

Preface: General Chair

This year's meeting is special. First, it is the first ACL meeting to be hosted jointly with our North-American chapter, the NAACL. Second, it is also the ACL's 40th anniversary meeting: our association was created 13 June 1962, and its first meeting took place 25-26 August 1963 in Denver.

Our field has expanded quite a bit since then, and so have ACL meetings. This year, our main conference program includes some 65 different refereed papers, covering most active research areas in computational linguistics. And our extended program is complementing that with 19 system demonstrations, 4 tutorials, 12 Student Research papers, and no less than 11 different pre- and post-conference workshops presenting a total of about 150 papers.

My first thanks are addressed to all those who chose to submit their work at ACL-02. Collectively, they spent some 5850 person-days (roughly 25 person-years) just for preparing submissions, final versions and oral presentations!¹ Of course, the underlying research effort is very much larger.

Eugene Charniak and Dekang Lin, our Program Co-Chairs for the main conference skillfully steered their highly competent program committee towards elaborating an enticing and compelling scientific program. Conference highlights include invited talks by Daphne Koller and Peter Norvig, as well as a Best Paper Award.

Some special events have also been attached to the main program of this 40th Anniversary meeting: 1) the new ACL electronic anthology will be presented; and 2) an ACL Lifetime Achievement Award will for the first time be presented to one of our outstanding contributors.

Ronnie Smith, our Demo Chair, and his reviewers Steven Bird and Johan Boyes selected 19 demos that will provide a vivid illustration of what can be achieved with current leading edge technology.

Our Student Research Workshop Co-Chairs, Alexander Koller and Gideon Mann, with some guidance from their faculty advisor Susan McRoy, have set up a student program that meets the highest quality standards. See companion volume for details.

Our Tutorials Chair, Hwee Tou Ng, and his two reviewers, Pamela Jordan and Jakub Zavrel, selected 4 tutorials on important and timely topics, to be presented by highly regarded specialists: Sadaoki Furui, David D. Lewis, Jean-Michel Renders and Michael Strube. See companion volume for details.

Walter Daelemans, our Workshops Chair, elicited great workshop proposals and coached workshop organizers through all the intricacies of ACL-02 organizational requirements. Eleven workshop projects were selected, ranging from popular SIG meetings (SIGDAT, SIGDIAL, SIGPHON-SIGNLL) and hot topics (summarization, NLP in bioinformatics) to more specialized and more speculative topics. Ten of the workshops have their own proceedings.

Schedule constraints are such that final versions of scientific contributions can only become available a few weeks before the conference. Dragomir Radev, our Publication Chair, had the challenging mission to get them all published in time for the conference, both in hardcopy and on CD-ROM. He received the help of several people, including: Dekang Lin, who organized Web-based collection of all electronic versions, David Yarowsky who provided code and advice for producing the CD-ROM,

¹This is a rough estimate that assumes an average of 7 person-days for preparing each submission and an average of 4 person-days for preparing final versions plus slides.

and Jahna Otterbacher who did most of the CD-ROM development work. Huge thanks to all of them!

Our Webmaster Aurélien Max, did exemplary work setting up and maintaining a convenient, informative and up-to-date ACL-02 Web site (<http://www.acl02.org>).

The ACL has a tradition of keeping registration fees affordable for all, and especially for students. Kathy McCoy, our ACL secretary-treasurer, did a lot of hard work to help us meet that goal without any need to nibble away on the convenience or even on the fun!

A key factor in balancing our budget has been the great skills of Deborah Dahl, our Sponsorships/Exhibits Chair, in successfully eliciting substantial sponsorships. I should also mention Susan McRoy, who secured an NSF grant to help students attend the conference. My most sincere thanks to all ACL-02 sponsors for their generosity!

I would also like to thank Priscilla Rasmussen, the ACL business manager, who provided us with expert guidance and advice about many delicate issues and important details.

Finally, our UPenn hosts deserve our deep gratitude. They have set the finest possible table for the grand scientific meal prepared by our authors. Believe me, “local arrangements” is a lot of work! Martha Palmer has set up and managed an outstanding team to do it all in great style: Trisha Yannuzzi, Laurel Sweeney, Gilbert Kowie, Craig Martell, Yuan Ding, Paul Howard.

So many people contributed to organizing ACL-02 in one way or another that I am sure I forgot to mention some essential contributions here. Thanks to all those who helped!

In closing I would like to thank you all for attending ACL-02, and I wish you a fruitful and pleasant conference.

Pierre Isabelle
May 23, 2002