Preface

PorTAL – Portugal for Natural Language Processing – follows two previous conferences: FracTAL, held at the Université de Franche-Comté, Besançon (France), in December 1997, and VexTAL, held at Venice International University, Cá Foscari (Italy), in November 1999. The main goals of theses conferences have been: (i) to bring together the NLP community in Europe; (ii) to strengthen the position of local NLP research in the international NLP community; (iii) to provide a friendly forum for discussion of new research and applications.

PorTAL has reconfirmed this year the goals and the high international standing of those conferences, largely due to its Program Committee, composed of renowned researchers in the field of Natural Language Processing, a third of them from Portuguese universities. This clearly contributed to the significant number of papers submitted (48) by researchers from 12 different countries.

Each paper submitted was reviewed by three reviewers, either from the Program Committee or by their commitment. All those who contributed are mentioned on the following pages. The review process led to the selection of 35 papers for oral presentation: 23 regular papers and 11 short papers. They have been published in this volume.

The conference, and this book, were structured around the eight following main topics: (i) *Pragmatics, discourse, semantics, syntax, and the lexicon*; (ii) *Interpreting and generating spoken and written language*; (iii) *Language-oriented information retrieval, question answering, summarization, and information extraction*; (iv) *Language-oriented machine learning*; (v) *Multi-lingual processing, machine translation, and translation aids*; (vi) *Natural language interfaces and dialogue systems*; (vii) *Tools and resources*; (viii) *Evaluation of systems*.

We would like to express here our thanks to all the reviewers for their quick and excellent work. We extend a special thanks to our invited speakers, Richard Sproat and Ruslan Mitkov, for their valuable contribution, which has undoubtedly increased the interest in the conference. The abstracts of their invited talks are presented at the beginning of this volume. We are indebted to a number of individuals for taking care of specific parts of the conference program: on the ground at the University of Algarve, Jorge Baptista managed the local arrangements; Cristina Mota built and maintained the PorTAL web site, which served as our principal information channel; Luísa Coheur, at L2F (INESC-ID), Paula Carvalho, and Cristina Mota, at LabEL (CAUTL), provided the indispensable administrative support.

We would like to publicly acknowledge the institutions, without whom this event would not have been possible: Centre de Recherches Lucien Tesnière, Departamento de Linguística Geral e Românica, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Câmara Municipal de Faro, Laboratório de Sistemas de Língua Falada, Laboratório de Engenharia da Linguagem. A special mention has to be made of the Universidade do Algarve, who generously hosted the conference.

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