Introduction to LREC 2020 by Nicoletta Calzolari
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Welcome to the 12th edition of LREC ... that should have been in Marseille, first time in France! Unfortunately not now, in May 2020. Now my welcome is completely virtual, to all of you authors of these Proceedings papers and to the colleagues who will look at these. Virtual but not less sincere.

This LREC would have also been an occasion to celebrate the 25th anniversary of ELRA. We are proud that ELRA is becoming a mature association. And LREC too. LREC started in 1998, 22 years ago.

We hope to welcome you in a non-virtual way next year in Marseille. We will enjoy together not only the conference but also the special "light" of Marseille and the wonderful view of the Mediterranean and the city from the Palais du Pharo.

Some LREC 2020 figures: previous records broken again!

Again all LREC records broken. We received 1468 submissions, plus 18 for the REPROLANG Track. 55 Workshop proposals were submitted, and 14 Tutorials.

We recruited 1715 colleagues to be part of the Scientific Committee. 3162 were invited, out of which 469 refused and 978 didn't answer. Finding reviewers is becoming a quite difficult task, good reviewers even more.

The LREC Program Committee analysed more than 4300 reviews, to reach a decision during a face-to-face meeting. Despite all our efforts, we know that both the reviewing and the decision (meta-reviewing) phases are exposed to various possible problems, from subjectivity to actual mistakes, and we apologise for these.

As a result of reviewing and meta-reviewing, we have 883 papers accepted, of which 188 Orals and 695 Posters. The REPROLANG Committee accepted 12 papers. In addition, we accepted 38 Workshops and 7 Tutorials.

If this had been a normal LREC it would have been for sure the largest ever, but here I cannot put any figure, just imagine ...

LREC 2020 at the time of COVID-19

All this happened before COVID. Now LREC does not take place in May 2020. When we, the ELRA Board and the LREC Program Committee, saw that it would not have been possible to hold LREC in May, we decided not to turn LREC in a virtual conference, differently from what many other conferences are doing this year.

We all know that the value of LREC is not only in listening to the papers, but in the networking, the face-to-face interactions in the crowded poster sessions, the exchange of ideas, also the gathering in the social events (exactly all what we cannot do now). Thinking at the wonderful LREC Poster sessions these days looks like a nightmare, with all the people crowded around the posters. Many things are changing and our perceptions are different these days. It may happen that we have to rethink the way we are used to organise large conferences.

We hope and will do our best to be able to organise LREC 2020 ... maybe next year, in the same place, Marseille, possibly in May.

If we succeed to have LREC next year, as we hope, we will see if to have a partially different model, for example with a mixture of current and new submissions. But we will consider different possibilities.

LREC 2020 Proceedings

So what happens now? We decided that we must publish the Proceedings, here they are. And we asked also all the Workshop organisers to publish all the Workshop Proceedings. Almost all did that.

Your efforts as authors and reviewers will not be lost.

Given that we don't have a Programme, the main Conference Proceedings contain all the accepted papers together, Orals and Posters. This is in line with what we have always said: that the distinction is not based on the value of the paper but is based on their being better suited for one or the other mode of presentation.

The Proceedings are clearly not organised as usual according to the programme sessions, not having a programme, but we decided to cluster them in virtual sessions, around a number of major topics.

This time we also decided to produce all the Proceedings using START, both the Main Conference and the workshops, so that it is straightforward to have all of them in the ACL Anthology.

LREC 2020 acceptance rate: a motivated choice for an inclusive conference

This year, the LREC acceptance rate is 60%, which is very similar to previous years. We are well aware that this is higher than in many other major conferences. But we think that we need conferences of both types. For LREC, as I always state, this is a carefully reasoned decision. For us it is important to try to provide a comprehensive picture of the field and to show how it is evolving. This implies not only to look for new methodologies but also to cover how various methods or resources are able to spread, for which purposes, usages, applications and for which languages. Multilingualism – and equal treatment of all languages – is an essential feature of LREC, as it is the attempt of putting the text, speech and multimodal communities together as well as academics and industrials. LREC wants to be an "inclusive" conference: this is for us a very important feature.

What is interesting is that quality and influence is not undermined by our acceptance rate: in 2019 Google Scholar Metrics h5-index, LREC ranks 4th of the large conferences in Computational Linguistics.

LREC 2020 novelty: the REPROLANG2020 Track

An important novelty this year has been the organisation of the REPROLANG Track, as a collaborative shared task. This followed the success of the Workshops on Replicability and Reproducibility that we organised in the last two LRECs. With the organisation of this track inside the main conference, we wanted to promote the view that replicability/reproducibility of research results must be considered as a regular part of scientific practice. We hope this track becomes a tradition in next LRECs. You find these papers, as well as a detailed description of the Track organisation, in one of the Sessions in the Proceedings.

Some LREC 2020 trend

Just few notes on my perception – completely subjective and also impressionistic – of major topics of this year, some typically covered at LREC more than at other conferences.

Among the areas that are increasing I can mention:

- Less-Resourced Languages: this has always been a very important area at LREC

- Analysis of Social Media

- Dialogue and Discourse

- Knowledge discovery, extraction and classification

- Digital Humanities

Always very relevant are:

- Infrastructural issues: another area characteristic of LREC

- Corpora

- Lexicons

- Multilinguality

- Semantics

- Tools, systems, applications

And new topics:

- Cognitive methods

- Neural language representation models

LREC Proceedings in Thomson Citation Index and SCOPUS

I remind that since 2010 the LREC Proceedings have been accepted for inclusion in CPCI (Thomson Reuters Conference Proceedings Citation Index). From 2018 the LREC Proceedings are also indexed by SCOPUS (Elsevier). These are important achievements, providing a better recognition to all LREC authors and useful in particular for young colleagues.

LREC and LRE Journal (Springer)

I also mention that substantially extended versions of papers selected by reviewers as the most appropriate will be considered for publication in a special issue of the Language Resources and Evaluation Journal published by Springer (a SCI-indexed journal).

Acknowledgments

As usual, I want to thank here all those who have worked for this strange LREC 2020, and will continue to do so for it to become a real LREC, possibly next year.

I express my deepest gratitude to the Programme Committee members, especially for the huge task of selecting the papers, the workshops and tutorials. I wish to thank each of them, the new ones: Frédéric Béchet and Philippe Blache, and obviously the "old" ones: Khalid Choukri, Chris Cieri, Thierry Declerk,

Hitoshi Isahara, Bente Maegaard, Joseph Mariani, Asuncion Moreno, Jan Odijk and Stelios Piperidis. A particular thanks goes to Jan Odijk, who has worked with me in the preparation of the Proceedings. And to Khalid Choukri, who has worked for the preparation of the Proceedings in START.

I thank the ELRA Association: LREC is a major service from ELRA to all the community. And this time I especially thank the ELRA Board Members and the President, António Branco: they have been very helpful in the difficult decisions we had to make this year.

I am especially grateful to, and somehow I feel sorry for, Frédéric Béchet and Philippe Blache, chairs of the Local Committee, who started to deal with the many local matters and who will hopefully continue to do that next year.

I thank the two institutions that always dedicate a great effort to LREC: ELDA in Paris and ILC-CNR in Pisa. I am very proud of the work of Sara Goggi and Hélène Mazo, and I thank them for their continuous dedication and competence in managing the many tasks they have in their hands. Without their commitment for many months, LREC would not happen. And I add my thanks to many other colleagues of the two institutions who contributed in different ways, and in particular to Roberto Bartolini, Valérie Mapelli, Caroline Rannaud, Irene Russo, Alexandre Sicard.

I express my gratitude to the Sponsors that have helped with financial support.

Also on behalf of the Program Committee, I praise our impressively large Scientific Committee. They did a great job, most of them on time.

I thank the Workshop and Tutorial organisers, and I feel sorry for them too. Some of them are holding a virtual workshop and I wish them a successful workshop. I hope they will share their experience with us. I hope that others will be with us when we can have again LREC in real life.

The biggest thanks goes to all the LREC authors, who provide the "substance" to LREC, and give us such a broad picture of the field. I hope to see all of them next year.

This time, sadly, I cannot thank the LREC participants. I will be so glad to do this possibly next year. For now I can only thank the virtual participants, the readers of these Proceedings.

Marseille will be a fantastic Mediterranean location for LREC 2020 . . . on a different year.

I cannot welcome you at LREC 2020, but with all the Programme Committee I hope you find interesting and fruitful readings in the LREC 2020 Proceedings.

Enjoy the LREC 2020 Marseille Proceedings!

Pisa, Italy, May 13, 2020
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