The Blizzard Challenge 2008

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 Blizzard Challenges 2005, 2006, and 2007 were held. We are now pleased to make this preliminary announcement of the fourth challenge: Blizzard Challenge 2008.

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.

For the Blizzard Challenge 2008, we are planning to release two databases. CSTR (www.cstr.ed.ac.uk) will release a 15-hour UK English speech database and lexicon. This database has not yet been publicly released: participation in the Blizzard Challenge 2008 is currently the only way to obtain this data. We plan to allow participants to retain this data for research purposes after the Challenge has finished. Participants will be asked to build two voices using (a) all data and (b) the ARCTIC subset. The second database will be of another major language (not English), from which participants will also be asked to build a voice.

The results will be presented at a workshop, which we hope will be a satellite of INTERSPEECH 2008 in Brisbane, Australia (www.interspeech2008.org). A condition of participation will be submission of a paper to this workshop. Accepted papers will be presented at the workshop, and published on the Blizzard website.

Blizzard website: http://www.synsig.org/index.php/Blizzard_Challenge

Registration Interested parties should register their intention to participate as soon as possible, by mailing blizzard@festvox.org. They should identify a contact person in their team, and provide email and postal addresses. A registration fee of 750USD per participant will be required to offset the costs of running the challenge and paying listeners; we believe this is excellent value for money!

There is a mailing list for discussion and announcements for the challenge:

blizzard-discuss@festvox.org

To join the list send a message to majordomo@festvox.org with the following line in the body of the message

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subscribe blizzard-discuss
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Provisional timeline

Feb	16	2008	Earliest database release date (about 7 weeks for voice building)
Apr	7	2008	Test sentences released (1 week for synthesis)
Apr	14	2008	Deadline for submitting synthesized speech
Apr	21	2008	Evaluation system goes live (8 weeks for evaluation)
June	16	2008	End of Evaluation (2 weeks for statistical analysis)
June	27	2008	Results distributed to teams (1 month for writing paper)
July	1	2008	Satellite workshop papers due (1 week for review)
Aug	15	2008	Notification of acceptance
Sep	22	2008	Presentation of results at the satellite workshop in Brisbane (tentative)
Sep	22-26	2008	Interspeech 2008 in Brisbane

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