

Proposal to Host the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics

Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio, USA USA

We propose to host ACL08 in Columbus, Ohio on 5-10 July 2008, with the meeting to be hosted by The Ohio State University. The planned duration of the conference includes one day of tutorials (5 July), 3 days of main conference (6-8 July) and two days of co-located workshops (9-10 July).

1 Date and Venue

The prime conference venue is the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Columbus, which is located next to the Columbus Convention Center, within easy walking distance of the Arena District and the Short North. The former is a rapidly developing entertainment district with a wide range of opportunities, while the latter is a historic, eclectic and diverse urban neighborhood which we think will appeal to ACL participants. The Short North has numerous alternative hotels and guesthouses, and the University campus and students dorms are located some blocks further north, and linked to the main conference venue by a regular bus service. The highly specific dates are due to the need to find a block of days for which both the dorms and the hotel are available.

The Ohio State University is one of the largest and most successful public research universities in the US, with a strong computational linguistics program distributed between Linguistics and Computer Science and Engineering. Five faculty and about 20 students specialize in computational linguistics and/or natural language processing. This will be the main source of volunteer labor in the organization of the conference. Both Linguistics and CSE are highly ranked departments with good facilities and a long history. We anticipate being able to attract sponsorship from the College of Engineering, from the College of Humanities and perhaps also from the University's College of Research.

Columbus is the capital of Ohio, and its largest city, with restaurants, museums, galleries, a symphony orchestra and other cultural activities. It is well-connected by road and air, with the airport only ten minutes away from downtown. Direct flights are available from most US cities, travelers from Europe and Asia will need to pass through customs at another US airport. While the city as a whole is car-oriented, the area to the north of the city center, which we have chosen as the conference venue, is highly suitable for pedestrians without cars.

The Short North has bookstores, art galleries, cafes and boutiques, as well as a wide range of restaurants in different price categories. The first Saturday of every month (including 5th July 2008) is the Gallery Hop, with many Short North locations providing special events. It seems to us ideal to link the opening reception to this event.

The Arena District is a more commercial entertainment area, built around the Nationwide Arena, which hosts sports events through the year and is surrounded by restaurants and cafes of various sorts.

Also within convenient walking distance is the North Market, which holds a group of independent traders offering organic and traditional foodstuffs. Slightly further afield is German Village, one of the city's historic districts, and the Brewery District, which offers additional bars and dining options. For attendees bringing families, there are a number of attractions for kids, including the Center Of Science and Industry (COSI) – our local science center, and the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, which has been rated one of the 10 best zoos in the country for kids.

2 Sponsorship

2.1 Local sponsorship

The Columbus area has several strong commercial research enterprises which we hope to persuade to provide some level of support. These include Chemical Abstracts (owned by the American Chemical Society), OCLC (The Online Computer Library Consortium: the research arm of a worldwide group of research libraries), Netscape (much smaller than it was, but still trying to re-invent itself), and Battelle (large government research contractor, not primarily focused on ACL concerns but heavily involved with the University and with promotion of technical education in general). We are budgeting for USD 1500 of sponsorship from each of three sponsors.

There will certainly be a change of governor in 2007, which may affect the level and nature of state funding for science and technology. Given this, it is difficult to make firm predictions about any state sponsorship. We assume none.

2.2 General sponsorship

We assume that there will be interest from the usual suspects (Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, IBM) but have not budgeted for this at this stage,

3 Infrastructure

3.1 Human Resources

The local chair, Chris Brew, will be in charge of the conference. He will be supported by a faculty committee including Donna Byron, Eric Fosler-Lussier, Detmar Meurers and Michael White, as well as by student volunteers from the Computational Linguistics and Language Technology Group.

We have budgeted USD 60 per participant for some professional help with conference management from Ohio State's conference organizers. This may be an over-estimate.

3.2 Space and Facilities

The conference meetings will be held in the Hyatt's meeting rooms.

A conveniently located email/internet room will be provided to participants. Wi-Fi connections are available throughout the hotel.

4 Lodging and Meals

Some lodging will be in local hotels and dormitories. We will negotiate competitive rates with the hotels. In order to use the Hyatt Regency's meeting rooms we need to fill 80% of a block of 250 rooms for the duration of the main conference and 100 rooms during tutorials and workshops, both at their standard rates (quoted as USD 136 for singles, 146 for doubles, 156 for triples). This may be open for negotiation and/or cross-subsidy from the registration fee.

We have several options for the banquet, including our preferred site, the Franklin Park Conservatory. The conservatory has space for 350 in its largest area (the atrium) and 170 in the palm house. With its pleasant atmosphere, this venue would be thoroughly enjoyed by participants; however, the seating arrangement could be suboptimal if all participants need to hear formal speeches. A number of other venues are possible, including the Center Of Science and Industry (COSI), the historic Ohio Theater, and the Hyatt Hotel ballroom.

5 Transportation

We expect that a large number of participants will be staying either in the main hotel or the other hotels nearby and will walk to the conference. We will work out a detailed plan for transport from the student dorms when we know their location. This could be as simple as "Take the bus down High Street", but might be more complex if the dorms that we are allocated are off campus. The university typically works with the public transport authorities to provide weekly passes for public transport. While this is ideal for High Street, we would need to arrange special buses to make the off-campus dorms conveniently accessible. OSU has bus service that can be chartered.

6 Budget estimates

We are attaching a draft budget in Excel format. The most important items are summarized here:

6.1 Income

- 500 regular attendees at USD 325, 200 student attendees at USD 100.
- 300 workshop/tutorial registrants at USD 100.
- TOTAL INCOME = USD 217,000

6.2 Expenses

- Food service expenses USD 99,700
- Fee to conference management services (USD 60 per participant) USD 42,000
- Misc program expenses (e.g., Web site, room rentals, transportation, local support, materials and supplies, postage). USD 54,600
- TOTAL EXPENSES = USD 196,300

At this stage there are sufficient imponderables that we don't really predict a surplus of USD 20,000.

7 Web Resources:

- The Ohio State University: www.osu.edu
- Computational Linguistics & Language Technology @ OSU: www.cllt.osu.edu
- Hyatt Regency Columbus: columbus.hyatt.com
- Short North Arts District: www.shortnorth.org
- Arena District: www.shortnorth.org
- Port Columbus International Airport: www.port-columbus.com/home.asp
- Franklin Park Conservatory: www.fpconservatory.org