FOREWORD

This publication is a tribute; a tribute which celebrates an important anniversary.

Thirty five years have passed since the moment when Bernard Quemada decided to use the computer to study and process modern languages. However, this initiative, which would be so decisive for research work in the field of lexicology and lexicography, was not particularly well received at that time as it was seen as breaking down the traditional barriers between disciplines and as casting doubt on certain preconceived ideas concerning the study of language and texts. In fact, a large part of the scientific community concerned was incredulous, unable to envisage the considerable development that these new procedures would have. Nevertheless, following the uneven rhythm of the technological «generations», these ideas have developed without interruption to arrive at the widespread diffusion of the present.

The speed of progress and development makes it easy for us to forget today the exceptional intuition of the first pioneers in the field. The rest has been the result of the tenacity and inventive competence of the handful of specialists who, throughout the world, have continued is this activity, thanks to scientific and human relationships of a rare strength and value.

This explains why we have decided to dedicate this collection of essays to Bernard Quemada, leader of this pioneer research community. It is the expression of our grateful recognition of all his work during the last thirty years in the introduction, promotion and development of automatic procedures for natural language processing.

To give an exhaustive description of the major scientific contributions of Bernard Quemada to the developments in the fields of computational lexicology and lexicography over these last thirty years would require an entire volume. In this Foreword *I will just mention a few of the most innovative lines of research which he has suggested to the international scientific community since the beginning of the '60s during meetings, conferences and schools in which I have been personally involved: for example, the 1961 Besançon «Colloque International sur la Mécanisation des Recherches Lexicologiques», the 1972 Pisa International Summer School on Computational Lexicology and Lexicography, the 1972 Montreal «Colloque International de Linguistique et de Traduction», the 1981 Pisa workshop on «The possibilities and limits of the computer in produc-*

ing and publishing dictionaries». Indeed, a large part of the projects, promoted by the international scientific associations (ACL, ACH, ALLC, etc.), international organisations (EEC, Council of Europe, ESF), and national institutions which characterize our field today, recognize needs and pursue objectives suggested by Quemada on those occasions. For example:

— the need to establish standards and norms to represent linguistic data in machine-readable form;
— the need for an international survey of methods and encoding practices, as a basis for normalization and harmonization;
— the construction of precompetitive, large, reusable linguistic resources for natural language processing and for lexicography, including textual corpora and general and special purpose lexicons;
— the design of specialized workstations for linguists and lexicographers (at the 1972 Pisa Summer School we implemented the first prototype on the basis of proposals made by Bernard Quemada);
— the establishment of specific professional training courses for researchers in our area;
— the need for the various categories of researchers operating in the fields of automatic language processing – lexicographers, humanists, theoretical linguists, 'language industries' developers (e.g. those working in translation, documentation, terminology, language teaching, etc.) to recognize that, because «ils travaillent sur une matière commune: la langue, et plus particulièrement, le lexique, dans diverses disciplines», they must share methods, tools, data, resources.

Today, more than ever, Bernard Quemada's activities at all levels, whether scientific, methodological or organizational, are a constant source of inspiration for us all. As director of the TLF (Trésor de la Langue Française) and of the INaLF (Institut National de la Langue Française) since its creation in 1977, Professor Quemada is now promoting the transformation of the priceless and monumental collection of linguistic material of the TLF into an integrated multifunctional source of textual and lexical knowledge, structured in a totally new way, based on an innovative use of the latest technological developments.

In 1988, Bernard Quemada was appointed vice-President of the Conseil Supérieur de la Langue Française, a committee chaired by the French Prime Minister, which is responsible for defining, coordinating and promoting national language policy and activity. In this new, important role, Bernard Quemada is actively encouraging a more effective use and integration of the know-how produced by the different branches of general, applied, and computational linguistics, in order not only to favour progress in our disciplines but also to help to solve the various cultural, technical and economic problems implicit in the use of natural languages as the principal vehicle for producing, communicating, storing and retrieving information in today's multilingual «information-society».

Let me conclude on a personal note. We are very proud that, one year ago, Bernard Quemada agreed to act as Chairman of the Scientific Council of our Institute, and we are very pleased to dedicate these two volumes of our Journal to him in recognition of his continuous contribution to the scientific advancement not only of our Institute but of computational lexicology and lexicography in Italy and in Europe.

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