

THE FINITE STRING

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FOR COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS

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open letter

May 1, 1970

Members of the Association:

from
the president

The Purpose of this letter is to report to you on recent and pending developments regarding the publication activities of the Association — in particular, the situation with respect to the journal *Mechanical Translation and Computational Linguistics*. Those of you who were present at last year's annual meeting will recall that when that subject was raised at the business meeting, the clear sentiment of the members present (expressed through passage of a formal resolution) was overwhelmingly in favor of termination of ACL sponsorship of the journal *MTCL* at the earliest possible moment consistent with existing formal agreements. You will also recall that no one at the meeting could supply a definitive answer to the question of what agreements (if any) governing the Association's relationship with *MTCL* were presently in force. The general uncertainty on this latter point led to the adoption of a second resolution that a special short-term committee be appointed to investigate present relations with the journal *MTCL*, to explore new alternative possibilities for publication, and to report the alternatives by mail to the membership.

I had originally hoped to be able to render a full report on progress towards resolution of these important questions shortly after assuming office in January. However, it soon became apparent that there was very little of a substantive nature to pass on to you at that time: An examination of our files had turned up no record of any formal agreement, a written inquiry directed to The University of Chicago Press had produced no response, and active exploration of alternative possibilities for publication had been postponed pending resolution of our status vis-a-vis *MTCL*.

In response to this situation, I first undertook a review of our records in order to acquaint myself with necessary background material and then set about trying to identify and contact those people at The University of Chicago Press and the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago who were likely to be aware of any existing agreement. The principal items of relevance in the ACL records were the following:

1. (from the minutes of the AMTCL Executive Committee Meeting, July 23, 1964)

'AMTCL will take over the journal *MT* for three years, effective with Volume VIII, issue No. 1. This arrangement is to be renegotiated at the end of three years and Mr. Yngve will continue to serve as editor of *MT*.'

2. (from the minutes of the AMTCL Executive Committee Meeting, May 18, 1965)

'Mr. Yngve was authorized by the Executive Committee to negotiate an agreement with The University of Chicago Press to take on the subscription service and membership list services for the Association and to have either The University of Chicago or the Graduate Library School of The University of Chicago assume financial responsibility for *MT* for a specified contract period to be agreed upon by both parties.'

3. (from the minutes of the AMTCL Fourth Annual Meeting, July 26-27, 1966)

'Prof. Yngve, editor of *Mechanical Translation*, presented the following report, which was ordered to be received and filed: *Mechanical Translation* is an official contract journal of The University of Chicago Press sponsored by The University of Chicago Graduate Library School, which means that The University of Chicago will pick up any deficit, if any occurs.'

On the basis of the above information, it seemed clear that, since precisely three volumes had appeared under AMTCL sponsorship (Cf. (1)), ACL was in a position to renegotiate (and hence withdraw) its sponsorship of the journal *MTCL* — provided that no valid agreement binding on the Association had been negotiated in the interim under the authority granted under (2). In a call to Mr. Villani, business manager of The University of Chicago Press, I learned that the only formal agreement he was aware of relating to the journal *MTCL* was between The University of Chicago Press and The University of Chicago Graduate Library School, and that this agreement was in no way binding on ACL (or AMTCL). Professor Howard Winger of The University of Chicago Graduate Library School, to whom I was referred by Mr. Villani, confirmed both that the aforementioned document was the only agreement of record concerning *MTCL* and that its terms did not involve the Association in any way. My conclusion from these conversations was that the resolution of the membership on May 13, 1969, that the present arrangements with the journal *MTCL* not be renewed after the expiration of the present agreement with The University of Chicago Press was in fact immediately effective, since there was no formal agreement between ACL and The University of Chicago Press and since the three-year sponsorship originally agreed upon by the Executive Committee had run its course with the appearance of the final issue of Volume 10.

Upon his return from vacation at the end of March, I talked with Prof. Victor Yngve, Editor of *MTCL*, about the *ACL-MTCL* relationship as I saw it in the light of the resolution adopted by the membership and the information I had gathered. Prof. Yngve indicated that he was in principle willing to discontinue publication of *MTCL* and stated that he would in fact do so if ACL sponsorship were withdrawn, since his chief purpose in editing the journal was to provide a service to the membership. Although he agreed that ACL was not legally bound to sponsor any further issues of *MTCL* after the May 13 vote, he pointed out that a

sizeable number of manuscripts had been accepted for publication prior to that date and that he felt that the Association bore a responsibility to the authors of those papers to see that their work was published. Prof. Yngve proposed that ACL sponsor a final volume of *MTCL* to take care of this backlog of papers and indicated that his present schedule of other work was sufficiently light to permit completion of the entire volume sometime during the course of the summer.

After checking with the Journals Editor at The University of Chicago Press to make sure of the feasibility of the proposed production schedule, I managed to contact five of the six remaining members of the Executive Committee to discuss Prof. Yngve's proposal. The unanimous consensus of the parties to these discussions was that publication of the backlog of papers in the form of a final ACL-sponsored volume was desirable provided that we could work out suitable guarantees — in the interest of ACL members and contributors alike — that publication deadlines would be strictly observed. To this end, we devised the following formula, which was subsequently accepted as workable by Prof. Yngve and communicated in writing to the appropriate parties at The University of Chicago Press and The University of Chicago Graduate Library School:

- (1) In the interest of both the authors and the ACL membership, the following deadlines will be observed:
 - (a) The first half of Volume 11 (Nos. 1 and 2 combined, consisting of the ankles by Lovins, Ljudskanov, Simmons and Burger, and Sakai, which have already been copy edited) will be completed and mailed no later than the end of July, 1970, and preferably prior to July 22, the date of the annual meeting of ACL.
 - (b) The second half of Volume 11 (Nos. 3 and 4 combined, consisting of the articles by Wilkes, Igarashi and Yamada, Culicover, Woodhouse, and Grimes, et al. (or as many of them as gain final acceptance)) will be completed and mailed no later than November 1, 1970.
- (2) The Secretary-Treasurer of ACL, Prof. Harry Josselson, is authorized to make payment for copies of Volume 11 mailed to ACL members in accordance with the above schedule on the basis of \$2.25 per member for the first half-volume and \$2.25 per member for the second half-volume, these amounts being consistent with the established rate of \$4.50 per member per volume. The Secretary-Treasurer is not authorized to pay for issues mailed after the deadlines specified above.
- (3) In order to minimize confusion among members and subscribers, Volume 11 will be dated 1968, and the ACL officers listed on the inside front cover will be those who served in 1968. In accordance with the wishes of the former Associate Editor, however, his name will not appear in the journal.
- (4) Both halves of Volume 11 should contain a statement to the effect that this will be the final volume of *MTCL*, that the Association is continuing to publish *The Finite String*, and that it is in the process of considering possible additional publication services for members and subscribers. (Depending on what actions are taken regarding these matters at the annual meeting in July, it may be possible to include in the second half-volume a more definitive statement regarding future publications.)

Undoubtedly, there will be some of you who will be dissatisfied with the approach embodied in the above formula, either because you would have preferred continuation of ACL sponsorship of the journal *MTCL* under

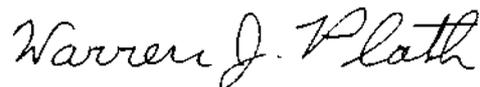
some longer-term arrangement or because you feel that it would have been better not to bring out a final volume at all. After considering the various options available, however, your Executive Committee has concluded that this is the only feasible approach which is generally consistent both with the wishes of the membership as expressed at the 1969 annual meeting and with the obligations of the Association towards those authors whose manuscripts were accepted prior to the date of that meeting. There is, of course, always the possibility that the specified schedule will not be met for one reason or another, but I have offered Prof. Yngve my personal cooperation and that of other ACL members to minimize that possibility. In the latter connection, I have received direct assurances from several of the authors that they will give particular attention to the prompt correction and return of their galleys, and I have also received and accepted a most generous offer on the part of Prof. Susumu Kuno to assume the burden of proofreading the galleys of both the Sakai paper and the Igarashi and Yamada paper in the interest of expediting the overall publication process.

This long and detailed report on ACL's publication situation would be incomplete without some mention of the steps now being taken towards exploring new alternative possibilities for providing publication services for the membership. As reported in the last issue of *The Finite String*, an ACL Committee on Publications has been formed with the immediate responsibilities of exploring possible new publications activities and presenting appropriate recommendations on that subject to the Executive Committee and the ACL membership at the annual meeting in July. The first working session of the committee will be in Atlantic City at the time of the SJCC, where it is expected that a number of proposals (not necessarily mutually exclusive) will be discussed, among them the following:

- (1) Adoption of *Language and Automation* -- the Center for Applied Linguistics' new quarterly periodical journal in the CL area — as a publication of the Association on a trial basis.
- (2) Expansion of *The Finite String* to include short (refereed) papers with the possibility that longer papers might appear as occasional special supplements.
- (3) Establishment of a quick dissemination service for papers in the CL area, with abstracts published in *The Finite String*.
- (4) Negotiation with journals in closely related areas (e.g., *Computers and the Humanities*) to determine whether they would be willing to offer reduced subscription rates to ACL members on some sort of a reciprocal basis.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you in July at the Annual Meeting, where I hope we will be able to formulate and adopt a program which will result in a significant strengthening of the publication services which ACL offers to its membership and the scientific community at large.

Sincerely yours,



Warren J. Plath
President