

## Preface from the Program Co-chairs

It is with great pleasure that we introduce the proceedings of ACL-04, the 42nd Annual Conference of the Association for Computational Linguistics. There is no sign of the field losing its vitality. The group of researchers considering themselves computational linguists is growing every year, numerous national and transnational projects are being defined and funded, and consequently, research results are presented in ever larger quantities. These results cover the complete research spectrum, from new annotated corpora and lexical resources over new statistical and parsing techniques to innovative applications.

The number and quality of submissions witnesses the healthy state of our field. We received 348 submissions for the main sessions, of which 88 were accepted, resulting in an acceptance rate of 25%, once more an extremely competitive selection. Among the accepted papers, 57% originates from North America, Canada and Mexico, 11% from Asia and the Pacific Rim area, and 32% from Europe. As a whole, the accepted papers provide an interesting overview of high-quality research in the field of Computational Linguistics.

We would like to thank all the authors of submitted papers for choosing ACL-2004 for the presentation of their research results. For the selection we are indebted to the programme committee with 11 area chairs from Europe, the U.S. and Asia, and the army of more than 200 reviewers that they recruited. With at least 3 reviews per submitted paper, the programme committee had to manage well over 1000 reviews (an interesting volume of more than 800 pages of critical literature when printed). We are deeply grateful to the area chairs and the reviewers for their conscientious judgement and for the time and energy they contributed. Our special thanks go to the 11 area chairs who spent many hours reaching a consensus on every submitted paper, and who attended a one day Program Committee meeting in Brighton in which papers were discussed and acceptances were decided. Many thanks to Donia Scott for making available the ITRI premises for this meeting, and to Kees van Deemter for hosting it.

The program is structured into plenary sessions, three parallel paper sessions, demo/poster sessions, and the student workshop. In addition to the submitted papers, the main program includes two invited presentations by distinguished researchers in neighboring fields. We are honored and very grateful that Anne Cutler (Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The Netherlands) and Jack Mostow (Carnegie Mellon University, Robotics Institute) have accepted our invitation.

As in the previous two years, the Association for Computational Linguistics will present an ACL Lifetime Achievement Award to a distinguished researcher for his or her pioneering work in Computational Linguistics. Previous recipients of this prestigious prize, awarded by the ACL Executive Committee, are Aravind Joshi and Makoto Nagao. The winner of this year's award will be announced at a special plenary session, followed by a lecture of the awardee. Also, as in previous years, a Best Paper award will be announced in a special plenary session at the end of the meeting.

We are very grateful for the advice and support of the General Conference Chair, Donia Scott, and the Local Organizing Chair, Toni Badia and the local organization committee. For the preparation of this volume and for the production of the CD-ROM version of the proceedings we would like to thank the Publications Co-Chairs, Owen Rambow and Sergio Balari. Furthermore, we could always rely on the experience, guidance, and support of the ACL executive committee, and the PC-chairs of ACL-03, Erhard Hinrichs and Dan Roth. Thanks are due also to the University of Sheffield and the University of Antwerp for financial and administrative support. Special mention is deserved by Guy De Pauw of the University of Antwerp who installed and maintained the electronic conference management system.

We hope that you enjoy the conference!

Walter Daelemans and Marilyn Walker  
Program Committee Co-Chairs  
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