

Message from the ELRA President
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When ELRA was established 11 years ago, in 1995, the main purpose of the association was of course the identification and distribution of language resources. But very soon the idea of organising a conference covering the same fields as ELRA, with the addition of Evaluation, came up, and the first conference was organised by ELRA in 1998. And this idea proved to be very good, - the LREC conference has established itself as the main meeting point of those who believe that language resources and evaluation are main building blocks for language technology both for written and spoken language. If you want to meet somebody from the field, just go to LREC and he/she will be there!

Over time, ELRA has further developed its mission from LR distribution to also cover production, validation and lately support for evaluation of language technologies. And language resources have developed from relatively simple speech or written resources to more advanced resources and to multimodal resources. The ELRA Board, and the distribution agency, ELDA, are watching the development, and welcome any request for specific types of resources and even for specific resources. We may be able to find them for you, or to encourage their production.

ELRA has a number of strategic activities. In 2006 we are investing in the production of one language resource, we are continuing the validation activities for both written and spoken resources, and developing a methodology for the validation of multimodal resources. For evaluation, we are focussing on the creation of the HLT Evaluation Portal. We have also been further developing the main activity, namely identification and distribution of LRs. The ELRA catalogue now contains around 800 resources, and as a new activity, ELRA has asked ELDA to make the assembled list of existing LRs available to our members. We call this the Universal Catalogue, in contrast to the ELRA catalogue which contains only the LRs for which we have obtained distribution rights. We believe the Universal Catalogue is very interesting and very useful, also for people outside ELDA; this is the reason for making it available to our members.

After our first president, professor Antonio Zampolli, Pisa, Italy, so tragically passed away in 2003, the ELRA Board created the Antonio Zampolli Prize. From the prize articles: "The Antonio Zampolli Prize is intended to recognize the outstanding contributions to the advancement of Human Language Technologies through all issues related to Language Resources and Evaluation. In awarding the prize we are seeking to reward and encourage innovation and inventiveness in the development and use of language resources and evaluation of HLTs. The prize covers the field of Language Resources and Language Technology Evaluation in the areas of spoken language, written language and terminology". At the LREC2006 conference, the Prize will be awarded for the second time. The ELRA Board has been very happy to receive the nominations made by outstanding people in the field, and we recognize there are several persons who are eligible for this prestigious prize.

At LREC 2006 you will have the chance to discuss strategic issues concerning language resources and evaluation and the contribution of these two fields to the further development of language technology for both spoken and written language.

You will also see a multitude of language resources and tools for very many different languages that may be useful for your own work or you may get or provide new ideas for the further evolution of the field.

Please take advantage of all this, and enjoy your participation!

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who contributed so hard to making this conference a success. This year the team of Nicoletta Calzolari at the Istituto di Linguistica Computazionale, CNR, Pisa and Genova, have had the main responsibility for the practical organization of the conference, supported by the ELDA team under the management of Khalid Choukri. This is a tremendous job and we thank all of them. At the same time Nicoletta Calzolari has been the programme chair, - not a small job with more than 800 submitted contributions! We are deeply grateful to Nicoletta and the Programme Committee. Finally, we would like to thank the Scientific Committee who did all the reviewing and the International Advisory Committee for their valuable advice.