

Message from the ISCA President

On behalf of the International Speech Communication Association (ISCA), welcome to INTERSPEECH 2007 in Antwerp. INTERSPEECH conferences continue the tradition established in Eurospeech and ICSLP meetings as one of the major conference series in the field of speech communication science and technology. This tradition began with the first Eurospeech conference in Paris in 1989 and the first ICSLP conference in 1990 in Kobe. ISCA builds upon the earlier organization ESCA and the Permanent Council of the ICSLP, to form a truly international organization, supporting conferences, workshops, and other scientific activities throughout the world. The organization's primary goal is "to promote Speech Communication Science and Technology, both in the industrial and academic areas" in all speech technologies, including acoustics, phonetics, phonology, natural language processing, cognitive science, signal processing, and pattern recognition. Previous conferences have been held in Genoa (1991), Banff (1992), Berlin (1993), Yokohama (1994), Madrid (1995), Philadelphia (1996), Rhodes (1997), Sydney (1998), Budapest (1999), Beijing (2000), Aalborg (2001), Denver (2002), Geneva (2003), Jeju Island (2004), Lisbon (2005), and Pittsburgh (2006). Future conferences will be held in Brisbane (2008), Brighton (2009), and Makuhari (2010). We welcome bids from any region for INTERSPEECH 2011.

We are delighted to have Victor Zue with us as the ISCA Medalist for 2007 and to award a special service medal to Wolfgang Hess, for his tireless efforts in creating and expanding the ISCA Archive. In the past year, the ISCA board has pursued a number of projects aimed at making ISCA more international and more responsive to the needs of its members. These include:

- The first two ISCA Distinguished Lecturers, Chin-Hui Lee and Marc Swerts, who will be giving presentations in parts of the world where we hope to increase participation in ISCA events.
- International Sub-Committees now representing Eastern Europe, West Asia and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- A renovated website which makes it possible to become an ISCA member, to update one's personal information, and to apply for ISCA grants online.
- A student committee with its own activities and website, including pointers to shareable software and job postings.
- ISCA ITRWs in Berlin (Perceptual Quality of Systems), Pittsburgh (SAPA 2006), Paris (NOLISP '07) with others to be held in Antwerp (SIGdial); Bonn (SSW-6); Farmington PA (SLaTE); Stellenbosch, South Africa (Odyssey 2008); Amsterdam (Evidence-based Voice and Speech Rehabilitation in Head & Neck Oncology); Sophia Antipolis, France (ETSI Workshop on Speech and Noise in Wideband Communication); Athens (Experimental Linguistics 2008); Australia (AVSP 2008); and Santiago de Chile (Robust ASR).
- New Special Interest Groups (SIGs): SIG-IL, Iberian Languages; SIG-ILSP, Indian Language Speech Processing; and SLaTE, Speech and Language Technology in Education.
- Continued surveys of the membership to see what other activities and services ISCA can support and continued distribution to members of ISCA's monthly newsletter, ISCApad.

I would also like to thank the outgoing members of the ISCA Board, whose terms are ending during this conference: Hiroya Fujisaki, Sadaoki Furui, Michael Wagner, and Chris Wellekens. We also give our best wishes and continued support to those who remain on the board: Jean-François Bonastre, Eva Hajicova, David House, Lin-Shan Lee, Michael Picheny, and Isabel Trancoso. As always, we are enormously grateful to our Advisory Council for their invaluable help and advice.

I hope you will enjoy this conference in this beautiful city and continue to support ISCA!

Julia Hirschberg
President, ISCA

Welcome Message from the General Chairs

On behalf of everyone involved in the organization of Interspeech 2007, and especially on behalf of the International Speech Communication Association ISCA, we would like to extend a very warm welcome to all participants. Interspeech 2007 is the eighth annual Interspeech conference, following previous –and very successful– conferences in Beijing, Aalborg, Denver, Geneva, Jeju Island, Lisbon and Pittsburgh. Also, the conference that you are participating in is the tenth in the sequence of bi-annual Eurospeech conferences. It is safe to say that the Interspeech conferences are generally recognized as the primary opportunity for the exchange of ideas in a broad array of fields under the cover term “Spoken Language Processing”. The Interspeech community is truly an interdisciplinary one, and the annual conferences bring together scientists in speech and natural language processing, acoustic phoneticians, linguists and psycholinguists, electrical engineers and computer scientists, and researchers in auditory physiology and perception, among many other disciplines.

As is the case with every conference, there are two primary attractions for the attendees: the high-quality papers that are presented and the possibility to meet with fellow scientists in one’s own discipline as well as with scientists from other disciplines. Increasingly, Interspeech conferences also offer the opportunity for scientists to meet and exchange ideas with people in the speech and information processing industry.

This year we received 1269 submissions, 738 of which could be accommodated in the scientific program. This amounts to an acceptance rate of 58%, which may be a historic low, but which at the same time holds the promise of very high overall quality. For the review and selection of the papers we relied on 601 reviewers, 24 Area Coordinators and a group of people who spent two full working days in Antwerp and Leuven to create the final program that consists of 30 oral sessions, 30 poster sessions and 9 special sessions. For the first time in the history of Interspeech all papers were assessed by three reviewers. We are aware that this may be stretching the limits of the time and effort that the community can afford. Yet, we are confident that this innovation has contributed to raising the overall quality of the selected contributions. In addition, there are four plenary sessions in which the keynote speakers address topics in the heart of our field or in which they open new perspectives for fresh and promising directions. The first keynote speaker on Tuesday is Victor Zue, the 2007 ISCA Medalist. He is followed by Sophie Scott on Wednesday, Alex Waibel on Thursday and Pierre-Yves Oudeyer on Friday. Virtually all participants will know Victor Zue and Alex Waibel, so they do not need further introduction and recommendation in our community. However, we would like to encourage all participants to attend the keynote lectures by the two speakers who may not be on your required reading list. We are proud to be able to offer these opportunities for broadening our horizons, and hopefully also yours.

When it comes to meeting fellow scientists we are confident that we have created an excellent ambience. The Flanders Concert & Conference Centre (FCCC) where all regular sessions take place and the Astrid Park Plaza Hotel (APP) that is host to the special sessions offer ample space and opportunity for meeting people and for sitting together for more intensive discussions. When the weather does not let us down, the adjacent Antwerp Zoo will offer truly unsurpassed opportunities for small meetings. And even if it may be too wet or chilly to sit and discuss in open air, the historic centre of Antwerp has a massive number of pubs, bars and restaurants where you can meet over excellent quality food and drinks. Last but not least, the official program of the conference includes a welcome reception in the FCCC, a student reception in the beautiful Grand Café Horta, a reviewer’s reception in the historic Town Hall, and a banquet in a venue close to the river Schelde.

We expect that many meetings between scientists and industrialists will take place in the same ambience as the meetings among scientists. However, we have created a hot spot in the exhibition area, where a booth is fully dedicated as a place for establishing contacts. We hope that this will help in building bridges between academia and industry.

It would have been impossible to organize Interspeech 2007 the way it is without numerous contributions from people and organizations. Carrying on the theme of collaboration between

academia and industry, we gratefully acknowledge the financial support of our industrial sponsors. Even more important, and therefore worthy of an even more grateful ‘thank you’ was the financial support of non-profit organizations that support research and development of speech and language technology. *STEVIN*, the Flemish-Dutch program dedicated to supporting the creation of a comprehensive Spoken Language Technology infrastructure for the Dutch language, and the Dutch Foundation for Speech Technology (*Stichting Spraaktechnologie*) deserve a special mention as Gold Sponsor.

Money is useless if there are no people to spend it expertly, effectively and efficiently. We are extremely happy that we could rely on effective, efficient and expert support from all members of the local organizing committee, the staff of the FCCC and APP, our Professional Conference Organizer (*Momentum PCO*) and the administrative staff of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Special thanks are due to the University of Antwerp and their staff for making available all facilities for the Tutorials on the day before the start of the main conference.

We have already mentioned some of the attractions of Antwerp, the venue of Interspeech 2007. An attempt to be complete could easily result in a written volume that would rival the proceedings of this conference in terms of number of pages as well as attractions – be it of a very different kind. Antwerp is home to one of the largest and most important diamond centers in the world. Closely connected to the diamond trade, it has one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe. It combines one of the biggest and most modern ports in Europe with a number of beautiful museums, two of which deserve special attention. First, the Museum of Fine Arts, featuring what is probably the world’s largest collection of paintings by Peter Paul Rubens next to primitives such as Jan Van Eyck and Hans Memling and 20th century artists such as Permeke, James Ensor and Rik Wouters. The other museum that you should not miss is Plantin-Moretus, where you can learn almost everything there is to know about the history of printing, the previous major revolution in information processing before the advent of the digital computer. The website of the Antwerp Tourist Office lists 16 more museums, from the National Maritime Museum to the Fashion Museum, which is one of the links to Antwerp as a truly exceptional shopping experience. Praising Belgian beers or Belgian chocolates seems completely redundant, but perhaps it is less well known that it is difficult to find better French cuisine than in Belgium.

Dirk Van Compernelle & Lou Boves
General Chairs

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