SIGdial: Special Interest Group on Discourse and Dialogue

SIGdial is a Special Interest Group on Discourse and Dialogue which was formed in November 1997 as a Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL).

SIGdial is a cooperative organisation driven entirely by volunteers among its membership which counts more than 200 people from academia and industry in Asia, Australia, Europe and North America. The people with overall responsibility for the SIG are elected. The first officer elections were held in July 1999 and will be held regularly, as regulated by the SIGdial constitution. In addition, many other SIGdial members contribute to running the SIG e.g. by collecting and distributing information about relevant events, liaising with related communities and organisitons, moderating the SIGdial members mailing list, and contributing to the contents of the SIGdial web pages.

The objective of SIGdial is to promote theoretical, empirical and applied research on computational discourse and dialogue. To achieve its goal SIGdial seeks to stimulate collaboration and encourages work on

- developing, challenging, and testing *theories* of discourse and dialogue by analysing *corpora* from interactions with actual or simulated unimodal or multimodal dialogue systems or from human-human interaction;

- development and distribution of reusable discourse and dialogue processing *components*, generic *architectures* and common *toolkits* for building complete dialogue systems;

- exploration and development of techniques and metrics for the *evaluation* of discourse and dialogue components and systems;

- development of *standards* and *guidelines* for discourse and dialogue transcription and annotation;

- sharing of discourse and dialogue *resources*.

To strengthen collaboration and bring members from the SIGdial community together the first SIGdial Workshop on Discourse and Dialogue was held on 7-8 October in Hong Kong in conjunction with ACL'2000. It was a successful event with strong support for organising a second SIGdial workshop already next year. The next issue of Elsnews will report on the first workshop.

Along with the workshop a short business meeting was held to discuss ongoing and new initiatives. Task groups were discussed as a new activity based on groups of people interested in the same SIGdial sub-area and wanting to promote and build new knowledge in this area through collaboration. Volunteers offered to launch four different task groups on continuation of the discourse resource initiative (DRI), evaluation, multimodal dialogue, and feedback, respectively. There was also broad agreement on considerably improving the SIGdial resource web page. During the coming months SIGdial will thus make an effort to collect information on resources in a broad sense, including e.g. tools and coding schemes. Moreover, it was decided to reach out to the International Speech Communication Association (ISCA) for a closer relationship. At the time of writing it is under negotiation whether SIGdial should also become an ISCA SIG.

New members are welcome and may join SIGdial by filling in the form at http://www.nis.sdu.dk/sigdial/members.php. The membership constitutes an ideal audience for issues pertaining to discourse and dialogue. Members receive information, participate in discussions,

initiatives and events focused on or related to discourse and dialogue processing, and contribute to the collective pool of knowledge and resources of the group by sharing their own.

We gratefully acknowledge Elsnet which is the first external sponsor of SIGdial. Elsnet has generously offered one page in Elsnews for SIGdial purposes in this and the following issue and the feature is likely to become permanent.

FOR INFORMATION

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For further information relating to SIGdial

Email: sigdial@loria.fr is SIGdial's moderated mailing list. Email sent to this list is received by all members.

Web: http://www.sigdial.org