

REFLECTIONS ON 20 YEARS OF THE ACL
AN INTRODUCTION

Donald E. Walker
Artificial Intelligence Center
SRI International
Menlo Park, California 94025, USA

Our society was founded on 13 June 1962 as the Association for Machine Translation and Computational Linguistics. Consequently, this 1982 Annual Meeting represents our 20th anniversary. We did, of course, change our name to the Association for Computational Linguistics in 1968, but that did not affect the continuity of the organization. The date of this panel, 17 June, misses the real anniversary by four days, but no matter; the occasion still allows us to reflect on where we have been and where we are going. I seem to be sensitive to opportunities for celebrations. In looking through my AMTCL/ACL correspondence over the years, I came across a copy of a memo sent to Bob Simmons and Hood Roberts during our 10th anniversary year, recommending that something in commemoration might be appropriate. I cannot identify anything in the program of that meeting or in my notes about it that suggests they took me seriously then, but that reflects the critical difference between volunteering a recommendation and just plain volunteering!

My invitation to participate in this panel was sent out to the presidents of the Association, who were, in order, Vic Yngve, Dave Hays, Win Lehmann, Paul Garvin, Susumo Kuno, (I fit here in the sequence), Martin Kay, Warren Plath, Joyce Friedman, Bob Simmons, Bob Barnes, Bill Woods, Aravind Joshi, Stan Petrick, Paul Chapin, Jon Allen, Ron Kaplan, Bonnie Webber, Norm Sondheimer, and Jane Robinson, and to my predecessor as Secretary-Treasurer, Hood Roberts. Harry Josselson, our first Secretary-Treasurer, is no longer among us, but he would have enjoyed such a gathering, being one for ceremony and celebration.

Vic, Dave, Martin, Warren, Joyce, Bob Simmons, Bill, Aravind, Stan, Paul, Jon, Ron, Bonnie, and Norm agreed to join me on the panel. Jane refused on the grounds that she was not yet part of history and that her Presidential Address provided ample platform to convey her reflections. Win, Paul, Susumo, and Bob Barnes were not able to come, and Hood was still waffling when this piece was being written. Vic, Dave, Win, Bob Simmons, Aravind, Paul, Jon, Norm, and I have written down some of our reflections; they appear on the following pages.

My charge to the panelists, with respect to both oral and written tradition, was quite broad: "You are asked to reflect on significant experiences during your tenure of that office, in particular as they reflect on the state of computational linguistics then and now, and perhaps with some suggestions for what the future will bring." The written responses are varied, as

you can see; I am sure that the oral responses will prove to be equally so.

To provide some perspective--and record some history, I am attaching a synopsis of "officers, editors, committees, meetings, and program chairing" (please let me know about errors!). It is interesting to note the names of people--many of whom are still prominent in the field, the practices associated with our annual meetings, and our publication history. I will comment on the latter two.

Our first meeting was held in conjunction with the 1963 ACM National Conference, but it is clear that our primary allegiance has been with the Linguistic Society of America, since we met seven times in conjunction with its summer meetings. For a period, we alternated between the LSA and the Spring Joint Computer Conference--and actually included that schedule in our membership flyer. We joined with the American Society for Information Science twice, and the Cognitive Science Society once. The convocation of the first International Conference on Computational Linguistics, now known popularly as COLING, replaced our annual meeting in 1965, and we are scheduled to host COLING-84 in two years. Recently, we have been meeting independently, reflecting an increased confidence in our ability to "make it on our own!"

The publication history of the Association has been equally varied. The Finite String, our newsletter, was published as a separate under the editorship of Hood Roberts from 1964 through 1973, and has continued in various forms ever since. In 1965, the Association adopted MT: Mechanical Translation, a journal founded by Vic Yngve in 1954, changing its name to Mechanical Translation and Computational Linguistics in the process. However, that journal was not able to sustain a sufficient flow of manuscripts, and the last issue, dated 1968, was published in 1970. After a lengthy exploration of an alternative primary journal, Dave Hays brought the American Journal of Computational Linguistics into being in 1974. His intention had been to create a printed journal that contained extended abstracts, supplemented by microfiches that provided details, programs, and computer listings. This proposal was submitted to the National Science Foundation for support. A grant was approved, but it stipulated that we publish a microfiche-only journal, and we did that until 1978, The Finite String being issued as a separate microfiche during this period. It became increasingly clear during the five microfiche years that the micropublishing industry was not going to develop as predicted in the early 1970s.

Microfiche readers that were both inexpensive and convenient had not materialized, and our members were reluctant to commit their manuscripts to a medium that restricted readership to a dedicated few. Consequently, George Heidorn set about converting the AJCL to a printed journal, the first issue of which appeared in 1980. Respectful of its microfiche origins, it is distributed with a microfiche that duplicates the printed version but sometimes contains additional material. The Finite String Newsletter continues to provide general information of interest to the membership as a special section.

To complete our publication history, I can announce a new venture that the Association is just beginning, Studies in Natural Language Processing, a monograph series under the Editorship of Aravind Joshi. It was prompted by Norm Sondheimer and brought into being through the organizational efforts of Paul Chapin. We are just completing negotiations with Cambridge University Press, which will publish it for us.

So much for general history, I will reserve my proper place down the line for other kinds of commentary.

ASSOCIATION FOR MACHINE TRANSLATION AND
COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS

(founded 6-13-1962)

ASSOCIATION FOR COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS
(renamed 7-24-1968)

Officers, Editors, Committees, Meetings,
and Program Chairing

	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>
President	Yngve	Hays
Vice-President	Hays	Alt
Sec-Treasurer	Josselson	Josselson
Executive Committee	Rhodes	Sebeok
Members	Garvin	Garvin
Editor (FS)	Lehmann	Lehmann
Editor (MTCL)	Roberts	Roberts
Nominating Committee	See	Yngve
Members	Oettinger	Oettinger
Annual Meeting	Lamb	Lamb
Program Chair	Denver	Bloomington
	8/25-26 (ACM)	7/29-30 (LSA)
	Yngve	Chafe

	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>
President	Lehmann	Garvin
Vice-President	Garvin	Oettinger
Sec-Treasurer	Josselson	Josselson
Executive Committee	Sebeok	Sebeok
Members	Hockett	Hockett
Editor (FS)	Kuno	Pendergraft
Editor (MTCL)	Roberts	Roberts
Nominating Committee	Yngve	Yngve
Members	Yngve	Yngve
Annual Meeting	Hays	Hays
Program Chair	Lamb	Lieberman
	New York	Los Angeles
	5/19-21 = ICCL	7/26-27 (LSA)
	Pendergraft	Kay

	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>
President	Kuno	Walker
Vice-President	Walker	Mersel
Sec-Treasurer	Josselson	Josselson
Executive Committee	Satterthwait	Satterthwait
Members	Hockett	Fronkin
Editor (FS)	Pendergraft	Pendergraft
Editor (MTCL)	Roberts	Roberts
Assoc Editor	Yngve	Yngve
Nominating Committee	Garvin	Chapin
Members	Hays	Garvin
Annual Meeting	Lieberman	Kuno
Program Chair	Atlantic City	Lieberman
	4/21 (SJCC)	Urbana
	Walker	7/24-25 (LSA)
		Petrick

	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
President	Kay	Plath
Vice-President	Plath	Friedman
Sec-Treasurer	Josselson	Josselson
Executive Committee	Satterthwait	Wall
Members	Fronkin	Fronkin
Editor (FS)	Montgomery	Montgomery
Editor (MTCL)	Roberts	Roberts
Assoc Editor	Yngve	Yngve
Nominating Committee	Chapin	Chapin
Members	Garvin	Kay
Annual Meeting	Kuno	Kuno
Program Chair	Walker	Walker
	Boston	Columbus
	5/13 (SJCC)	7/22-23 (LSA)
	Fraser	Wall

	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>
President	Friedman	Simmons
Vice-Pres	Simmons	Fronkin
Sec-Treas	Josselson	Roberts
Executive Committee	Wall	Wall
Members	Robinson	Robinson
Editor (FS)	Montgomery	Chapin
Nominating Committee	Roberts	Roberts
Members	Kay	Kay
Annual Meeting	Plath	Plath
Program Chair	Walker	Friedman
	Atlantic City	Chapel Hill
	5/17 (SJCC)	7/26-27 (LSA)
	Barnes	Schank

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>
President	Barnes	Woods
Vice-President	Woods	Wall
Sec-Treasurer	Roberts	Roberts
Executive Committee	Martins	Martins
Members	Robinson	Joshi
Editor (FS)	Chapin	Chapin
Editor (AJCL)	Roberts	
Nominating Committee		Hays
Members	Simmons	Simmons
Annual Meeting	Plath	Barnes
Program Chair	Friedman	Friedman
	Ann Arbor	Amherst
	8/1-2 (LSA)	7/26-27 (LSA)
	Friedman	Nash-Webber

	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>
President	Joshi	Petrick
Vice-President	Petrick	Grimes
Sec-Treasurer	Roberts	Roberts/Walker
Executive	Martins	Diller
Committee	Rieger	Rieger
Members	Nash-Webber	Nash-Webber
Editor (AJCL)	Hays	Hays
Nominating	Simmons	Joshi
Committee	Barnes	Barnes
Members	Woods	Woods
Annual Meeting	Boston	San Francisco
	10/30-11/1 (ASIS)	5/10 (ASIS)
Program Chair	Diller	Chapin

	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>
President	Chapin	Allen
Vice-President	Allen	Kaplan
Sec-Treasurer	Walker	Walker
Executive	Diller	Diller
Committee	Hobbs	Hobbs
Members	Nash-Webber	Bruce
Editor (AJCL)	Hays	Hays
Assoc Editor	Heidorn	Heidorn
Nominating	Joshi	Joshi
Committee	Petrick	Petrick
Members	Woods	Chapin
Annual Meeting	Georgetown	Urbana
	3/16-17 (RTLL)	7/25-27 = TNLP
Program Chair	Allen	Waltz

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
President	Kaplan	Webber
Vice-President	Webber	Sondheimer
Sec-Treasurer	Walker	Walker
Executive	Rosenschein	Rosenschein
Committee	Hobbs	Lehnert
Members	Bruce	Bruce
Editor (AJCL)	Heidorn	Heidorn
Assoc Editor		McCord
Nominating	Allen	Allen
Committee	Petrick	Kaplan
Members	Chapin	Chapin
Annual Meeting	La Jolla	Philadelphia
	8/11-12 (CSS)	6/19-22
Program Chair	Sondheimer	Hendrix

	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>
President	Sondheimer	Robinson
Vice-President	Robinson	Perrault
Sec-Treasurer	Walker	Walker
Executive	Rosenschein	Karttunen
Committee	Lehnert	Lehnert
Members	Mann	Mann
Editor (AJCL)	Heidorn	Petrick/Damerou
Assoc Editor	McCord	McCord
Editor (SNLP)		Joshi
Nominating	Allen	Sondheimer
Committee	Kaplan	Kaplan
Members	Webber	Webber
Annual Meeting	Stanford	Toronto
	6/29-7/1	6/16-18
Program Chair	Perrault	Bates

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
President		
Vice-President		
Sec-Treasurer		
Executive	Karttunen	Karttunen
Committee		
Members	Mann	
Editor (AJCL)		
Assoc Editor		
Editor (SNLP)	Joshi	
Nominating	Sondheimer	Sondheimer
Committee		
Members	Webber	
Annual Meeting	Cambridge	Stanford
	June	July = COLING-84
Program Chair		

SOME ABBREVIATIONS

Publications:

- FS = The Finite String (1964-present)
- MTCL = Machine Translation and Computational Linguistics (1965-1968)
- AJCL = American Journal of Computational Linguistics (1974-present)
- SNLP = Studies in Natural Language Processing (Cambridge University Press Monograph Series, 1982-1987)

Other organizations in conjunction () with which our meeting was held or which coopted = our meeting:

- ACM = Association for Computing Machinery
- LSA = Linguistic Society of America
- ICCL = International Conference on Computational Linguistics (now called COLING)
- SJCC = Spring Joint Computer Conference (now called National Computer Conference)
- ASIS = American Society for Information Science
- RTLL = Georgetown Round Table on Languages and Linguistics
- TNLP = Theoretical Issues on Natural Language Processing-2
- CSS = Cognitive Science Society
- COLING = International Conference on Computational Linguistics