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EDITORIAL

Editorial

Everything that has a beginning has an end.
Titus Maccius Plautus,
a Roman playwright of the Old Latin period

The Prague Bulletin of Mathematical Linguistics (PBML) had its beginning in 1964, one year before the start of the series of regular international meetings called COLING and the regular conferences of ACL. In the history of Czechoslovak computational linguistics (at that time called by its Praguian followers “algebraic”, inspired by the logician Y. Bar Hillel, but soon after changing this name to a more internationally common “mathematical”, and later, when computers entered the scene more vigorously, “computational”), this may be considered a milestone of the field (CL in the sequel). The start of PBML was accompanied (on September 18–22, 1964) by an international meeting (“colloquium”) of researchers involved in the newly arising branch of science, which may be claimed to be the first such meeting in our geographical area. No wonder that not many of the participants of the colloquium are among us any more (to name just a few who have already left: Helmut Schnelle, Manfred Bierwisch, Hans Karlgren, Bernard Vauquois, Ferenc Kiefer, Ferenc Papp, Laszlo Kalmár). Also the initiator and for a long time the editor-in-chief of the Bulletin and the main organizer of the 1964 colloquium Petr Sgall, who was the founder of the field of CL in Czechoslovakia, died on May 28, 2019.

Since those who introduced the study and work in CL in Czechoslovakia were linguists, it is no wonder that the first small CL group started its activities at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University (CU) around 1959. However, as they had good personal links to colleagues from the field of logic and mathematics, a still smaller parallel group of Sgall’s students found their place at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of CU. The two groups led by Petr Sgall joined together at the beginning of 1968 in the so-called Laboratory of Algebraic Linguistics under the roof of the Faculty of Arts. Due to the Soviet invasion in August of the same year and to the fact that none of the members of this Lab expressed their support for the new political situation, the very existence of the Lab was endangered, Petr Sgall was supposed to leave the Uni-

versity and the other members (at that time they were 15 in total) were also supposed to leave the academic area. However, thanks to our colleagues and friends at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics (FMP) and also to the fact that the political situation there was not so strict as that at the Faculty of Arts, the members of the Lab found their shelter at that Faculty, not as a group or department but as individual faculty members, facing, of course, restrictions as for their teaching, international contacts and academic degrees. The situation gradually became more favorable; at the beginning of the eighties, there was a possibility to create an unofficial group at the Dept. of Applied Mathematics, and after the “velvet revolution” in 1989, an independent institute was established at FMP called the Institute of Formal and Applied Linguistics (ÚFAL) chaired by Petr Sgall. The chairs of the Institute of course changed during the last 34 years, but the Institute is still there, and the Prague Bulletin of Mathematical Linguistics as well. It should be added in this connection that the existence of the Bulletin was also severely endangered after the Soviet invasion, but it was thanks to our colleague and friend, the logician Professor Karel Berka, a member of the Communist Party but a very devoted friend of ours, who was willing to take over the responsibility and to chair the Editorial Board and thus saved PBML’s existence. The role of PBML was more than crucial. Not only that it was almost the only publication forum in the country where the results of our research in CL could be published and thus disseminated internationally, but also, and most importantly, the journal was a very valuable material for exchange at the time when no financial resources were available for buying books or journals published abroad or to pay for mimeographed research papers offered by such activities as those of the Indiana University Linguistics Club at Bloomington University, Indiana, etc. In this way, our CL community has not lost awareness of the most recent developments of the field and kept international contacts alive.

Though the original intention of the first PBML editor-in-chief Petr Sgall and the Editorial Board members (a general linguist Pavel Novák, a quantitative linguistics specialist Marie Těšitelová and a formal logician Pavel Berka) was to provide a forum for the newly arising local CL community to introduce their research results, PBML had soon acquired status of an internationally well-known CL forum for both theoretically- and application-minded researchers from all corners of the world. This was also reflected by the reorganization of the editorial board into a body of internationally recognized researchers in 1997, thus ensuring a high scientific quality of the PBML’s contents.

However, with the expansion of the field in the recent years (even before the deep learning revolution), there are many more opportunities to publish computational linguistics research worldwide, many of which are also recognized by national authorities as “worthwhile” when considering grant applications or personal promotions. Despite some effort, PBML was unable to reach that status, apparently reflected by the low number of submissions, which in turn made it harder to submit applications to worldwide indexes. While we **deeply** regret it, we are now closing the operation,

hoping that researchers can publish under similar conditions (Open Access, free of fees) in other more recognized venues, such as TACL or CL.

With many sincere thanks to our Editorial Board members and my assistants, Dr. Jana Hamrlová and Dr. Martin Popel of ÚFAL (Computer Science School, Charles University), I wish our prospective contributors good luck in pursuing science in the field of Computational Linguistics and success in publishing its results.

Jan Hajič
Editor-in-chief
PBML