

ALT News No. 49

March 2012

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1. Message from the president

Last summer when the Nominating Committee wrote to ask if I'd run for President, one of the benefits that quickly came to mind was the opportunity to be in frequent communication with Anna Siewierska, a good thing in itself and a chance to observe and learn from her combination of first-rate scholarship and organizational leadership. But we lost one of the best people who ever walked the earth, and this office is now on its own. Earlier last year I had brief discussions with Anna about two of her active priorities: expanding typology in underrepresented areas and particularly in China, and maximizing the impact of the ALT conference in a changing subdisciplinary world. These are among my own priorities as well, and I will work to keep the momentum up.

At the recent LSA meeting in early January I was struck by the number of papers from various subfields that described their approach or analysis as typology. When the ALT was formed the term "typology" and typological methods were not sought after by other subfields (especially not in North America). My own take (I wasn't at the first meeting) is that ALT formed in response to the near-invisibility of typology in broader linguistics (including dearth of venues for publication and conference presentations) plus the galvanizing experience of large-scale international cooperation in the EUROTyp project. The world is now a very different place, our methods and fundamental principles are emulated, and typology is a serious and welcome contender in many arenas. This is a real success, and it's due to the hard work of everyone in typology - we can congratulate ourselves and our founders and each other.

But not rest on our laurels. The latest issue of LT (15:3, December 2011) is a great read - a series of spirited comments (mostly critical) on highly visible cross-linguistic quantitative studies published in Nature and Science last spring. (Full disclosure: I'm a comment coauthor.) Kudos in spades to editor Frans Plank for this initiative and the commendable speed of publication. As comment coauthor Michael Cysouw points out in a recent LINGTYP posting, LT published well ahead of even Science's own technical comments on one of the articles (Science 335 p. 657; Feb. 10, 2012). (Michael coauthored one of those too.) Comment criticisms concerned fundamental issues of typology such as sample design, definitions of variables and classes of variables, statistical and pure-linguistic interpretation. It is good to see typologists raise these issues so incisively, but we need to be much more proactive in seizing the initiative, teaming up with statisticians, computational scientists, etc., defining the terms and issues ourselves, proposing durable connections

of linguistic data to questions of perennial general interest,
and publishing the results visibly. Typologists of the world,
off (y)our laurels.

Johanna Nichols

2. Tributes and memorial events for Anna Siewierska

2.1. Memorial events

Anna's colleagues at Lancaster University organized a memorial event in November 2011, which was attended by a number of ALT members. The program included academic presentations, personal reminiscences, and poetry and music (a brief report can be found at <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/stories/1417/>).

A further memorial event is planned at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig, on April 27th 2012 (organized by Martin Haspelmath with Dik Bakker). More information is available at: http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/conference/2012_ASMW/

2.2. Tributes and obituaries

A number of colleagues have written tributes and obituaries:
- <http://www.linguistic-typology.org/tribute-Anna.pdf> (Martin Haspelmath)

- <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/tributes/anna.php> (Barry Blake, Willem Hollmann, Nigel Vincent & Anne Wichmann)

- <http://www.unm.edu/~wcroft/anna.html> (Bill Croft)

More tributes from colleagues, students and friends can be found at <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/tributes/anna.php>

The next issue of *Linguistic Typology* will have an obituary by Martin Haspelmath and Ekkehard König.

2.3. Memorial volume and scholarship

A memorial volume is being planned: *Languages Across Boundaries: Studies in Memory of Anna Siewierska*, edited by Dik Bakker and Martin Haspelmath. The volume is jointly funded by ALT, Societas Linguistica Europaea (SLE) and de Gruyter Mouton, to be distributed to all members of ALT and SLE.

Lancaster University is planning a *Scholarship for excellence in Linguistics in memory of Anna Siewierska*. Details can be found at: <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/tributes/anna.php>

3. ALT officers

At the 2011 elections, the slates proposed by the nominating committee were overwhelmingly accepted.

ALT welcomes Johanna Nichols as the new president, Kees Hengeveld, Ritsuko Kikusawa and Bill McGregor as new members of the Executive Committee, and Ian Maddieson and Jae Jung Song as new members of the Editorial Board of *Linguistic Typology*.

We thank the outgoing officers, Grev Corbett, Martin Haspelmath and Jack Hawkins, for their service in the Executive Committee, and Joan Bresnan and Steve Levinson for their service on the Editorial Board.

4. ALT conferences

4.1. Past conference

We thank the program committee and the organizing team of ALT9 in Hong Kong for a successful and well-organized conference. We also thank the workshop organizers, for three very interesting panels on typological phenomena of note in languages of China.

ALT is grateful to:

- The organizing committee: Stephen Matthews (chair), Umberto Ansaldo, Picus Ding, Michelle Li, Matthias Gerner, Foong-Ha Yap and Kang-Kwong Luke.
- The program committee: Johanna Nichols (chair), Umberto Ansaldo, Hilary Chappell, Larry Hyman, Stephen Matthews and Thomas Stolz.
- The sponsors: the Louis Chan Fund for Asian Studies, John Benjamins and Mouton de Gruyter.

4.2. Upcoming conferences

ALT10 will be organized in Leipzig, 15-18 August 2013. A call for papers will be sent out in the next few months, on lingtyp and other mailing lists. More information can be found at http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/conference/2013_ALT10/

ALT11 in 2015 will be organized in (North or Latin) America. The executive committee received two excellent bids in response to its call. We are very grateful to the colleagues who offered to host the conference, and we hope that calls for the next conference will receive similar high-quality offers.

The executive committee decided to accept a bid from the University of New Mexico, with Joan Bybee, Bill Croft and Ian Maddieson as the organizing committee. The dates for the conference will be finalized once the dates and locations of other events, like the LSA institute or the ICHL conference, are known.

4.3. Report on the business meeting in Hong Kong

4.2.1. Membership

	Regular	Student	Total
2005:	362	62	424
2006:	364	64	428
2007:	387	65	452
2008:	376	60	436
2009:	319	56	375
2010:	406	70	476
2011:	313	53	366

Membership numbers have dropped for 2011. This may be due in part to a recent change in membership policy (see newsletter 47: in the new procedure, members are asked to re-confirm their membership for every new year). In response to the drop in membership numbers, the new executive committee decided to cancel this policy (and simply assume continuing membership), but to offer members an opportunity to cancel membership before the end of each year.

4.2.2. Financial report

Date	Action	Sum (EUR)	Balance
2009 (Pre-ALT VIII)			+21.148,46
May-Sept	ALT VIII costs	-3683,35	+17.465,11
(recurrent)	Banking costs	-25,19	+17.439,92
2010			
Jan 02	Bank interest	+273,49	+17.713,41
(recurrent)	Banking costs	-32,97	+17.680,44
Apr 01	Legal help	-95,00	+17.585,44
Apr 06	Membership fees	+4560,00	+22.145,44
May 27	Website	-905,70	+21.239,74
2011			
Jan 02	Bank interest	+201,65	+21441,39
Jan 31	Membership fees	+4550,00	+25991,39
(recurrent)	Banking costs	-16,21	+25975,18
Feb 10	Legal help	-180,37	+25794,81
Apr 08	Scholarships	-4.900,00	+20894,81
Apr 26	Scholarship	-433,88	+20460,93
May 06	Scholarships	-1.441,08	+19019,85
Jun 28	Schol. & Aw.	-2.703,68	+16316,17
Jul 12	Award	-1.257,88	+15.058,29

Estimates for the coming years:

- Membership 2011 +4000
- Membership 2012 +4000
- Awards (3 in 2013!) -4000

Estimated pre-ALT X balance +19058,29

4.2.3. *Journal report*

Frans Plank presented a report on the journal, which can be read in *Linguistic Typology* 15(3): 681-689.

4.2.4. *EC initiatives*

The president presented two new initiatives by the executive committee, which were received favourably by the meeting. They will now be further considered by the executive committee.

- Conference manager:

Other linguistic organizations, like Societas Linguistica Europaea, have seen their conference series grow significantly after the appointment of a conference manager. ALT may also consider appointing an officer who deals specifically with conferences, in a practical and a strategic sense. A conference manager could provide advice to local organizers of ALT conferences, and liaise between the organizers and the executive committee. More generally, they could look into questions of timing and venue, and make recommendations about the general direction in which the conference series should go (informed by membership polls). This may help to ensure that ALT conferences remain attractive as the most important venue for new typological work.

- Syntax of the World's Languages:

Syntax of the World's Languages is a conference series whose aims partly overlap with ALT's aims, with an audience that partly overlaps with ALT's membership. Conferences are organized in even years, alternating with ALT's conferences (see below). Given the overlap, the alternating schedule, and ALT's occasional funding for SWL, ALT could try and collaborate more closely with SWL. ALT could offer continuity and financial support to SWL, while SWL could help to raise interest for ALT in the wider community of typologically interested fieldworkers.

(Leipzig 2004)

http://email.eva.mpg.de/~cschmidt/SWL1/conference_2004.html

(Lancaster 2006)

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/staff/hollmann/swl2.htm>

(Berlin 2008)

<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~gast/swl3/>

(Lyon 2010)

http://www.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/Colloques/SWL_IV/index.asp?Langue=EN

(Dubrovnik 2012)

<http://www.ffzg.unizg.hr/swl5/SWL5.htm>