

Preface from the Conference Chair

I am delighted to welcome you to the 42nd meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics: ACL'04 in Barcelona.

In keeping with the tradition of ACL conferences, we present you with a scientific programme of cutting-edge research in our field, in the form of papers, demonstrations and posters, supported by tutorials and workshops and complemented by an ACL-endorsed associated conference. The programme continues to show a healthy mixture of high standards of selectivity coupled with wide participation from our scientific community: ACL'04 received 619 submissions to the technical sessions and workshops (not including 260 to EMNLP) of which 221 were accepted, providing an overall acceptance rate of 36%.

Over the three days of the main conference, there will be 137 presentations, distributed over three parallel sessions, in addition to a fourth session on Day 2 when the Student Research Workshop will take place. We are continuing the format for Demonstrations and Interactive Posters introduced so successfully by our colleagues in Sapporo last year: in the first session of each day there will be short formal presentations of each system to be demonstrated, and poster to be (interactively) displayed, later that day. As in the last two years, the ACL executive committee will be presenting an ACL Lifetime Achievement Award to a distinguished researcher for his or her pioneering work in Computational Linguistics. Previous recipients have been Aravind Joshi and Makato Nagao. The winner of this year's award will be announced by the ACL Executive Committee at a special plenary session on Day 2, followed by a lecture by the recipient of the award. Also as in previous years, the Programme Chairs of the Main Session will be announcing, at the end of the Conference, the recipient of the Best Paper Award; this year the Chairs of the Student Research Workshop will also present an award, for the best Student Paper.

This scientific programme will be accompanied by a special programme of social events: you are all invited to join us at the Welcome Reception on the evening of the 21st July. I hope we will choose to also join us at the Conference Banquet on the 23rd in the medieval Saló de Contractacions at the nearby Llotja, which will be a feast of local Catalan cuisine and wines, and will be the venue for the Presidential Address by Johanna Moore.

Any ACL conference is only as good as the people who take time out of their very busy schedule to help put it all together. As General Chair, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all programme chairs for their dedication and care in producing this year's programme: Walter Daelemans and Marilyn Walker (main session); Philippe Blache and Horacio Rodríguez (Demos and Posters); Srinivas Bangalore (Workshops); Inderjeet Mani (Tutorials); and Leonoor van der Beek, Dmitriy Genzel, Daniel Midgley and Justine Cassell (Student Research Workshop). Many thanks also to Owen Rambow and Sergi Balari for their sterling job of coordinating the production of several hundreds of papers over many proceedings, to Deborah Dahl and Antònia Martí for their work in securing sponsorships for the conference, to Felisa Verdejo and José Mariño Acebal for their work on publicity, to Joaquim Llisterra for coordinating the website and to Montse Caprubí for her administrative support.

This will be the second ACL conference to be held in Spain — the other being in Madrid in 1995, which was the first ACL meeting to take place outside North America. We liked it so much the first time that we couldn't resist the opportunity to do it again! I am extremely grateful to our colleagues from Barcelona, under the steer of Toni Badia, for offering to host this year's conference, for securing for us the very generous offer of an excellent venue at the Forum of Cultures, and for their invaluable work in providing the necessary infrastructure and support for a successful conference.

Finally, without the generosity of our sponsors — in particular the Forum of Cultures — this conference would not have been possible. On behalf of all members of the Association of Computational Linguistics, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and appreciation to them.

Donia Scott
ITRI, University of Brighton
General Chair