

## ACL SIGNLL - President's Report 2006-2007

The goals of SIGNLL, ACL's special interest group on natural language learning, are to promote and inform about research on computational modeling of learning in natural language. These are served by (i) the maintenance of an informative and up-to-date website and associated mailing list, and (ii) the organization of annual events (the CoNLL conference and the CoNLL shared task), and support of other related activities.

In 2006-2007 SIGNLL has grown to 484 registered members (as of May 20, 2007). The current elected board (until October 2007) is composed of Antal van den Bosch, president; Hwee Tou Ng, secretary; and Erik Tjong Kim Sang, information officer.

The web-pages, located at URL <http://www.aclweb.org/signll/> and maintained by Erik Tjong Kim Sang, remain an important source of information, complemented by an email list for announcements for SIGNLL-related events. On the web-site, links can be found to relevant associations, networks, research cooperations, research departments, groups, institutes, mailing lists, archives, journals, bulletins, conference reports, online papers (including all papers of all CoNLL proceedings), online courses and slides, bibliographies, software, corpora, companies, meta-information sources etc.

The main events in 2006-2007 were the tenth and the eleventh CoNLL conferences (SIGNLL Conference on Computational Natural Language Learning), the latter organized jointly with SIGDAT under the header of EMNLP-CoNLL 2007, and yet to happen on June 28-30, 2007 in Prague, co-located with ACL-2007.

### CoNLL-X

The tenth anniversary of CoNLL, dubbed CoNLL-X for the occasion, was celebrated in New York, 8-9 June, 2006, co-located with HLT-NAACL (<http://www.cnts.ua.ac.be/conll2006/>). Programme chairs were Lluís Marquez and Dan Klein. The two-day event featured invited talks by Michael Collins and Walter Daelemans. Of 53 full paper submissions, 18 were accepted for presentation (34%). 85 registered participants received a celebration t-shirt showing the "CoNLL World Tour 1997-2006" dates at the backside.

The CoNLL-X shared task focused for the first time on Dependency Parsing. It was organized by Sabine Buchholz, Yuval Krymolowski, Erwin Marsi, and Amit Dubey, and featured training, validation, and test sets for an impressive 13 world languages. The task was shared by 19 participants who together submitted 247 systems.

For the first time CoNLL featured a best paper award, selected by a jury appointed by the CoNLL-X programme chairs. The first award went to Rie Kubota Ando for her paper "Applying Alternating Structure Optimization to WSD".

#### EMNLP-CoNLL 2007

In the fall of 2006, the boards of SIGDAT and SIGNLL decided to propose to ACL a joint EMNLP-CoNLL conference, to be aligned with ACL-2007 in Prague, 28-30 June, 2007. The driving reason for the alignment was that ACL-2007 was the only summer conference in computational linguistics in 2007, and both SIGs intended to align with it. Before, the overlap between EMNLP and CoNLL has caused the two SIGs, by way of liaison David Yarowsky, to develop a careful planning that avoided the co-location of the two events, but now the argument was reversed and forces were joined. Under program chair Jason Eisner an exciting program of 110 presentations has been prepared (<http://www.cs.jhu.edu/EMNLP-CoNLL-2007/>) on the basis of over 400 submissions. 66 papers will be presented as talks, and 44 as posters.

The CoNLL shared task for 2007 is a continuation of the CoNLL-X shared task on Dependency Parsing. A shared task organisation team headed by Joakim Nivre and further composed of Johan Hall, Sandra Kuebler, Ryan McDonald, Jens Nilsson, Sebastian Riedel, and Deniz Yuret organized two subtasks: a Multilingual Track focusing on the development of dependency parsers for 10 languages, and a Domain Adaptation Track aimed at measuring the robustness and adaptability of English dependency parsers for parsing data beyond the genre of the training set. 23 groups participated in the competition. The shared task session at EMNLP-CoNLL will draw the usual attention and suspense.

#### Conclusion

The SIGNLL board is of the opinion that the SIG remains unique in its focus. We are happy to observe that the CoNLL conference series continues to have a significant impact on the field, partly because of the successful shared tasks, which have been broadly referenced and have contributed benchmark data sets that are commonly used throughout computational linguistics. We keep striving for complementarity with related SIGDAT events such as EMNLP. Creating a joint call for papers for EMNLP-CoNLL 2007 has learned us that CoNLL will remain having a particular focus with unique and complementary elements found nowhere else, and we intend to continue guarding these

topics as laid out in the original charter of SIGNLL (<http://ifarm.nl/signll/about/>) as the core elements of CoNLL.

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