pan](#)

Shenzhen, China

- Utilized machine learning tools (such as Liblinear and XGBoost) to mine potential customers for personalized advertising
- Increased the company's sales of financial products by 4 times during an online test

## Grants

### HKSTP Ideation Programme

Sep. 2024 – Present

Palm (a pad that provides the elderly with customized recommendations of finger exercises)

HK\$50K

**RGC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme (PDFS)**

Aug. 2022 – Jul. 2025

*Causal Inference for Natural Language Processing in Recommender Systems*

HK\$1.24M

**Huawei Gift Fund**

Jun. 2024 – Jun. 2025

*Incremental Learning of Large Language Models for Recommendation and Its Applications*

HK\$330K

**Selected Publications (citation 1000+, h-index 12)**

- **Lei Li**, Yongfeng Zhang, Dugang Liu, Li Chen. Large Language Models for Generative Recommendation: A Survey and Visionary Discussions. Proceedings of the 2024 Joint International Conference on Computational Linguistics, Language Resources and Evaluation (**COLING'24**), pages 10146-10159, Turin, Italy, May 20–25, 2024. (**citation 100+**)
- **Lei Li**, Yongfeng Zhang, Li Chen. Prompt Distillation for Efficient LLM-based Recommendation. Proceedings of the 32nd ACM International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management (**CIKM'23**), pages 1348-1357, Birmingham, United Kingdom, October 21–25, 2023. (**citation 100+**)
- **Lei Li**, Yongfeng Zhang, Li Chen. Personalized Prompt Learning for Explainable Recommendation. ACM Transactions on Information Systems (**TOIS**), volume 41 (4), article 103, pages 1-26, March 2023. (**citation 200+**)
- **Lei Li**, Yongfeng Zhang, Li Chen. On the Relationship between Explanation and Recommendation: Learning to Rank Explanations for Improved Performance. ACM Transactions on Intelligent Systems and Technology (**TIST**), volume 14 (2), article 21, pages 1-24, February 2023
- Dugang Liu, Weihao Du, **Lei Li**, Weike Pan, Zhong Ming. Augmenting Legal Judgment Prediction with Contrastive Case Relations. Proceedings of the 29th International Conference on Computational Linguistics (**COLING'22**), pages 2658-2667, Gyeongju, Republic of Korea, October 12–17, 2022
- Shijie Geng, Zuohui Fu, Yingqiang Ge, **Lei Li**, Gerard de Melo, Yongfeng Zhang. Improving Personalized Explanation Generation through Visualization. Proceedings of the 60th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (**ACL'22**), pages 244-255, Dublin, Ireland, May 22–27, 2022
- **Lei Li**, Yongfeng Zhang, Li Chen. Personalized Transformer for Explainable Recommendation. Proceedings of the 59th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics and the 11th International Joint Conference on Natural Language Processing (**ACL'21 oral**), pages 4947-4957, Online, Thailand, August 1–6, 2021. (**citation 200+**)
- **Lei Li**, Yongfeng Zhang, Li Chen. EXTRA: Explanation Ranking Datasets for Explainable Recommendation. Proceedings of the 44th International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval (**SIGIR'21**), pages 2463-2469, Virtual Event, Canada, July 11–15, 2021
- **Lei Li**, Yongfeng Zhang, Li Chen. Generate Neural Template Explanations for Recommendation. Proceedings of the 29th ACM International Conference on Information & Knowledge Management (**CIKM'20**), pages 755-764, Virtual Event, Ireland, October 19–23, 2020. (**citation 100+**)

**Talks****Recent Trends in Recommender Systems Community (RecSys 2024)**

Nov. 2024

*Professors' Insights Gained from Top Conferences*

Huawei (Online)

**Conversational Recommender Systems and Recent Trends Driven by LLMs**

Oct. 2024

*Summer School at RecSys'24*

Bari

**Large Language Models for Generative Recommendation**

Apr. 2024

*ConsumerBG AI Workshop Hong Kong*

Huawei Hong Kong Research Center

**Large Language Models for Generative Recommendation**

Apr. 2024

*Huawei Computing Youth Forum*

Hangzhou

## Large Language Models for Recommendation

Tutorial at RecSys'23

Attracted hundreds of attendees

Sep. 2023

Singapore

## Generating Recommendation Explanations with Transformer and Pre-trained Model

Data Science Lab

Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology (Online)

Mar. 2023

## Improving Personalized Explanation Generation through Visualization

Department of Computer Science

University of Luxembourg (Online)

Dec. 2022

## How to Come up with Ideas and Do Research: Experience Sharing

COMP7160 Research Methods in Computer Science

Hong Kong Baptist University

Oct. 2021

### Academic Services

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- **Guest Editor:** ACM Transactions on Recommender Systems (TORS) special issue on “Large Language Models for Recommender Systems”, 2023 – 2025
- **Workshop Organizer:**
  - “EARL: The 2nd Workshop on Evaluating and Applying Recommender Systems with Large Language Models”. RecSys'25
  - “EARL: Workshop on Evaluating and Applying Recommendation Systems with Large Language Models”. RecSys'24
- **Session Chair:** CIKM'23, WWW'23
- **Program Committee Member:** KDD'25, RecSys'24, WWW'23, RecSys'22
- **Invited Reviewer:** IEEE TKDE, ACM TOIS, ACM TORS, ACM TIST, IEEE TBD, IJHCS, ACM TiIS, NEUCOM, KNOSYS, JIIS
- **External Reviewer:** CIKM'24, SIGIR'21, WWW'21, WWW'19

### Awards & Honors

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<b>RPg Performance Award</b>	HKBU	Sep. 2021
<b>Research Postgraduate Studentship</b>	HKBU	Aug. 2017 – Aug. 2021
<b>Research Excellence Award</b>	PG Day, HKBU	Jun. 2021
<b>Best Presentation Award</b>	PG Day, HKBU	Jun. 2020
<b>Excellent Teaching Assistant Performance Award</b>	HKBU	Jun. 2018, 2019, 2020
<b>Teaching Assistant Performance Award</b>	HKBU	Feb. 2020
<b>Outstanding Graduate</b>	SZU	Jun. 2017

### Technical Skills

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<b>Programming Language</b>	Python, Java, Matlab, C++ (ordered by proficiency)
<b>Platform and Tool</b>	PyTorch, TensorFlow, Scikit-learn, MongoDB, Django, XGBoost, Liblinear

### Languages

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<b>Mandarin</b>	Native
<b>English</b>	Working proficiency
<b>Cantonese</b>	Elementary

Last update: August 24, 2025