

Visit Report Alex Gruenstein

Alex Gruenstein has been working at MIT and Stanford, in the fields of multimodal dialogue systems, speech recognition, and natural language understanding, for the past eight years. He visited Edinburgh University from 24th February to 6th March 2009 and was hosted by Dr. Oliver Lemon and Dr. Verena Rieser.

During his visit, Alex gave an ICCS seminar at the University of Edinburgh School of Informatics, which was also attended by members of the Heriot Watt community. The talk was also advertised to St Andrews University and the University of Aberdeen.

The following week, he gave a hands-on tutorial on the use of the WAMI toolkit for developing web-accessible multimodal interfaces.

This SICSA visit has already led to a significant collaboration between the University of Edinburgh and MIT. In this collaboration a web-based speech interface was developed using MIT's WAMI portal for speech services and a natural language realiser developed at Edinburgh for the EC FP7 CLASSiC project (www.classic-project.org). Web-based speech-interfaces are an important step forwards for research in this area, as they allow gathering realistic data over the web (as opposed to inviting paid subjects into the lab). The dialogue systems group in Edinburgh now plans future web-based data collections using the WAMI toolkit integrated with Edinburgh dialogue systems research. A video of the current prototype system is available here:

<http://homepages.inf.ed.ac.uk/vrieser/videos/>

Alex's visit therefore resulted in the transfer of important new capabilities, knowledge, and skills to the benefit of Scottish research in multimodal interface technologies.