

# Service Statement

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One of the most rewarding aspects of working in academia is having the opportunity to serve the academic community around the university and the larger community of researches working in areas related to mine. Over the years, I have been involved in several service activities where my involvement had a substantial positive impact, these include: my role in support of the NYU Tandon PhD program in Computer Science and Engineering (CSE); my role as organizer and program committee member of IEEE VIS and other top conferences; my role in summer programs aimed at involving young students into research; and my role as co-host of the Data Stories podcast. In the following I describe each of these experiences in more detail.

**PhD program.** As a faculty member at NYU Tandon I have been involved in many activities revolving around the PhD program. I always felt a special connection with PhD students: they are the backbone of research activities happening in the school and they are in constant need of support for the difficult level of growth they need to develop. At Tandon I have contributed to the PhD program as part of the PhD committee; as interim PhD committee chair; and as chair of PhD admissions. With my help the program has gone through a number of important transformations. As PhD admission chair I have completely redesigned and streamlined the admission and selection process. Under my tenure the department has been equipped with a new method to collect and analyze data about our candidates; a new workflow model to review the candidates; and a new method to select the candidates for admission. The system I developed has been used for several years and it has substantially improved the process the CSE department follow for admissions. As a PhD committee member I have helped manage the many activities related to the PhD program and I have introduced several innovations. As an example, I have recently led a new initiative to create an annual PhD Research Expo in which our PhD students have the opportunity to present their work to their peers and our faculty members. The event has been highly praised by everyone in our community and will be repeated every semester using the organization model I developed for this first edition. Another innovation I have introduced is the constitution of a new committee of PhD student representatives aimed at building a bridge between PhD students in the program and our faculty. Never before the department had such a committee and the idea has been welcomed with enthusiasm by my colleagues and by the students.

**Undergraduate and K12 summer research.** Another highly rewarding service activity I have been involved in over the years is the support of UG and K12 students over the summer. Tandon has a series of summer programs that aim at involving undergraduate and K12 students in research. For several years we hosted in my lab students from disadvantaged NYC schools and UG students from the international NYU sites of Abu Dhabi and Shanghai. Involving students early on in research is a great way to develop talent, to encourage students to pursue a career in research and to have a positive impact on their future. Playing a role in the formation of these young minds has been extremely rewarding and I am proud of the work we have done with them. K12 students working in our lab have been admitted in competitive UG programs around the country. Similarly, UG students working with us have published in prestigious conferences and have been admitted in prestigious PhD and MS programs in the US and abroad.

**Organizing and program committee member.** Since the beginning of my career I have

been involved in the organization of the IEEE VIS conference; the premier conference in visualization. Over the years I have contributed in various roles including being *workshop chair* (2010, 2011, 2016), *poster chair* (2014, 2015), *short paper chair* (2020). Being part of the organizing committee of IEEE VIS for several years gave me the opportunity to actively contribute to one of the best communities of people I have ever known. IEEE VIS is characterized by an open culture which nicely blends the need for rigor with a genuine desire to help students and junior researchers grow and succeed. I can safely say that IEEE VIS provided the best possible environment for my intellectual growth and I am happy I had the opportunity to give back through the roles I covered.

Similarly, I have been over the years part of the program committee of some of the major conferences that publish research in visualization. These include IEEE VIS, EG/IEEE EuroVis, and ACM CHI. As a PC member for these venues I have always felt I could contribute by providing constructive and detailed feedback to authors. In reviewing papers I have always tried to be as thorough as possible and to have respect for the work done by the authors. When reviewing papers it is always important to be mindful of how much time and effort students and advisors may have spent doing the work. My goal is always to provide detailed recommendations and rationale behind my criticism so that authors can improve their work. I strongly believe that the strength of an academic community depends substantially on the tone, quality and rigor of the feedback other members of the community receive when being evaluated. I consider it my duty to take this work seriously and to do it in the most professional and respectful way possible.

**Co-host of Data Stories podcast.** In 2012 I started the Data Stories podcast together with renowned data visualization designers Moritz Stefaner. The podcast focuses on data visualization and the role data play in our life. After almost 10 years of producing the show, I can safely say that Data Stories has been one of the most impactful experience I had in terms of providing a service to the data visualization community and beyond. One of the original goals of the podcast was to build a bridge between visualization researchers and practitioners. In fact, from the beginning having a researchers (myself) and a designer (Moritz) as co-host created the right blend to build such a bridge. After several years we are now at a stage where more and more researchers and practitioners know and influence each other and I believe Data Stories played a major role in making this happen. Even if the main intent of Data Stories has never been to be an educational platform, we have over the years received countless feedback from students and early enthusiasts describing Data Stories as the biggest influence in their education and in deciding to build their career in data visualization.

One specific activity I am particularly proud of regarding Data Stories is a special kind of episode we have organized a few times called “Data Visualization Around The World”. The main intent of the episode is to highlight the work of people working outside of North America and Europe. We always felt that people working in other areas of the world do not get enough exposure and that we could play a role in making the work of amazing people from these countries gain more exposure.

**Future plans.** My future plans in terms of service include continuing and expanding the service activities I can contribute to. Within Northeastern University (NU) there is a unique opportunity to contribute substantially with novel initiatives that impact students, faculty and beyond. As an active member of the data visualization community I am looking forward to playing a major role in “glueing” together the many data visualization initiatives that already exist at NU (Khoury, CAMD, Roux, Experiential AI, etc.) and in proposing and leading new ones. NU has the potential to become the most prominent place to do data visualization research and development in the world and I am looking forward to playing a major role in making this happen.