Message from ELRA's CEO:
Khalid Choukri

Dear LREC participants,

Welcome to LREC 2002!

ELRA (European Language Resources Association), its distribution agency ELDA (Evaluation and Language resources Distribution Agency) and the Facultad de Informática are proud to welcome you in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, where we are pleased to organise the third edition of the **L**anguage **R**esources and **E**valuation **C**onference.

LREC has become over the past years, and with the first two LREC conferences, a major milestone event in the field of Human Language Technologies (HLT). Focusing on issues and presentations related to language resources and evaluation, it has gathered a wide range of representatives from every kind of organisations and from all over the world.

The first LREC conference and its satellite workshops brought together in 1998 in Granada (Spain) more than 500 attendees, from 325 industrial and academic organisations. It was the first time such an initiative in the HLT field was launched, and successfully carried out. Experts involved in every sector of HLT shared experiences and points of view as well as technical aspects and up-to-date findings with each other; 230 papers, covering a wide variety of HLT domains and a large number of issues, were presented, and the first edition of LREC proved to be a major success regarding the awareness and promotion of this field. In addition to the main conference, we supported the organisation of several pre- and post-conference workshops to address specific issues within small groups of experts. Among these workshops, we would like to mention the one co-patronised by the European Commission and NSF, about Multilingual Information Management (MLIM). This workshop identified the most effective future directions of research related to multilingual and multi-modal information management. It paved the way to several initiatives that yield to projects involving teams from both parts of the Atlantic, co-operating on these crucial issues of Multilinguality. The MLIM report is available at: www.hltcentral.org/usr_docs/MLIM.html.

Two years later, in May 2000, the LREC conference took place in Athens (Greece), in the prestigious Zappeion Megaron centre, and attracted over 600 people from all over the world. They had the opportunity to share their views during the main conference and its 10 satellite workshops. We made our best to accommodate more presentations than in 1998, given the increase of the number of submissions, and over 270 accepted papers.

LREC thus has become a central event for improving communication and sharing experiences and capabilities in every sector of HLT. For the next few days, players interested in HLT will meet together and participate in various conference sessions and workshops. Opportunities to get in touch with up-to-date technical progress and breakthroughs in all areas of HLT will be offered, as well as presentations of current European and international projects and initiatives implying language resources and evaluation. The following figures speak for themselves regarding the variety of those presentations and overviews: out of 460 papers, about 365 were accepted. The papers addressed issues related to written resources (over 280), spoken resources (about 100), multimodal and multimedia ones emerged with about 25 submissions, evaluation was covered by over 50 submissions and finally, about 16 submissions focused on terminology. As for the satellite workshops, 18 have been selected, out of 26 proposals.

The planning of the LREC 2002 conference includes, apart from the main conference on 29th - 30th & 31st May, 18 pre- and post-conference workshops that are organised on 27th & 28th May and 1st & 2nd June. The program committee has selected 9 pre-conference workshops and 9 post-conference ones, which address a large variety of topics such as issues on resources and tools in field linguistics, use of semantics in various areas, extraction of linguistic knowledge from annotated data, language resources for Arabic language processing, etc. Several workshops specifically address evaluation concerns such as evaluation of Machine Translation (MT), evaluation of multimodal-based systems and multimodal resources, etc. Some workshops also focus on the issue of standardisation and normalisation in the field of HLT, notably for terminology.

We would like to thank all the workshop organisers for their efforts so far and for the efforts still to be done to make all these events very fruitful during this week.

Within LREC, we have established a useful tradition which is an accompanying exhibition. This will be replaced by a new initiative, LangTech, which has been launched recently in the framework of the Euromap LT project, and which is supported by key organisations involved in HLT, including ELRA. LangTech will cover the technologies developed in the field of speech and language processing. An exhibition of applications, products, services and research prototypes will be organised, along with speeches from leading players in the industry or presentations from developers and solution providers. It will take place on 26th and 27th September 2002 in Berlin. ELRA has decided to join efforts with LangTech to create a useful synergy on the European scene, given the LREC and LangTech complementarity.

Now a few words about ELRA (**E**uropean **L**anguage **R**esources **A**ssociation) and its distribution agency, ELDA (**E**valuation and **L**anguage resources **D**istribution **A**gency).

ELRA is a non-profit making organisation founded with the support of the European Commission in 1995, with the mission of providing a clearing house for language resources and promoting HLT. Its members are academic and industrial organisations involved in the use of language resources for research or/and human technology development. Over the past 3 years, we have enjoyed an average of more than 100 members/year.

ELDA is ELRA's operational body, in charge of identifying, collecting, marketing, and distributing language resources, along with the dissemination of general information in the field of HLT. Besides, ELDA participates in evaluation campaigns for HLT, has considerable knowledge and skills on HLT applications and has participated in many French, European and international projects.

The language resources available in our catalogue are distributed in 3 "colleges": speech, written, and terminology resources (respectively 199, 206 and 275 in 2001). As for the statistics on sales of resources in 2001, 408 resources were sold by ELDA. The sales are distributed as follows: 243 speech resources, 163 written resources and 2 terminology resources.

For the last two years, ELRA and ELDA have got involved in the evaluation activity, which is a highly critical action in the field of HLT. On the one hand, the task aims at checking the quality of the developed applications and systems, and on the other hand, at ensuring that these applications and systems are ready for the market. We used to supply the language resources appropriate for testing and evaluation, but we are now getting involved in the evaluation process itself. Besides, in order to assure and constantly improve the quality of its

catalogue, ELRA has been expanding its network of technical centres to handle the resources' validation task. Our spoken language resources validation centre continues to check and validate the speech resources available in our catalogue, and such a technical centre is about to be set up for the validation of the written language resources.

The local organisers and the ELRA & ELDA staff are at your disposal for any further information needed, and we will be happy to help you to solve any problem which may occur.

We hope that you will appreciate and get the many benefits of the event, that you will enjoy the social programme proposed for you by our local organisers, and that you will be able to get the opportunity to enjoy what Las Palmas de Gran Canaria has to offer to all of us.

Last but not least, we would like to thank all the reviewers who did a wonderful job helping us selecting the most appropriate papers for the conference.

I look forward to meeting you, and wish you a very successful and productive conference.