

COLING/ACL 2006 - Report from the General Chair

The most important item is that the group of Chairs for this COLING/ACL has been really wonderful, very cooperative, easy to discuss issues among all, responsive, not to mention very competent. All most important decisions have been taken, or discussed, together. All the real work - hard work - has been done by them, and they will report on all the various aspects.

In my report I want to first thank all of them.

There have been episodes of help given to one another in difficult situations, e.g. students of Claire Cardie offered for help with the HTML version of the program when the locals were too busy with printing matters, etc.

Just a few points:

- We had many interactions with the organizers of EMNLP, David Yarowsky and Ken Church, involving also the Advisory Board, wrt their location before or after the main conference, and we reached an agreement, satisfactory for both.
- Notifications have been sent out on time, despite the hard work of the Program Chairs with so many submissions, and having to deal with both Regular papers and Posters. There was only a small delay for the Interactive presentations.
- Collecting and sending out information in the Newsletters has been very efficient, also a sign of the cooperation among all.
- Also the choice by the Local Chairs of the local company for registration etc. has proved to be very good.
- A novelty of today is a new search facility which allows to search all the content on the site.
- Enquiries of different types have been promptly answered by the relevant people.
- We have never perceived the situation going out of control, both from the scientific and from the local/logistic point of view.

The Advisory Board:

- The most strategic decisions have been taken after consultation with the Advisory Board, who have been always very cooperative and proactive. In particular we discussed issues such as:
 - o scientific focus of the program – in between Coling and ACL traditions
 - o area chairs
 - o program structure & reserve papers
 - o highlight of research on Asian languages, resulting in a panel, top 4 Asian language papers in parallel, special session, award for best paper
 - o publications of proceedings, etc.
- The decision to have this Board was certainly very positive, and it was important to have a representative of AFNLP in it.

I'm proud to say that, also because of all the efforts and initiatives of all the people involved, with different roles, COLING/ACL 2006 will probably be, altogether, the biggest ever happening in Computational Linguistics.

In general, I think that we have tried to maintain the spirit of both Conferences, COLING and ACL, not so much a compromise, but trying to take the best of both. This will obviously result in an event with its own special character and personality, which we will enjoy together in Sydney!

Nicoletta Calzolari
Pisa, 2 July 2006

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I add the report I received on 28 February by Richard Power, in case it's useful:

Nicoletta

The mentoring is now over. Last year I was asked for a brief report, so I'm sending one now (below): please forward to anyone else who needs it.

best wishes, Richard

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The mentoring service for COLING-ACL'06 is now finished. Most papers were returned to authors by the deadline (21st February), but a few were late, mostly because demand was much greater than in previous years. However, all arrived in time for the authors to incorporate the suggestions.

We received 20 papers for revision (compared with 7 last year). They came from China (8), Japan (5), Spain, Germany, Morocco, Tunisia, Korea, Germany, and a Japanese speaker in Australia (one each).

The mentors were Deborah Dahl, Lila Ghemri, Chrys Chrystello, John Nerbonne, and Florence Reeder, all unpaid volunteers. Because of the increased demand most of them had to do four papers, as compared to 1-2 papers last year. This was too much: if we continue the service next year we need to recruit more mentors, since the demand especially from the far east is likely to increase further.

As in previous years, the mentors took a lot of trouble over the papers and their suggestions were much appreciated by the authors. I encouraged the mentors not to correct all instances of basic errors like omitting the article in English, just to correct one or two and note the general rule, but the amount of work required was still considerable – we really have to get the number of papers per mentor down to 1-2.