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Guest editorial

Computational Neuroscience: Trends in Research 2003

The papers of this proceedings volume were originally presented at the Computational Neuroscience Meeting (CNS*02) held Sunday, July 21, 2002 to Thursday, July 25 in the Congress Plaza Hotel & Convention Center in Chicago, Illinois, USA. All papers were peer reviewed prior to the meeting and final revised versions were submitted in October last year.

CNS*02 was a step into the unknown. After chairing ten annual meetings Jim Bower stepped down as organizer and program chair end of 2001. Though he announced his intention to do so well in advance, little was done by the community to prepare for the “after Jim” period. This made the 2002 meeting quite an organizational challenge. Fortunately it did not turn into a nightmare and because of a lot of planning which occurred during the 2002 meeting we are in much better shape for CNS*03.

That the 2001 meeting happened at all is thanks to a small group of devoted people. Special thanks go to Phil Ulinski who volunteered to be local organizer for what he knew would be a very difficult meeting and who found some extra funds to support the event. He also selected the excellent meeting location in a historic hotel on the Chicago lake front, with an interior reminiscent of Al Capone’s days. Though the dim poster area initially suggested a continuation of the darker period of Chicago history, a few bright spotlights soon cleared up any possible confusion about the nature of the meeting. The CNS meeting ran smoothly and the scientific content was excellent. Several people contributed to the success by taking care of the many administrative duties both before and during the meeting. Special thanks go to Diane Hall, Chris Ploegaert and Mary Ulinski. Mike Wijnants wrote the abstract and proceedings paper submission software system on very short notice and was always ready to correct any problems that popped up.

2002 was a transitional year for the meeting in several aspects, but especially in style and organization. It was inevitable that the meeting would change without Jim. Though it was not our plan to sacrifice the rock ’n roll jam session it certainly lost its glamour this year and we are looking into alternative entertainment options for 2003. More importantly we also want to restructure the meeting without losing its appeal to young scientists. While the meeting continues to be successful, attendance has been stagnating and we would like to see more senior investigators show up. A first step was made in the 2002 meeting by ending it with a full day of workshops. In 2003 we will shorten the main meeting to three days and have two days of workshops, many of

which will be pre-organized mini symposia. We hope that this change in structure will promote continued growth of the meeting. The attractive location of the 2003 meeting which will take place in Alicante, Spain will also help of course.

During the 2001 meeting a group of people started discussing ways to structure the meeting organization so that the working load and responsibilities would be shared by many. These discussions continued during the year, making use of a web forum set up by Ranu Jung, but no decisions were made before the 2002 meeting. A group of interested volunteers, open to all CNS attendees, continued these deliberations during the 2002 meetings and this led to several important decisions. The Computational Neuroscience Organization was founded in Chicago and an executive council was elected. Christiane Linster will be president for the coming years with Todd Troyer as vice president, myself as secretary and Linda Larson-Prior as treasurer. In addition Phil Ulinski is chair of the grants committee while I continue to chair the program committee. The executive council will run the organization and the meeting together with the local organizer, while the program chair together with the program committee will be responsible for the scientific content and schedule. In addition a board of 15 members was elected recently. The board will be responsible for the long range planning and will elect the executive officers in the future.

But let's return to the essence of the meeting: its scientific content. A total of 246 papers were submitted to the meeting and 141 of these papers are published in this proceedings volume. The first 28 papers were selected for oral presentation, the others were presented as posters in one of the three poster sessions. The papers are ordered as presented during the meeting which means that you will find papers covering similar topics close to each other. I hope you enjoy reading these papers which represent the work of many enthusiastic researchers in the field of computational neuroscience.

Conference details

Program chair:

Erik De Schutter (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

Local organizer:

Philip Ulinski (University of Chicago, USA)

Workshop organizer:

Maneesh Sahani (Gatsby Computational Neuroscience Unit, UK)

Government liaison:

Dennis Glanzman (NIMH/NIH, USA)

Program committee:

Upinder Bhalla (National Centre for Biological Sciences, India)

Avrama Blackwell (George Mason University, USA)

Victoria Booth (New Jersey Institute of Technology, USA)

Alain Destexhe (CNRS Gif-sur-Yvette, France)

John Hertz (Nordita, Denmark)

David Horn (University of Tel Aviv, Israel)

Barry Richmond (NIMH, USA)

Steven Schiff (George Mason University, USA)

Todd Troyer (University of Maryland, USA)

Administration:

Diane Hall

Chris Ploegaert

Website and software:

Willem Stam

Mike Wijnants

Supporting agencies:

National Institute of Mental Health, Committee on Computational Neuroscience of the University of Chicago

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