SemDial 2020

WatchDial

Proceedings of the 24th Workshop On the Semantics and Pragmatics of Dialogue

Held virtually at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts
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Sophia Malamud, James Pustejovsky & Jonathan Ginzburg (eds.)

SemDial Workshop Series

WatchDial Website

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Preface

This year WatchDial, hosted at Brandeis University in Waltham (known as "Watch City"), marked a first as the first virtual SemDial. Despite the challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the workshop went ahead with great success and high attendance, using Zoom conference software, in addition to Slack-based conversations and SpatialChat for virtual coffee breaks.

WatchDial, in tune with the SemDial workshop series as a whole, offers a unique cross section of dialogue research including experimental studies, corpus studies, and computational and formal models.

This year we received 23 full paper submissions, 21 of which were accepted after a peer-review process, during which each submission was reviewed by a panel of three experts. We note that the review scores for the accepted papers are entirely in line with prior years. The demo/breaking news session hosts 7 additional submissions that came in response to a call for demos and research in progress. All accepted full papers and demo/breaking news abstracts are included in this volume.

The WatchDial programme features three keynote presentations by Bonnie Webber of University of Edinburgh, by Craige Roberts of Ohio State and Rutgers University, and a joint presentation by Claire Bonial, Stephanie Lukin, and Clare Voss of the U.S. Army Research Laboratory. We thank them for participating in SemDial and are honoured to have them at the workshop. Abstracts of their contributions are also included in this volume.

WatchDial has received generous financial support from Brandeis University, specifically, the Linguistics program, the Computational Linguistics program, the Philosophy department, and the department of Computer Science. We have also been given an endorsement by the ACL Special Interest Group SigDial.

We would like to thank SemDial co-Presidents, Ellen Breitholtz and Julian Hough, for their guidance and support. We are grateful to Casey Kennington for his continuing stewardship on the challenge of making SemDial proceedings more indexable and to Chris Howes for her continuing archaeology of past proceedings. We would also like to extend our thanks to our Programme Committee members for their very detailed and helpful reviews.

We would also like to thank our local organizers at Brandeis University, including: administrative support from Julie Seeger, Justin Penney, and Michael Golitsyn; student organizers Fox Baudelaire, Dominique O'Donnell, Kenneth Lai, Alex Lu, Hayley Ross; tech support team lead Dimokritos Stamatakis, and tech support team member Angus L'Herrou; and webmaster Victoria Steger. We thank student moderators Che Qu, Lizzie Liang, Vicki Ng, and Luke Parker Gopnik. Thanks to everyone who helped with all aspects of the organization.

And last, but not least, a special thank you to the authors, whose contributions to science during a global pandemic are a remarkable achievement, and to the participants who attended live sessions and viewed the recordings from all around the globe. Without you, there would be no WatchDial.

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Sophia Malamud, James Pustejovsky, and Jonathan Ginzburg

Waltham, MA

July 2020

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Table of Contents

Demo and Breaking News Presentations