TALIP Perspectives: Editorial Commentary

The State of the Journal

It has been a year since I took over as Editor in Chief of ACM's *Transactions on Asian Language Information Processing*. I am happy to report that during this past year there has been a lot of progress on many fronts.

The 12 months ending on June 30, 2014, saw 150 submissions to the journal, double the 75 for the previous year. Part of the increase in submissions can probably be attributed to better advertising: ACM has started distributing flyers for TALIP at major conferences such as ACL, EMNLP, Interspeech, and ACPR.

Another reason for the increase may be that we added a new "Short Paper" category (nominally 5–10 pages in length) that allows for short reports on small experiments, or any other topic of interest, that do not have enough content for a long paper. This new category attracted 42 submissions during the year ending June 30, 2014.

Of course, increased submissions do not ipso facto imply an increase in the number of publishable articles. But, in fact, we *have* seen an increase in these so much so that, during the past year, it has not been necessary to supplement the volume with special issues. Indeed, as I write this, there are ten accepted articles ready, enough to fill at least the remainder of volume 13. Note that TALIP's overall acceptance rate over the past year has been about 19%, down from 25% for the previous year.

Our submissions have been global, with submissions from Bhutan, China, France, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, Jordan, North Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestinian Territory, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States, and Vietnam. The largest number of submissions have been from India.

Because submissions have been up in a number of areas, we have added six new Associate Editors to the board: Yassine Benajiba, Julia Hockenmaier, Yang Liu, Shijian Lu, Dipti Sharma, and P. Shivakumara. A few board members have also left us for various reasons and we thank them for their service to the journal.

As professionals we are each one of us busy with many things (not to mention that most of us try to have lives outside of the profession). Editorial service requires a special ability: it requires the ability to put aside one's own many projects for a short while at somewhat regular intervals and attend to work that benefits other people most immediately, namely, the authors who submit to the journal. The time required, as calculated as a percentage of one's total professional time commitment, is usually rather small. But it does require the organizational skills to make that time available. Not everyone has these skills, so I am particularly grateful to the Associate Editors who have been willing to spend the time to keep the editorial process flowing smoothly.

In December 2013, ACM added a new administrative assistant for TALIP, Ms Jeyel Tecson. Jeyel has been responsible for handling the initial checking of manuscripts as they come in, making modifications to the Manuscript Central system for TALIP, and shepherding accepted articles through the final publication process. Thanks, Jeyel, for all your work so far.

One of my goals for TALIP has been to reduce the time to decision for submissions. Unfortunately, on that goal we still have work to do. The mean time to decision between July 31, 2013, and June 30, 2014, was 58 days, which is higher than the mean time

of 55 days for the previous year. However, the difference is not significant ($t = -0.41$, $p = 0.68$), and indeed the standard deviation in review times for this past year (36.3) is less than that for the previous year (50.0), suggesting that we have removed some of the more extreme outliers in reviewing time. Also, TALIP's turnaround time is among the quickest turnarounds for an ACM journal. Still, an ideal goal in my view would be about 45 days. That should in theory be possible, for example, it rarely takes me more than a month to do a review. As I have noted, it just takes the willingness to set aside other things for a while.

Starting with 12(4), I inaugurated a new editorial/opinion column entitled "TALIP Perspectives", based loosely on the "Last Words" column in *Computational Linguistics*. We have had two contributions thus far, appearing in 13(1) and 13(2), not counting the one I wrote myself that appeared in 12(4), or the current one.

Thomson Reuters Web of Science (formerly ISI) has begun evaluating TALIP for possible indexing. This is a long process, but if we are successful, it will remove one of the hurdles that the journal faces in attracting submissions. Particularly in Asian countries, academic institutions seem to believe that indexing of a journal is an indication that the journal publishes better, more replicable research. As a result, academic researchers may be less willing to submit to a non-indexed journal since they fear such publications will not help advance their careers. Not infrequently I get inquiries from prospective authors about whether TALIP is indexed and what our "impact" factor is. Personally I find this state of affairs silly: It is well-known that some of the highest-profile journals such as *Science*, frequently publish work that is at least technically flawed and, at worst, fraudulent. See, for example, my editorial in the 13(4) issue of TALIP; the problem is in any case widely reported. What is particularly funny is that one of Thomson Reuters' indexed journals, the *Journal of Vibration and Control*, has recently been involved in a case of peer-review fraud by a Taiwan-based researcher (see "Science Journal Pulls 60 Papers in Peer-Review Fraud", *New York Times*, July 10, 2014). In other words, publication in one of these indexed journals is hardly any guarantee of the quality of the work. But one must go with the times, I suppose, so I am hopeful that TALIP will be indexed so that at least this concern of some researchers about submitting to the journal will be removed.

Finally the board of ACM has approved an extension in the charter of TALIP to go beyond Asian languages and include native languages of Africa, Australasia-Oceania, and the Americas. Most of these languages are *low resource* and so the theme of TALIP will shift from focusing on just Asian languages (many of which are also low resource), to include low-resource languages more generally. Starting with 14(1) (i.e., the first 2015 issue), we will accept articles that deal with NLP and speech processing for languages from these parts of the world, too. While I do not expect that this will result in a huge influx of new articles initially, I hope that researchers who work on systems for low-resource or endangered languages would consider the journal as a possible outlet for their work. The name of the journal will change to *Transactions on Asian and Low-Resource Language Information Processing*, or TALLIP to reflect this expanded focus. I will be implementing changes related to this through the rest of 2014.

Richard Sproat
Editor-in-Chief