A PROPOSAL FOR JOURNAL OPEN ACCESS

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We propose that the ACL journal *Computational Linguistics* convert its publishing model from subscription-based to open access. Open access journals are provided freely to all, eliminating access barriers to our scholarly writings and making uniform their availability, consistent with the purpose of the Association to "promote research and development activities in the field of computational linguistics" and "provide information on computational linguistics to the general public". Open access provides wider sharing of knowledge and the acceleration of research, and is thus in the best interest of authors, potential readers, and the computational linguistics community as a whole.

Concomitant with this change would be the following changes to the publication process:

- The process would take advantage of advances in journal management software systems, enabling web-based workflow management of the submission, editor assignment, reviewing, and issue processes.
- Author permission would be changed to a Creative Commons license, so as to enable free accessibility of the articles for all purposes, including data mining and use as an experimental corpus.
- Authors would reclaim responsibility for typesetting, eliminating the anachronisms and problems of the galley proof change process.
- Articles would be issued upon acceptance of the final typeset version, so that the journal would carry no backlog. This would dramatically shorten publication delays.
- Articles would be accepted independently of artificial page limitations. This would enable, though not require, accepting more articles for publication if the supply of high-quality articles allowed.
- A print edition would be published according to the principles of open-access print archiving[1] thereby maintaining the true archival aspect of the journal. Microtome publishing has already agreed to serve as the print-archive publisher, though MIT Press may also be willing to perform this task.

In summary, the model and process of publication would be essentially identical to that used by the Journal of Machine Learning Research, the highest impact factor journal in artificial intelligence[2] and the second highest of any computer science journal.

Other changes to the journal that would be enabled, but not necessitated, by the change to an open access model include:

[1] `http://mtome.com/Services/printarchiving-whatis.html`

[2] `http://jmlr.csail.mit.edu/news.html`

- Expansion of the types and lengths of articles published by the journal, perhaps including survey or tutorial articles.
- Addition of discussion or commentaries associated with the articles.
- Open peer reviewing.
- Automatic citation linking and search augmentation.
- Archiving of supplementary material, especially software and primary data including corpora.

Although all of these ought to be considered over time, we propose that they be considered as secondary. They can be implemented, if at all, at such time as the changeover to the open access model is stable.

We leave to the ACL executive committee or its designee the details as to whether changes should additionally be made to the structure of the editorial team of the journal, how the minimal costs of web and software hosting would be reclaimed, and other logistical issues. We are, of course, happy to help in any way the executive committee sees fit.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **How much will this cost?**
  The cost is minimal, as most work in managing the journal relies on volunteerism (volunter editor, editorial board, reviewers, authors). Logistics can be managed by journal workflow systems, of which many are available and open source. Several solutions are possible for the remaining costs: they can be absorbed as ACL overhead (e.g. using the same `aclweb.org` for hosting), funded by advertising, or coverd by author charges (in particular for first-copy costs such as copy-editing and typesetting that the authors themselves can't or won't perform).
- **Why should anyone be an ACL member if they can get the journal freely on the Web?**
  An ACL membership comes with other benefits, such as reduced registration at most ACL-sponsored conferences, discounts on ACL-sponsored publications, and participation in ACL Special Interest Groups. Currently, *Computational Linguistics* already allows unrestricted electronic distribution by authors, so negative impacts on ACL membership due to open access should be minimal.
- **How do we ensure long-term archival availability of the journal content?**
  Computational Linguistics would continue to be made available in both print and online versions. The print edition would continue to provide long-term archiving.
- **Will this affect our "impact factor"?**
  High "impact factor" is critically dependent on a committed editorial board with high scientific standards. It has nothing intrinsically to do with the access model used. Case in point: *Journal of Machine Learning Research*, within two years of its inception as an open access journal, has risen to be the top journal in artificial intelligence and the second ranked journal in all of computer science.

With the combination of legacy of the journal brand, continued high quality, and open access publication, we can only expect a rise in the reputation of the journal, and hence its "impact factor".

- **Don't we still need editing to keep the papers readable and ensure a uniform style?**

  Of course. This would continue to be enforced. Copy editing and typesetting to the high standards of the journal would be the responsibility of the author. For authors of accepted papers with extensive copy-editing needs who are unable to take on this task, the journal could provide copy editing at the expense of the author. In the experience of *JMLR*, this occurs very infrequently.

- **Will an open access *Computational Linguistics* get more submissions?**

  Whether this change will increase the number of submissions and accepted articles or not, the open accessibility of the journal wil be valuable in any case. But we expect that the size of the journal may grow. Currently, many potential authors are deterred by the perception (partly based on reality) that there is an unacceptably long delay from submission to publication. By removing the artificial scarcity imposed by the annual page limit and by moving to a web-based workflow, the backlog will be eliminated, perception will change, and more potential authors will submit to the journal.

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