

REFLECTIONS ON 20 YEARS OF THE ACL
AN INTRODUCTION

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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 microformal 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	Denver	Bloomington
	8/25-26 (ACM)	7/29-30 (LSA)
Program Chair	Yngve	Chafe
President	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>
Vice-President	Lehmann	Garvin
Sec-Treasurer	Garvin	Oettinger
Executive Committee	Josselson	Josselson
Members	Sebeok	Sebeok
Editor (FS)	Hockett	Hockett
Editor (MTCL)	Kuno	Pendergraft
Nominating Committee	Roberts	Roberts
Members	Yngve	Yngve
Annual Meeting	New York	Los Angeles
	5/19-21 = ICCL	7/26-27 (LSA)
Program Chair	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	Fromkin
Editor (FS)	Pendergraft	Pendergraft
Editor (MTCL)	Roberts	Roberts
Assoc Editor	Yngve	Chapin
Nominating Committee	Garvin	Garvin
Members	Hays	Kuno
Annual Meeting	Lieberman	Lieberman
	Atlantic City	Urbana
	4/21 (SJCC)	7/24-25 (LSA)
Program Chair	Walker	Petrick
	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
President	Kay	Plath
Vice-President	Plath	Friedman
Sec-Treasurer	Josselson	Josselson
Executive Committee	Satterthwait	Wall
Members	Fromkin	Fromkin
Editor (FS)	Montgomery	Montgomery
Editor (MTCL)	Roberts	Roberts
Assoc Editor	Yngve	Chapin
Nominating Committee	Chapin	Chapin
Members	Garvin	Kay
Annual Meeting	Kuno	Kuno
	Walker	Walker
	Boston	Columbus
Program Chair	5/13 (SJCC)	7/22-23 (LSA)
	Fraser	Wall
	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>
President	Friedman	Simmons
Vice-Pres	Simmons	Fromkin
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
	Walker	Friedman
Program Chair	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	Simmons	Hays
Members	Plath	Simmons
Annual Meeting	Barnes	Barnes
	Friedman	Friedman
Program Chair	Ann Arbor	Amherst
	8/1-2 (LSA)	7/26-27 (LSA)
	Friedman	Nash-Webber

	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>		<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>
President	Joshi	Petrick	President		
Vice-President	Petrick	Grimes	Vice-President		
Sec-Treasurer	Roberts	Roberts/Walker	Sec-Treasurer		
Executive Committee	Martins	Diller	Executive Committee	Karttunen	Karttunen
Members	Rieger	Rieger	Members	Mann	
Editor (AJCL)	Nash-Webber	Nash-Webber	Editor (AJCL)		
Nominating Committee	Hays	Hays	Assoc Editor		
Members	Simmons	Joshi	Editor (SNLP)	Joshi	
Barnes	Barnes	Barnes	Nominating Committee	Sondheimer	Sondheimer
Woods	Woods	Woods	Members	Webber	
Annual Meeting	Boston	San Francisco	Annual Meeting	Cambridge	Stanford
	10/30-11/1(ASIS)	5/10 (ASIS)		June	July = COLING-84
Program Chair	Diller	Chapin	Program Chair		
	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>			
President	Chapin	Allen			
Vice-President	Allen	Kaplan			
Sec-Treasurer	Walker	Walker			
Executive Committee	Diller	Diller			
Members	Hobbs	Hobbs			
Editor (AJCL)	Nash-Webber	Bruce			
Assoc Editor	Hays	Hays			
Nominating Committee	Heidorn	Heidorn			
Members	Joshi	Joshi			
Barnes	Petrick	Petrick			
Woods	Chapin	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 Committee	Rosenschein	Rosenschein			
Members	Hobbs	Lehnert			
Editor (AJCL)	Bruce	Bruce			
Assoc Editor	Heidorn	Heidorn			
Nominating Committee	Allen	McCord			
Members	Petrick	Allen			
Barnes	Chapin	Kaplan			
Annual Meeting	La Jolla	Chapin			
	8/11-12 (CSS)	Philadelphia			
Program Chair	8/19-22	Hendrix			
	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>			
President	Sondheimer	Robinson			
Vice-President	Robinson	Perrault			
Sec-Treasurer	Walker	Walker			
Executive Committee	Rosenschein	Karttunen			
Members	Lehnert	Lehnert			
Editor (AJCL)	Mann	Mann			
Assoc Editor	Heidorn	Petrick/Damerau			
Editor (SNLP)	McCord	McCord			
Nominating Committee	Joshi	Joshi			
Members	Allen	Sondheimer			
Barnes	Kaplan	Kaplan			
Members	Webber	Webber			
Annual Meeting	Stanford	Toronto			
	6/29-7/1	6/16-18			
Program Chair	Perrault	Bates			

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