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Editors' foreword

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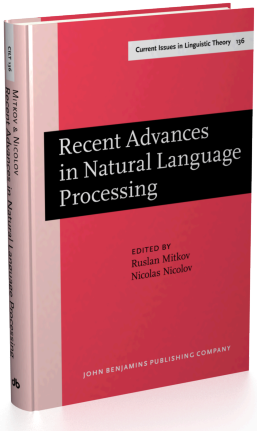

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Editors' Foreword

This volume brings together revised versions of a selection of papers presented at the First International Conference on "Recent Advances in Natural Language Processing" (RANLP'95) held in Tzigov Chark, Bulgaria, 14–16 September 1995. The aim of the conference was to give researchers the opportunity to present new results in Natural Language Processing (NLP) based on modern theories and methodologies. Alternative techniques to mainstream symbolic NLP, such as analogy-based, statistical and connectionist approaches were also covered.

It would not be too much to say that this conference was the most significant NLP event to have taken place in Eastern Europe since COLING'82 was held in Prague and COLING'88 in Budapest, and one of the most important conferences in NLP for 1995.

The conference received submissions from more than 30 countries. Whilst we were delighted to have so many contributions, restrictions on the number of papers which could be presented forced us to be more selective than we would have liked. From the 48 papers presented at RANLP'95 we have selected the best for this book, in the hope that they reflect the most significant and promising trends (and succesful results) in NLP.

The book is organised thematically. In order to allow for easier access, we have grouped the contributions according to the traditional topics found in Natural Language Processing, namely, morphology, syntax, grammars, parsing, semantics, discourse, grammars, generation, machine translation, corpus processing, and multimedia. Clearly, some papers lie at the intersection of various areas. To help the reader find his/her way we have added an index which contains major terms used in NLP. We have also included a list and addresses of contributors.

We believe that this book will be of interest to researchers, lecturers and graduate students interested in Natural Language Processing and, more specifically, to those who work in Computational Linguistics, Corpus Linguistics, and Machine Translation.

Given the success of the 1995 Conference, it has been decided that "Recent Advances in Natural Language Processing" will be the first in a series of conferences to be held biennially, the next being scheduled for 1997 (11-13 September 1997).

We would like to thank all members of the Program Committee. Without them the conference, although well organised (special thanks to Victoria Arranz), would not have had an impact on the development of NLP. Together they have ensured that the best papers were included in the final proceedings and have provided invaluable comments for the authors, so that the papers are 'state of the art'. The following is a list of those who participated in the selection process and to whom a public acknowledgement is due:

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The conference grew out of an idea proposed by Ruslan Mitkov which we discussed at the international summer school "Contemporary Topics in Computational Linguistics" in 1994 (the summer school has taken place annually in Bulgaria since 1989). Among those who supported the idea at the time and encouraged us to organise RANLP'95 were Harold Somers, Michael Zock, Manfred Kudlek, and Richard Kittredge.

We would like to acknowledge the unstinting help received from our series editor, Konrad Koerner, and from Ms Anke de Looper of John Benjamins in Amsterdam. Without them this book would not have been a viable project. Thank you both for the numerous clarifications and your constant encouragement!

Nicolas Nicolov produced the typesetting code for the book, utilising the TEX system with the LATEX 2_ε package. The technical support from the Department of Artificial Intelligence at the University of Edinburgh is gratefully acknowledged.

May 1997

Ruslan Mitkov
Nicolas Nicolov