

WELCOME MESSAGES

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF COORDINATORS

Welcome to ICSLP '98 in Sydney, Australia. All those involved in the organisation of this conference are delighted that we, together with our colleagues around the southern globe, can welcome all northerners to the first ICSLP in the southern hemisphere. We hope that you will enjoy the brief change of climate and some of the unique aspects of our life "down-under" while you are here.

We meet together within a tradition begun in 1990 by Hiroya Fujisaki in Kobe, and given innovative twists of implementation in three successive ICSLP conferences in Banff, Yokohama, and Philadelphia. This now well-established conference series continues to enjoy increasing patronage from the worldwide scientific community which recognises the value of a broad-based multidisciplinary focus on matters related to the processing of spoken language by humans and machines.

I also welcome you here on behalf of the Australian Speech Science and Technology Association, the host of this conference. When ASSTA was formed in 1988 it was riding the crest of a wave resulting from an initiative in 1986 to launch what appears to have been the first international conference focused entirely on a multidisciplinary appreciation of the phenomenon of speech. So your host society was founded in the environment of the broad-based study of speech and has continued that tradition with its biennial SST conference series, seamlessly incorporating its 7th SST conference with this 5th ICSLP conference.

In designing ICSLP '98 we have sought to involve a broad mix of local talent which reflects the ethos of the series but have also been most aware of the worldwide support through our International Advisory Board many of whom have been very active. In constructing a technical program committee comprising a computational linguist, a psychologist, a computer scientist, and an electrical engineer, we set the tone for a broad disciplinary appreciation of what we wished to achieve.

Australia is a vast continent, whose sparse population includes migrants from all of the countries from which our delegates have come. It is a land of grand challenges: from those of survival in a harsh terrain to those of advancement in the domain of ideas and invention. We translated this national theme into encouragement to our keynote speakers to lead us to appreciate more deeply the implications of the grand challenges of our field. Graeme Clark has faced the challenge of providing speech perception via artificial neural stimulation, and has led an Australian multidisciplinary team to realise his dream. He can examine that process by both looking back and looking forward. Stephanie Seneff has developed an awesome multidisciplinary breadth in her career as a speech scientist. She is more aware than most of the nature of and possible solutions to the grand challenges that lie ahead. Another grand challenge arises in the area of communicating our scientific awareness to all our stakeholders. We look forward to a lively and instructive time as a broad-based panel discusses just how we should be communicating our science so that our field can receive optimal levels of financial support.

On behalf of my fellow coordinators, Peter Blamey and Julie Vonwiller,

Bruce Millar
(Chair of Coordinators and President of ASSTA Inc.)