Editorial

This is the first issue of Volume 8, and we thought we would take this opportunity to bring readers of *Natural Language Engineering* up-to-date with various developments with the journal.

First there have been a number of changes to the editorial board. When the journal was set up the editorial board was appointed for five years, but in practice the original editorial board had been in post for seven years. A number had left the field. We had lost touch with some and others had indicated they were no longer in a position to continue because of pressure of other duties and the like. We would like to thank all the members of the editorial board who are standing down for their years of service: the journal could not have been the success it has without your efforts. Equally we would like to welcome the new members of the board and to say we look forward to working with you in the coming years.

As part of the changes to the operation of the journal agreed with Cambridge University Press in 2000, we have introduced a number of assistant editors to the new board with specialist expertise in particular areas. However, we have had considerable difficulties in recruiting suitable people, so to-date we have only appointed Lucia Helena Machado Rino in Generation and Martin Russel in Speech. We are continuing to look for people to fill further assistant editor positions in Parsing and Analysis, Semantics and Reasoning and Resources.

As you will be aware, the journal publishes a significant number of special issues. Although these often attract considerable numbers of high quality submissions, and are widely read and cited, we are anxious that the journal continues to be primarily a submitted paper journal. Furthermore, the number of submitted papers continues to rise. In order to avoid the time from submission to publication rising further (currently averaging a little over a year), we will in future be reducing the number of special issues to a maximum of one per volume.

We are also tightening up our review procedures in the interests of greater fairness in the more competitive environment. In particular we now normally assign four rather than three reviewers and only publish with three positive reviews.

In Volume 8 we expect to have two special issues: on Robustness (edited by Vincenzo Pallotta and Afzal Ballim) and Word Sense Disambiguation, arising out of the SENSEVAL-2 competition edited by Phil Edmonds, Martha Palmer and Adam Kilgarriff. Both special issues have elicited very strong responses and we are sure will be of great interest. Another development with this volume will be the inclusion of a CD-ROM with the final issue with a variety of information which it is not possible or appropriate to include in the print version of the journal. We hope this

will give authors the opportunity to include data, programs and other material to support their papers.

Other special issues in the pipeline include one on Finite State Methods edited by Gert van Noord, Lauri Karttunen, and Kimmo Koskenniemi and Medical Language Processing by Pierre Ziegenbaum. The former gives us special pleasure, since it will be the first time we have published a follow up special issue: our very first special issue was on Finite State Methods in 1996!

Finally we are also considering the introduction of periodic open peer reviewed papers in order to provide an outlet for high quality material which does not fit well with the normal style of peer reviewed journal articles.

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