

Report on Prof Ani Nenkova's Distinguished Visiting Fellowship

Host: Advait Siddharthan (Aberdeen)

Prof Ani Nenkova visited Scotland from June 23 to July 2. She spent a week at Aberdeen and a day in Edinburgh. Her visit was useful for all concerned.

She gave three presentations at Aberdeen, two departmental seminars and a third to the Natural Language Generation group, the first of which was attended by over 40 faculty, postdocs and students, and all of which attracted audiences from across disciplines. Ani had fruitful meetings with most members of the NLG group, and several possibilities for collaboration were discussed, given her interests in evaluating text quality, and the Aberdeen NLG group's expertise in generating texts. The visit was particularly useful for PhD students and Postdocs, many of whom took the opportunity to run their ideas through her. A couple of them have come away with fresh ideas on how to develop their research, and Ani too is now interested in applying her evaluation tools to the output of NLG systems. Of particular interest to both sides are studies of how general and specific information should be interwoven in good writing, and the role of reformulation and redundancy in facilitating this. Given the considerable overlap in interests, we will now explore ways to involve each other in future grant proposals.

Though only in Edinburgh for a day and a half, Ani gave a seminar and also met with numerous faculty and students, in the process, developing new contacts with the speech community; Maria Wolters plans to visit Ani in Philadelphia to continue discussions of a possible collaboration.

All in all a very positive visit.