

Preface from the General Chair

This conference is an experiment in various ways. Primarily, it is the first attempt to bring together in a meaningful way the North American research communities in NLP, IR, and Speech. The impetus for this merger came from many people interested in Human Language Technology who felt that two largely overlapping conferences in the same season every year in North America is too much of a good thing. On the initiative of Charles Wayne (DARPA), Gary Strong (NSF), John Prange (ARDA), and prior HLT chairs James Allan (UMass Amherst) and Mitch Marcus (University of Pennsylvania) and others, and with the agreement of the NAACL and ACL Executives, the SIGIR Executive Board, and influential members of ISCA, a conference Advisory Board was created to make sure the necessary balances of influence were maintained and the procedure would run smoothly. This board consists of Donna Harman (NIST), Lynette Hirschman (MITRE), Graeme Hirst (University of Toronto; chair), Karen Kukich (NSF), John Prange, Dragomir Radev (University of Michigan), Salim Roukos (IBM), David Yarowsky (Johns Hopkins University), and Charles Wayne.

And, thanks to a superb team of organizers, the conference has come together beautifully. It is my pleasure to thank the following tireless and dedicated people.

First, and without any doubt the two people most responsible for making sure the program was assembled in time and with high quality, are Marti Hearst (Berkeley) and Mari Ostendorf (University of Washington). They did a fantastic job of handling all aspects of the program, and several more. Marti's paper submission and reviewing support software worked perfectly, and her team at Berkeley made sure the conference website was always up to date. Mari stepped in at several crucial moments to handle unforeseen events.

For the incredible amount of work that Local Arrangements always entails, we were extremely fortunate in having Dekang Lin (U of Alberta). Dekang was aided by an able band of people, including Colin Cherry, Patrick Pantel, Greg Kondrak, Shaojun Zhao and Wenxin Li. Thank you very much, Dekang and crew.

Publication is an very complex and time-consuming part of a conference. In addition to the normal work of assembling all the material and ensuring that it is correctly produced, we this year had to become completely self-sustaining, since Morgan Kaufmann Publishers will no longer support conference proceedings. A great deal of thanks to the once again dependable Dragomir Radev (University of Michigan) and his new colleague Steven Abney (also University of Michigan). Ali Hakim was in charge of all the nitty-gritty details with the CD-ROM, and Pragya Sen of U. Michigan helped out with the cover pages and proofreading. The scripts for the front matter of the proceedings, prepared for prior ACL conferences by David Yarowsky (Johns Hopkins University), were of great use.

Workshops and tutorials were handled by James Allan (UMass Amherst), representing IR, Jason Eisner (Johns Hopkins University), representing NLP, and Wayne Ward (U of Colorado), representing speech. I hope you will enjoy the well-balanced, wide-ranging, and very interesting set of tutorials and workshops.

For organizing the demos, thanks to Bob Frederking (CMU) and Bob Younger (SPAWAR).

Priscilla Rasmussen, registrar extraordinaire, again helped with contract negotiations, conference registration, and general know-how. It is always a pleasure working with her.

A word of thanks to NAACL President Diane Litman, for helping things go smoothly.

I would like to thank the three co-chairs of the Student Research Workshop, Costas Boulis (University of Washington), Eric Breck (Cornell), and Victor Lavrenko (UMass Amherst), and their faculty advisor Marc

Light (University of Iowa), who did a very competent job of organizing what is a somewhat new event to some of the communities.

A final experiment: a new, fully online, registration process, complete with credit card transactions. The software was developed at the University of Delaware by Chris Pennington, under guidance of Kathy McCoy. I think they did a very nice job, one that will be of good service to this and no doubt other conferences, for a long time.

We will only know if the experiment is a success if you enjoy the conference. I hope you do!

Eduard Hovy
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