Editorial

The current pandemic is devastating populations and economies, but this is not the only type of disaster threatening people. To minimize the impacts of the disasters, a wide panoply of tools are needed, including good ad-hoc models, optimization algorithms, tools to detect the disease and to monitor its progress and spreading, and new or improved means for communication between humans, among others. These are the categories of subjects reflected in this Special Issue.

The first part of the issue is devoted to models. One paper addresses the transport of poisonous gases in chemical disasters. Another paper uses cellular automata (CA) to model epidemics. Section two comprises two papers on communication means (social networks) and interfacing. The third section is the largest and addresses tools. Three papers are in the realm of image processing for lung diagnostic. One paper assays the use of sounds, specifically cough, in the diagnostic. Another paper introduces a system based on drones for monitoring the state of people. Although this is a good mix, papers on several important topics are lacking. More papers with reference to ready to use solutions would have been welcomed. There is only one paper (by Dobrea and Dobrea) related to code on GitHub; we would have liked to have more such papers. Another paper (by Pirnau) relates to public domain software applications useful in crises. The paper by Benbrahim et al. describes in full detail the method of programing – and this is one of the reasons it has been included in this issue. We would have liked to see a paper on applications such as Corona-Warn-App (see https://github.com/corona-warn-app/cwa-documentation) and on similar applications, and on the issues arising from the use of such applications. There is no paper on the domino effects of the current pandemic or of other crises, which is a weakness of this special issue and, as far as I have seen, of other similar initiatives in the literature. Whatever its limitations are, I hope this special issue constitutes a useful and timely addition to the literature.

*

A number of 30 manuscripts have been received. Due to publication constraints, several good manuscripts were not retained after the reviewing process. The reviewing has been "triple blind", that is, authors did not know who the reviewers are, and neither the reviewers knew the authors of the papers. In addition, the reviewers of any of the specific paper did not know who the other reviewers are and what their recommendations were. Most of the papers had three or four double-blind reviews. I thank all the authors and reviewers for their remarkable contributions, patience, and hard work.

The special issue was published on the web in less than two month, which is a success as much as a peril: reviewing has been made thoroughly, yet in a hurry; authors revised several times their papers, but that was done under pressure. Therefore, despite authors', reviewers', and the guest editor's best efforts are probable, including errors in the reviewing and in the paper selection process.

*

This special issue evolved from my indefinite but persistent idea of me fast publishing something useful during the COVID pandemic. That was followed by the idea of having several researchers offering what they can do best on the topic. All this process took about two weeks and, on March 30, 2020, I suggested to the Chief Editor of ROMJIST that a section of an issue of the journal could be fast published with papers on the topic. On April 2, I proposed also by e-mail this special issue. On April 7 the announcement was published on the web. Several people helped this initiative to materialize, in the first place the Chief Editor, Dan Dascalu, and the Head of the Section of Information Science and Technology of the Romanian Academy, Florin Gheorghe Filip; also thanks are due to the members of the Presidium of the Romanian Academy, who agreed with the proposal. I am also grateful to Ms. Adriana Apostol and Mr. Petru Lucian Milea for their logistic support.

May 24, 2020
Horia-Nicolai Teodorescu