

Message from ELRA's President, Henk van den Heuvel

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Twenty years of LREC! It is my honour and pleasure to welcome you to this 11th edition of our successful Conference. Welcome to Miyazaki!

We are also very grateful with our guests representing the European Commission. Your presence here is deeply appreciated. Especially we welcome, Gael Kent, Director Data at the European Commission- DG CONNECT in Luxemburg. We are looking forward to your speech.

We are very honoured to have literally in our midst Prof. Makoto Nagao, Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University. We greatly admire your contributions to such various fields as Machine Translation, Natural Language Processing, Pattern Recognition, Image Processing and Library Science.

After 20 years LREC we have broken with the tradition to convene around the Mediterranean area, and look for another venue to meet and network. Honestly, we see this as an exceptional move motivated by our deep desire to intensify the ties with our Asian colleagues as we know them from the Asian Federation of Natural Language Processing (AFNLP), the Board of which is also closely involved in the organisation of this LREC through the Local Liaison Committee. We are very pleased to see so many of our Asian colleagues here in Miyazaki.

As President of ELRA it is my duty and pleasure to point out a couple of developments that are taking place in our Association. Already in 2012 one of my predecessors, Stelios Piperidis, referred to the dazzling speed of changes in which our community is finding itself. In his opening speech at LREC 2012 he also mentioned the upcoming of data-driven techniques and numerical and learning methods. In our days we see how algorithms and techniques developed in the area of Artificial Intelligence have come to play a paramount role in the area of Language and Speech technology. This technology puts special demands on the amount and preprocessing of Language Resources for training and testing purposes. Large amounts of data are collected from the web and continuously processed and used for application refinement. Now, in this rapidly changing field, ELRA has to find its way as one of the traditional sustainable key-players in language resources management and intermediary between stakeholders. It is evident that LRs remain essential also in our time, it is also evident that well-targeted annotated resources remain essential for supervised training approaches. Therefore, there remains an important role for ELRA as a sustainable LR broker offering relevant and high quality resources both to academia and commercial parties.

However, the changes that we see around us force us to continuously reflect on our *raison d'être* for our members in consideration of what their demands are for LRs and in terms of the services we offer around them. As a result of that, ELRA's Board has introduced important changes in its membership policy.

First of all, to stimulate continuity for our institutional members we have introduced a discount on membership fees upon membership continuation, starting with a discount of 15% for the second year up to 30% for the third year and following. Second, we have equalized the fees for EU and non-EU members to the EU-members fee. Last but not least, as of January 2018 ELRA has introduced individual membership. An event such as LREC shows how vivid and productive the community around LRs is, and advocates for establishing a permanent link within this community, not only a biennial meeting point. For this reason ELRA has decided to open up its memberships for individuals, too, and to offer this membership with special services and benefits, of which the reduced registration fee is the one now most salient.

Employees of institutional ELRA members are also individual ELRA members if and when they want to use ELRA member services (including discount on LREC registration fees). They will not have to pay the individual membership fees as well since their organization covers for that.

In addition, one position in the ELRA Board will be reserved for a representative from the individual members, and this member is elected by the individual members only. This Board member has the same rights as the other ELRA Board members on all issues related to Board matters.

There will be a General Meeting for individual members at each LREC where they can convene with their representative and the Board to discuss ELRA matters concerning individual members. This meeting will be organized for the first time in this LREC 2018, namely this very afternoon at 18:00. The content of the meeting is an interesting mixture of relevant issues from the ELRA board, an inventory of wishes from individual members, and a self- introduction of Board applicants.

You are all invited to attend this first ELRA membership meeting, where we will tell more about the new membership policy, the special services for members and the election of the new Board member. We have sent out an invitation and an agenda for this.

Another observation that requires our persistent attention is that there are many players offering LRs both at the national and international level, and this landscape is becoming quite diffuse. This implies that we need to identify and re-identify times and again what our, ELRA's, position is compared to other LR brokers. It is ELRA's firm belief that this can best be done through cooperation. In this way we have set up a successful cooperation with for instance, LDC, by identifying the differences in membership policies, LR production and distribution strategies, and using each other's strengths in cooperation. In the same spirit ELRA has now set up a Collaboration Agreement with CLARIN ERIC. In this Collaboration Agreement we have clearly identified where our mutual and complementary strengths are and how we can bring these together to the benefit of both organisations. The objective of such agreements is not that one organization becomes part of the other but that both remain independent whilst joining forces. Indeed, here we see an important role for our association in facilitating synergies.

Another example of such a synergy has been established in our Special Interest Group for Under-resourced Languages, SIGUL. Created in April 2017, SIGUL is a joint Special Interest Group of the European Language Resources Association (ELRA) and of the International Speech Communication Association (ISCA). Through its establishment of the Special Interest Group on Under-resourced Languages, ELRA reasserts its active involvement in contributing to enhance the support for the languages with little or no technological support.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have worked so hard to make this conference a fantastic event: the LREC Programme Committee, chaired by Nicoletta Calzolari, the Scientific Committee, the Conference Editorial Committee headed by our LREC cornerstones Sara Goggi and H  l  ne Mazo, the International Advisory Committee chaired by Prof. Makoto Nagao, the group in Pisa, Khalid Choukri and the ELDA staff in Paris, the Local Committee headed by Prof. Hitoshi Isahara and Dr Kyoko Kanzaki. Each one of them in his/her own role has been taking care of the incredible amount of issues that emerge when undertaking the organisation of such a complex and demanding conference as LREC. Our particular thanks go to our sponsors and supporters.

We thank workshop and tutorial organizers, project consortia participating in the HLT Village; you have all exceeded yourselves once more to make this LREC such a great event.

Dear LREC Participants, in the end this is your conference. With your active participation in the oral sessions, your lively discussions with the presenters at the poster sessions, your visits to the HLT Village and Exhibition Booths and participation in the Industry Track I am confident you will make LREC 2018 yet another success.

Henk van den Heuvel

ELRA President