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08 December 2009

World-leading software celebrates fifteenth birthday

Academics at the University of Sheffield are celebrating the 15th birthday of their unique digital software this week (8 December 2009), which helps make sense of the web and social and mass media.

The General Architecture for Text Engineering (GATE) software can help to offer solutions for any number of problems, from the credit crunch to the swine flu pandemic, by providing a quicker, more accurate method of sifting through masses of information on the web.

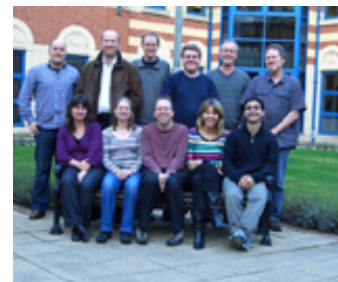
To mark the occasion, the research team behind the software will be launching a brand new version of GATE, along with a new website and the announcement of new commercial partnerships.

From the problems of the credit crunch to the flu pandemic, we often require better ways to sift through a mass of information on the web. Sheffield's Natural Language Processing group supplies the GATE software for different sorts of human language processing tasks, often helping to analyse and sort through social media and other data on the web, including in digital libraries or on company intranets.

Having secured more than £5 million in external funding over the last 15 years, the software has many thousands of users around the world in areas ranging from identity theft prevention to medical research. For example, cancer research staff at the World Health Organisation who are searching for gene disease associations use GATE to improve their statistical models by analysing published research that was previously inaccessible due to its scale and complexity.

Professor Hamish Cunningham, from the Department of Computer Science, is Project Leader for GATE. He said: "TV isn't killing conversation any more – now it's texts, tweets, blogs and the like which are becoming rooted in our communication culture. This is good news for GATE, as is the fact that more and more organisations are moving to free software like ours. We've been lucky enough to give something of value back to those who funded our research. All in all, it looks like GATE will still be around in another 15 years."

Notes for Editors: For more details see the [GATE webpages](#)



The team behind the GATE software

Investment in GATE has come from EPSRC, BBSRC, AHRC, JISC, the European Commission, and commercial sponsors such as IBM, Ontotext and Matrixware.

GATE is open source free software like Linux or Apache, and is now being applied to voice of the customer and social media applications.

As well as the new services offered by industry, the [Information Retrieval Facility](#) supports GATE-based services for research on their supercomputer infrastructure.

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