

March 2, 2020

Re: Cancellation of ASPLOS 2020 in Lausanne Switzerland

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a Professor at EPFL, Dean of the School of Computer and Communications Sciences, and the General Chair of ASPLOS 2020, the 25<sup>th</sup> ACM International Conference on Architectural Support for Programming Languages and Operating Systems, which was scheduled March 16 – 20 at EPFL in Lausanne, Switzerland.

**I am sorry to announce that ASPLOS 2020 and the associated symposium and workshops in Lausanne are canceled because of the COVID-19 outbreak.**

There are three strong reasons to cancel ASPLOS:

1. Attendance is likely to be poor, at best. I was hoping for 400-500 people. We currently have a bit more than 300. I have heard from a few people who are reluctant to travel, but as yet, there has not been a rush to cancel. However, large companies (e.g., Amazon, Amgen, Nestlé, to name three in the news) are starting to tell their employees to avoid unnecessary or all travel. In the next two weeks, the number of companies (and universities) limiting travel will surely increase.

2. There is a significant chance that the Swiss government or EPFL will prevent the conference from occurring. Friday, the Swiss government banned gatherings of more than 1000 people, which caused the cancellation of the Geneva Auto Show next month. EPFL has banned people who visited China, Iran, South Korea, Singapore, and Northern Italy from its campus for two weeks after their visit (STCC is on the EPFL campus and affected by this rule). As the disease spreads, both regulations are likely to become stricter and will eventually prevent us from holding ASPLOS.

3. And, finally, I believe it is the responsible and proper action at this time. On Friday, the WHO elevated the risk of COVID-19 to “very high.” It is essential to take steps to reduce the spread of the virus. Handwashing and quarantine are two such steps, but avoiding large gatherings, particularly those involving people flying from far-flung places is another important measure to contain the virus’s spread.

Obviously, none of us involved with ASPLOS are happy with this decision, but we believe that it is the right one.

**We will take the following steps:**

1. We will refund the registration fee of all attendees later this week. Students who received travel support will have their non-refundable expenses paid.

2. We will ask all ASPLOS presenters to record a video of their conference talk. We will put them up on YouTube and the ACM DL along with the papers. The PC chairs, Luis and Karin, will be in touch with authors to provide them with guidelines for producing a high-quality video of their talk and help in putting it online.

3. We will create a Slack workspace with a discussion channel for each session, in which we will put the papers and videos, so the authors and attendees can discuss the papers and research. We will open this workspace up to the larger community, not just registered attendees.

We considered other, more interactive options (e.g. Zoom), but believe that the large number of time zones make this approach impractical without a great deal of thought and planning, which is obviously not possible in the limited time.

Several ASPLOS steering committee members have suggested and volunteered to arrange local meetings of people interested in ASPLOS, to hear local talks and discuss papers.

4. The workshops and VEE will make their own decisions about presentations and discussions, but a number are likely to follow in the footsteps of ASPLOS. The workshop chairs will be in touch with authors to inform them about next steps.

5. We are investigating the possibility of holding an ASPLOS session or day at related conferences (ISCCA, PLDI, OSDI) this year.

I am personally very unhappy and disappointed with this situation, as I was looking forward to seeing all of you in Lausanne. However, I am confident that it is the right decision and that we do not have another, responsible alternative. I hope that everyone will be able to visit lovely Lausanne in the near future!

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely



James Larus  
Professor and Dean