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Language Engineering

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Language Engineering

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Open Distributed Systems

Gerhard Heyer
Hans Haugeneder (Eds.)

Language Engineering

Essays in Theory and Practice of
Applied Natural Language Computing



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Preface

The present volume of articles grew out of a workshop on language engineering, or better: the principles of an engineering approach for the development of language products, that was initiated and organized by Gerhard Heyer in May 1991 on the premises of the Reimers Stiftung, Bad Homburg. This is the list of persons that participated: Dr. J. Arz (Darmstadt), Dr. H.-U. Block (München), Dr. P. Bosch (Heidelberg), Prof. Dr. U.L. Figge (Bochum), Dr. Ch. Galinski (Wien), T. Gerhard (Luxembourg), Prof. Dr. W. von Hahn (Hamburg), Dr. H. Haugeneder (München), Prof. Dr. R. Hauser (Erlangen-Nürnberg), Prof. Dr. G. Heyer (Leipzig), Prof. Dr. H. Kamp (Stuttgart), Prof. Dr. Krause (Bonn), Dr. J. Laubsch (Palo Alto, USA), Dr. D. Rösner (Ulm), Prof. Dr. H. Schnelle (Bochum), Prof. Dr. J. Siekmann (Kaiserslautern), Dr. O. Stock (Trento, Italy), Dr. G. Thurmair (München), Dr. H. Trost (Wien), Prof. Dr. H. Uszkoreit (Saarbrücken), Prof. Dr. W. Wahlster (Saarbrücken), Dr. M. Zoeppritz (Heidelberg).

All contributions were of very high quality, and the discussion has certainly been very stimulating and fruitful at a stage where the very notion of language engineering has not yet become a (rather polysemous) commonplace. Walther von Hahn and Rainald Klockenbusch were so kind as to immediately commission the proceedings, and one of the very first books on language engineering could soon have appeared. In the months to follow, however, editorial work was delayed for at least two reasons. Not only had there been contributors to the workshop who did not in the end contribute to this volume, but, more importantly, there were also changes in the professional environment for both the editors that forced them to existentially concentrate on retaining natural language processing as their professional orientation. It is one thing to discuss how a successful language engineering should look like, but it is quite another thing to really build commercially successful language products. Time to reflect on the general principles of our discipline became a privilege that in a true sense of the word had to be earned first.

In view of the many changes of European computer and software industries during those four years, and considering the obvious need for most of us who work on natural language processing to turn it into a profitable discipline, the

notion of language engineering may have even more practical relevance today than it did in 1991. When re-reading the present collection of papers I became convinced that they would still make a valuable contribution to the present discussion, and herewith take the risk of publishing them in a state at which the book had already been in 1993.

Many thanks to Walther von Hahn and Rainald Klockenbusch for their patience and support, many thanks also to my secretary at Leipzig, Mrs. Renate Schildt, without whom the final attempt to get this book published would not have succeeded.

Leipzig, March 1995

Gerhard Heyer

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