Welcome from the Chairs

Document Analysis and Recognition has never been a more exciting technical field. After many years of theoretical foundation and the gradual establishment of some core technical products such as machine print OCR systems, a much broader range of applications of our research are now emerging. Pen-based PDAs and tablet PCs; digital libraries and archive conversion; business document databases; web documents, text recognition in natural scenes; online and offline handwriting recognition products; and biometrics, are all rapidly developing and beginning to find widespread application. Predictions made in the late 1970s of the demise of paper in future electronic offices have proved to be very wide of the mark, as paper still demonstrates many qualities unsurpassed by any other display technologies. Nevertheless, there are still many unresolved research problems, as we strive to make it as easy to convert from paper and image to structured electronic document metadata, as it now is to convert metadata to images on paper.

On behalf of the ICDAR2003 organizing committee, we are honored and delighted to welcome you to the Seventh International Conference on Document Analysis and Recognition at the Edinburgh Conference Centre. After visiting Asia (Bangalore, India) in 1999 and North America (Seattle) in 2001, it is again the turn of Europe to host ICDAR, and in Edinburgh, we believe we have chosen a venue that guarantees a successful technical conference amid the culture and scenery of Scotland.

Our technical program is rich and varied with seven keynote papers and around 230 technical papers split between posters and three parallel oral sessions each day. In addition, there are two workshops and a tutorial program co-located at the conference site immediately before the conference. We also expect to provide technical demonstrations, internet access and numerous opportunities for informal networking in the bars and cafes on the Conference Centre site at Heriot-Watt University, all within convenient walking distance of the conference accommodation.

Edinburgh city centre is readily accessible via bus or taxi direct from the conference centre, and the conference dates have been chosen to immediately precede the Edinburgh International and Fringe Festivals 2003, the biggest and most famous annual cultural festival in Britain. We encourage conference delegates to extend their stay and take advantage of this unparalleled opportunity to enjoy the culture, history and scenery of Scotland.

As Chairs of ICDAR2003, we know that the success of the conference depends ultimately on the many people who have worked with us in planning and organizing both the technical program and supporting social arrangements for the last four years. In particular, we thank the Program Chairs for their wise advice on organizing the technical program; the Program Committee for their thorough and timely reviewing of the papers, and our sponsors who have helped us to keep down the costs of ICDAR2003 for all participants, and have also contributed to the conference in individual ways by sponsoring prizes, bursaries to students, conference memorabilia and various social events. The Local Organizing Committee have all worked extremely hard to organize the details of important aspects of the conference program, from recruitment of sponsors, through management of the electronic submission and review process to organisation of the social activities including a memorable conference dinner at Murrayfield, the home of Scottish rugby football. Last but certainly not least, we are sure that all delegates will join with us in thanking the conference secretariat, based at the University of Essex, who are responsible both for the excellent conference website, and for efficiently managing all the administrative details of the Conference.

Andy Downton
University of Essex

Mike Fairhurst
University of Kent

Chairs of ICDAR2003