UCLA Iranian Studies

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Computers and Challenges of Writing in Persian

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The Persian script has presented some difficulties, ever since printing presses were introduced in Iran in the 1600s. The appearance of typewriters created additional problems and the introduction of digital computers added to the design challenges. These difficulties persisted, until high-resolution dot-matrix printing offered greater flexibility to font designers and the expansion of the computer market in the Middle East attracted investments on improving the Persian script for computers. Nevertheless, certain peculiarities of the Persian script have led to legibility and aesthetic issues to persist in many cases. In this talk, I will enumerate some of the features of the modern Persian script that made it a poor match to implementation on modern technologies and review the challenges presented by, and some of the solutions proposed for, each new generation of computer printers. Interestingly, the same features that make legible and pleasant printing and displaying difficult also lead to challenges in automatic text recognition. I will conclude with an overview of current state of the art and areas that still need further work.

SPEAKER

Behrooz Parhami (PhD, UCLA 1973) is Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at UCSB, where he teaches and does research in computer hardware architecture. A Life Fellow of IEEE, a Fellow of IET and British Computer Society, and recipient of several other awards, he has written six textbooks and more than 300 peer-reviewed technical papers. Most relevant to this talk is his 12 years of experience in Iran, spanning 1974 to 1986, where he studied the Persian language in connection with computers and their applications, participated in technology transfer and standardization projects, helped establish the Informatics Society of Iran (and its technical journal, "Gozaresh-e Computer"), and was a leader in developing computer engineering educational programs and associated curricula.

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