CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

The Blizzard Challenge 2012

Evaluating corpus-based speech synthesis on common databases

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In order to better understand and compare research techniques in building corpus-based speech synthesizers on the same data, the annual Blizzard Challenges 2005–2010 were held. The seventh Blizzard Challenge will run during 2011. We are now pleased to call for participation in the eighth challenge: Blizzard Challenge 2012, which runs over TWO YEARS from 2011 to 2012.

The basic challenge is to take the released speech data, build synthetic voices, and synthesize a prescribed set of test sentences. The sentences from each synthesizer are then evaluated through extensive listening tests. The 2012 challenge concerns the use of audiobook data and will take place in two phases:

- Phase One (February 2011 – August 2011):

    - Audiobook data from a single speaker, obtained from librivox.org, then segmented and aligned by Toshiba Research Europe Ltd, will be released for use as the corpus.
    - The task is to build a text-to-speech system using this data, optionally in conjunction with allowed "external data" as specified in the rules
    - Test sentences will be drawn from novels
    - There will not be a formal listening test until 2012
    - Participants should build a voice and demonstrate it at the Blizzard Challenge 2011 workshop

- Phase Two (September 2011 – September 2012):

    - The data, task and listening test design for the second phase of the challenge are not yet specified
    - Participants are encouraged to contribute to the design of the second phase

Blizzard Workshop: The Phase One systems will be demonstrated by the participants at the Blizzard Challenge 2011 workshop, which will be a satellite of Interspeech 2011 (interspeech2011.org), in Italy. The Phase Two results will be presented at a workshop, which will probably be a satellite of Interspeech 2012 (interspeech2012.org).

Website: http://www.synsig.org/index.php/Blizzard_Challenge_2012

Registration: Interested parties should register as soon as possible, by mailing blizzard@festvox.org. They should identify a contact person in their team, and provide email and postal addresses. During Phase Two, a registration fee will be charged, to partially meet the costs of running the challenge and paying listeners.

Licenses: the license for the released data can be found via the Blizzard website. Data will be released to each participant once the appropriate license has been agreed to.

Mailing list: it is essential to join the blizzard-discuss mailing list, which is used to send important information to participants. Instructions are on the Blizzard website.

Provisional timeline:

Feb	25	2011	First databases released
Aug	28-31	2011	Interspeech, Florence, Italy
Aug/Sep		2011	Blizzard workshop, Italy
Feb		2012	Second databases released
Sep	2-13	2012	Interspeech, Portland, Oregon, USA
Aug/Sep		2012	Blizzard workshop, USA

Further Information: For further information please contact blizzard@festvox.org.

A description of the challenge was published at Interspeech 2005:
http://www.festvox.org/blizzard/bc2005/IS051946.PDF