

Preface

This document is a record of the papers and other material presented at the Second European Conference on Cognitive Modelling (ECCM-98), which was held on the campus of the University of Nottingham from 1st to 4th April 1998. The conference attempted to build on the success of the first meeting in the series, which had been held in Berlin in November 1996. As well as presented papers, the conference included tutorials (on ACT-R, Soar, and COGENT), invited addresses, symposia, posters, and demonstrations of models and modelling software.

In the call for papers, we tried to encourage the submission of papers which report both a running (i.e. implemented) computer model *and* some empirical data against which the model can be compared. We were pleased with the results. Almost all the papers submitted included both those components, the only real exceptions being papers where such a criterion was not appropriate, such as those dealing with tools or methodology.

We were also pleased by the quality of the papers submitted. The quantity and the quality were high enough that we were able to be selective, while still having enough papers for a full conference programme. Within the constraints of preparing for a conference — where a large number of papers have to be assessed in a short interval of time, and where decisions about acceptance or rejection have to be made on the basis of a paper as it stands — we attempted some serious refereeing. Of course, the review process could not be as thorough as it is for journal publication, but each paper was read and commented on by at least two members of the programme committee, and we tried hard to make the feedback given to authors clear and informative, especially in cases where changes were suggested or where reasons for rejecting a paper (or accepting it as a poster) were offered.

Of the 40 papers submitted, we accepted 20, and invited a further 10 to be presented as posters (6 of which took up the invitation). We also accepted 5 of the 6 contributions submitted as posters. Our main criterion for posters was that they should be of relevance to the cognitive modelling research community, but possibly reporting work that is too preliminary to be presented as a main paper, or possibly focused on a model without as yet including the comparison to data.

As well as having representation from a wide range of areas of cognitive modelling, the conference is a truly international event. Contributions to the programme came from 14 different countries: the UK (11), USA (9), France (8), Germany (7), Italy (3), Belgium (2), Finland (2), The Netherlands (2), Australia, Bulgaria, Greece, Japan, Sweden, and Switzerland (1 each). It should be noted that the author index to these Proceedings lists no fewer than 80 authors who have contributed to the conference.

It is appropriate to end this introduction with some thoughts about the nature of the ECCMs and how they relate to other meetings. Many of us tend to think of cognitive modelling as a research activity dominated by the USA. Yet even in the USA, the publication of descriptions of running computer models and their detailed comparison with empirical data is comparatively rare, and there seem to be no meetings attempting what ECCM is trying to do. The closest that comes to mind is the annual meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. Yet the feel of that meeting is entirely different to ECCM, in part because it is indeed a meeting of a particular scientific society (which ECCM is not), and in part because Cognitive Science (as viewed by the Society) is a broad field, of which cognitive modelling is seen as just a small part. Mainly, what makes ECCM distinctive is the point we stressed above, namely our emphasis on the presentation of both an implemented model and its comparison against empirical data, and on keeping a reasonable balance between the two.

At the time of writing, nothing has been decided about the location and timing of any third ECCM. There are some uncertainties about future meetings, and especially about our relationship to the ongoing series of European Conferences on Cognitive Science (ECCS: St Malo, 1995; Manchester, 1997; Sienna, 1999). These matters are to be discussed at a special session during the conference. We certainly hope that something recognisably similar to the first two ECCMs continues, though perhaps still more international in flavour. To judge from the papers at this conference, cognitive modelling in Europe is in a comparatively healthy state.

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