First Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics

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WELCOME

I am particularly happy to have this opportunity to welcome the participants at this meeting on behalf of all those in Pisa who are working in the field of computational linguistics and, in particular, on behalf of my colleagues at the Istituto di Linguistica Computazionale of the Italian National Research Council (CNR) and of the Dipartimento di Linguistica of the University of Pisa. I am indeed delighted that the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics has accepted the proposal that I made in Prague to organize its first meeting in Pisa.

As a member of the Program Committee, I have already had an opportunity to read the papers to be presented, and I thus feel quite confident in affirming that this meeting will provide further evidence of the development and expansion of computational linguistics in Europe. Here our field is characterized, perhaps more than elsewhere, by the presence of a number of differentiated sectors and by extremely profitable interdisciplinary relationships with many other fields of research. In fact, in the last ten years, computational linguistics has rapidly increased its influence not only at the scientific but also at the application and industrial levels.

Our work here in Pisa has always been directed towards a global view of the different aspects of computational linguistics, and our activities range from the processing of very large corpora of texts to the study of models of linguistic processes and structures, aiming at the integration of the different components. Our interests are clearly shown by the themes of the various international meetings and summer schools which we have organized here in Pisa over the last fifteen years.

Our activity during this period has been made possible by the support of the University of Pisa and CNR. I should thus like to thank Professor Biorci, vice-president of CNR, whose efforts have been so valuable in determining the development of our Institute, for honouring us with his presence here today.

I should now like to conclude by wishing you all every success for your work during the next two days, and also by expressing my particular appreciation to Professor Giacomo Ferrari, one of my oldest colleagues, who has put so much energy and enthusiasm into the organization of this meeting.

Antonio Zampolli

CONFERENCE SUPPORT

The conference, which is sponsored by the Association for Computational Linguistics, was organized by its European Chapter through the Italian Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, with the help of the Istituto di Linguistica Computazionale of Pisa and the Istituto di Elettrotecnica of the University of Genoa. Additional support was provided by Perkin Elmer Italiana, the Cassa di Risparmio di Pisa, and the Ente Provinciale del Turismo di Pisa.

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OPENING REMARKS

I am very glad to open this Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics. I will not take much of your time, but I do want to give you a few simple expressions of appreciation. The Italian National Research Council and I personally are honoured and pleased because this is the first meeting of the European Chapter and because it is taking place in Italy. Choosing this location means that the European scientific community has appreciated the research work carried out in Italy during these past years. Our scientists feel especially proud on this occasion, and I am sure that they will derive from this meeting a powerful encouragement to work even harder than before.

In this fascinating sector of science, I am also glad for the choice of Pisa as the place where the conference is being held. Pisa, in fact, as many of you already know, had a pioneering role in this country in the field of computer science and, in particular, computational linguistics. In this pioneering action, the University of Pisa and the National Research Council have collaborated closely, and I am honoured to mention Professor Faedo who had the vision, the will to pursue it, and the power to realize it, first as a mathematician, then as Rector of the University of Pisa, and finally as the President of the National Research Council.

I am also pleased to mention Professor Zampolli, who started his work when computational linguistics was unknown in Italy and who has given the field such an extraordinary push both through his scientific contributions and through his fantastic enthusiasm.

Another reason for appreciating this meeting is its international character. I know that the number and quality of the submitted papers has been really remarkable, and that the people who came just to be here and learn from others are also outstanding. Young scientists are important, and the relatively low average age of people in the audience makes me confident about the future of your discipline.

Finally, I want to stress that the objectives of the National Research Council do not include the promotion of any particular research projects. Rather the Council has a special role inside the world of the public research institutions in Italy. Its commitment is to realize a harmonious integration of the government's objectives with those of the scientific bodies, in particular with the research carried out in our universities. Within this general framework and this specific commitment, the National Research Council is particularly interested in research projects that have the following primary characteristics: (a) involving scientists from different institutions, (b) attracting international attention, and (c) having high significance for human society, for the progress and welfare of people. Now, computational linguistics, and this meeting in particular, stresses all three of these characteristics. So I am particularly glad to thank you for your attention and to give you my best wishes for the full success of this conference.

Thank you.

Giovanni Biorci, Vice-President
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche

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