Preface from the Program Chair

Is the number of papers submitted to the MT Summit indicative of the level of world-wide interest in machine translation in a given year? Probably not; but for the purpose of this Preface, let's assume that it is. (Otherwise, I'd be hard pressed to fill this page.) This year's Summit attracted an impressive number of submissions – 104, to be exact – which represents a substantial increase over the previous Summit. Breaking this figure down by continent, we obtain the following: 36 submissions from Asia, 33 from North America, 27 from Europe, with the remaining 8 papers being co-authored by people from two continents.

The reader is free to confer upon these numbers whatever significance he or she sees fit, but I would maintain that they *are* indicative of a growing world-wide interest in translation automation, with one significant exception, and that has to do with MT's end users. It is a truism that more people are using machine translation today than ever before, thanks in large measure to the MT engines that are now offered as options on various search engines and Web browsers. Those millions of casual or occasional MT users are not adequately represented at our conference, which remains by and large a gathering of academic researchers and commercial developers, i.e. MT professionals whose aim is to satisfy the needs of the myriads of actual and potential 'naïve' MT users. It would clearly be preferable, it seems to me, if we could somehow find a way of attracting more of those users to our conference, including more professional translators. For then we would be closer to the stated goal of the MT Summit, which is to bring together all three constituencies that have a stake in translation automation, so that each can benefit from input from the others.

These Proceedings are certainly quite indicative of the current preoccupations of the researchers and developers who are actively engaged in MT. One has only to glance at the themes of the sessions in the Program: no fewer than three of these are devoted to statistical MT. Another three sessions are devoted to MT evaluation, with many of the papers there focussing on the automatic metrics that have emerged to help accelerate the evaluation of statistical MT systems. What is the significance of all this intensive work in data-driven MT, which seems to be driving our field and is even attracting the attention of the main-stream media? Hopefully, the presentations and debates at this year's Summit will allow us to arrive at clearer assessment of recent advances in SMT.

I hope you find the papers in this volume rewarding. I have certainly enjoyed drawing these contributions together and was very impressed, myself, with the overall quality of the submissions. I sincerely want to thank all those who went to the trouble of preparing a paper for MT Summit IX; and I thank as well all the reviewers who took the time to provide those authors with detailed and often incisive comments, which allowed the latter to improve their contributions. (The names of the worthy reviewers on the Program Committee are listed on the next page.) Finally, special thanks go to my colleagues at the RALI, and particularly to Guy Lapalme and Graham Russell, whose constant support and judicious advice helped carry me through to the end.

Elliott Macklovitch
Program Chair, MT Summit IX