

eINTERFACE 2005 Daily

Tuesday, August 2nd

eINTERFACE What's on a man's mind?

I take this opportunity to mention how the idea of eINTERFACE came to life in mid 2003, when the core committee of SIMILAR was busy establishing the list of WorkPackages for our beloved SIMILAR NoE. It is basically a three acts piece.

Act 1. I have been a researcher for 18 years now. It is therefore becoming hard to navigate in the “conferences” directory of my laptop. Small to big, short to long, close to far away, I think I have tried them all. One of them, however, will last forever in my memory as the most productive meeting I have ever attended. It was a summer-school on Prosody, in July 1993, organized by the ELSNET (already a scientific network). I spent two weeks there, at UCL London, attending lectures and, more importantly, taking labs with my fellow PhD students from all over the world. I must say this is simply the place where I met most of my friends for life ! (the only picture that is left from this event is available from my friend Vincent Pagel's web page : <http://vincent.pagel.free.fr/Album/>; guess where I met him...).



Act 2. In 1996, I had the opportunity to work for AT&T at Bell Labs for 1.5 years, in the TTS group. This was set about 2 years after I finished my PhD (i.e., 2 years after I had signed with Kluwer for writing the “3-months-of-work” book in TTS I took 3 years to complete; I finished it at AT&T...). It was clear to me that I

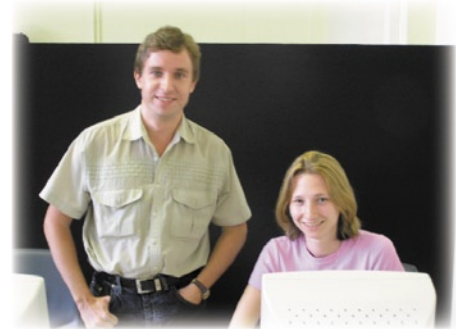
was then about to meet the greatest gurus in speech processing (yet I had underestimated the number of famous people who were working in this lab), and that I would work with the best maintained software archive in the world (you snap your finger, and you get what you were looking for). I did meet all these people, and the atmosphere was such that meeting each

other was really easy, but I also realized something I had never imagined: research in the US is a huge network thing. “Network” in terms of “you seldom work on your own on a problem”, but also in terms of “Be with the network; the network will take care of you”. In other words, research is very much advertised and supported by your employer, by all sorts of professional organizations, and even among the general public. Hence its dynamics.

Act 3. I was aware of the DARPA workshop on speech recognition organized yearly by Prof. Fred Jelinek at Johns Hopkins University (<http://www.clsp.jhu.edu/workshops/>). Funded by the Defense Agency (which implies a strong financial support), these workshops have progressively been a must for researchers in the field, who come from all around the world to participate. One of our researchers, Christophe Ris (Mr. Web for eINTERFACE) took part to it, and my colleague Hervé Bourlard, now the Director of IDIAP in Switzerland, was an active member of it. I have always envied this event, and dreamt of finding money to organize something SIMILAR.

Thierry

eINTERFACE From east to west



6604 Km. This is the usual distance between Yelena (MIT, Cambridge, US) and Alexey (SPIIRAS, Saint Petersburg, RU), but now they are both in Mons working on the project #1 at 45.3 cm from each other. Yelena and Alexey were both born in ex-Soviet Union but the destiny pushed them on the opposite sides of the world. Yelena is fond of maths and every summer she takes part to scientific activities. She is very interested in cooperative work and sharing ideas. Alexey is a member of the only lab working on multimodal interfaces in Russia. For him the SIMILAR NoE is very important : it shares the same interest areas as him and brings his lab closer to the European research. He is very involved in multimodal meetings and he was an organizer of SPECOM'04, the first SIMILAR conference. When he received the call for participation of the eINTERFACE workshop he did not hesitate: what a great chance to have discussions on topics close to his PhD thesis, to work together with other European researchers and to get new contacts ! Yelena first saw the project topics: they were focused exactly on her domain of interest: multimodal interfaces ! Then she did not want to miss the opportunity to meet researchers and ideas different from the American ones she knows quite well. Beyond their differences, Yelena and Alexey agree on two things: Mons is a very beautiful city and the Belgian beer is the best in the world !

Céline & Matei