

THE EDITOR'S DEPARTMENT
Annual Report

Every year the Editor is asked to submit to the Executive Committee of the Linguistic Society of America, at the time of the annual meeting in January, a report on activities, any important developments, and issues pertaining to the running of the journal. My first such 'State of the Journal' report, summing up my first year on the job, is printed below in its entirety, with only minor editorial and typographical adjustments and a few corrections, in lieu of my more usual editorial comments in this section of the journal.

Brian D. Joseph
Columbus, Ohio
May 5, 2003

THE EDITOR'S REPORT

For me, the 78th year of *Language's* existence has been a memorable one. During this year, the transition from Mark Aronoff's editorship to my own was managed relatively smoothly, thanks to his staff and to mine; during this year, I accepted my first paper as editor and rejected my first paper; I handled my first crisis and experienced my first delight at a successful resolution; I (inevitably) received my first complaint(s) and (unexpectedly) received my first words of praise (I am hoping for more of the latter and less of the former!). Most importantly, though, to turn to the journal itself, the requisite four issues came out, and delays that the transition occasioned in the normal publication schedule of March, June, September, and December were reduced with each passing issue, from 45 days with the March issue (counting from the end of the designated month to the date of arrival in the *Language* office, May 15), to 42 days with the June issue, to 29 days with the September issue, and finally to zero with the December issue, which as of this writing is set to be mailed before the end of the month.

The four issues contained 857 pages, with 544 devoted to 17 articles, 94 to 31 Book Reviews, 145 to 194 Book Notices, and 74 to other sorts of material (Discussion Notes: 4 pages for 2 items; Editor's Department columns: 13 pages for 4 pieces; Editor's Report: 4 pages; index: 25 pages; letters: 1 page; Obituaries: 10 pages; Publications Received/Recent Publications: 16 pages; slippage: 1 page). These totals are comparable to those of the past eight years (see Mark Aronoff's Editor's Report in *Language* 78.2.394-97 (2002)), though a bit on the low side, where the average volume contained 20 articles that took up on average 564 pages and the average number was 48 for Book Reviews and 178 for Book Notices. These figures suggest that the average length of articles is increasing, as volume 78's average of 32 pages per article is the second

highest in the past nine years. Whether this is indeed a trend or not remains to be seen, and the import of this figure is not clear to me (are longer articles good, if length means greater thoroughness? Are shorter articles good, if brevity indicates conciseness of expression and greater clarity?).

It was a lively year also in terms of traffic in and out of the office, as measured by the number of papers submitted and the number acted upon — the figures reported here are for January 1, 2002 to October 31, 2002 (taking this as a cut-off date to allow for a reasonable and accurate tally to be made within the reporting deadlines — this will be the cut-off date in future years, so that in subsequent years at this time a full 12 months of ‘business’ will be reported on):

- 110 papers submitted since January 1, 2002 (including a few ‘late arrivals’ in 2001 for which my office initiated the review process)
- 95 papers acted on since January 1, 2002: 15 accepted; 57 rejected; 23 returned for revisions with an invitation to resubmit.

The number acted on includes several submitted in and carried over from the previous year and, further, of those submitted since January, some are still in the process of being reviewed and decided upon; hence the numbers do not match. Although the meaning of these numbers is perhaps open to interpretation (e.g. do resubmissions count as separate and distinct in the overall tally? Is the ultimate acceptance of a revise-and-resubmit of the same ilk as an outright acceptance? etc.), they do suggest a highly selective review process with less than 20% of submissions accepted.

Predictably, the papers covered a wide range of topics within the field, but, perhaps also predictably, the breakdown of the areas of submission reveals that the largest numbers of submissions came in semantics, syntax, historical linguistics, and phonology, with 13 other subfields represented as well. Here the tally is based on our assessment of the primary area a paper fell into, not the authors’ (as most do not have occasion to classify their work), and the categories are not intended to define the field overall in any way but rather they represent definable groupings that emerged from the pool of submissions; many papers could legitimately be classified in another area, e.g. syntax or semantics for a paper on the analysis of control:

Semantics:	24
Syntax:	22
Historical Ling.:	15
Phonology:	11
Morphology:	7
Psycholinguistics:	6
Discourse Analysis:	6
Computational Ling.:	4
Child Lang. Acq’n:	3
Contact Linguistics:	2
Creolistics:	2
Metatheory:	2
Sociolinguistics:	2
History of Ling.:	1
Forensic Ling.	1
Metrics:	1
Second Lang. Acq’n:	1

To turn away from the numerical summaries of the year’s activities, I note that *Language* as a journal and as an institution is very well established and did not really seem to be in need of any major changes; indeed, my goal this year was to keep the

journal on the steady course that previous editors had set for it. Nonetheless, a few innovations were instituted both for *Language* qua journal and for the running of *Language*, viz.:

1. a 'Letters to Language' section of the journal; so far, there has been just one letter worthy of publication, and it comes in the December issue as the debut of this section, but my hope is that there will be more with time and that this section will be a venue for the lively exchange of thoughts and ideas about our discipline.
2. giving the Editor's Department a more prominent place in the journal; I have moved it to the beginning of each issue and have written something for each issue; I plan to try to have something interesting and worthwhile to say in each subsequent issue as well. I do not see this as a mere vanity on my part but rather consider it to be a part of a more public role that the editor can play.
3. updating the journal's website (for help with which I have my son, David Clark-Joseph, to thank), including the addition of a page of pictures of relevant *Language*-related people and things (<http://www.lsadc.org/language/pics/pics.html>)
4. automating somewhat the processing of papers submitted through the use of special database and tracking software designed for journals (*Journal Assistant*)
5. reinstating a practice of several years ago that had fallen into limbo, i.e. sending to referees a 'follow-up' packet containing the associate editor's recommendation (inasmuch as it was based in large part on the referees' reports), the other referee's report, and my own letter to the paper's author(s) reporting my decision on the paper and adding my own comments to those of the referees and the associate editor. My goal in doing this, especially for reviewers, is to let them see how their reports and recommendations were used in the editorial process and how they measured up to someone else's opinion of and report on the same paper, all in the hopes of 'educating' them about the reviewing process and their own role in it, and ultimately, therefore, to help make them better referees in the future. Early feedback from reviewers suggests that this is a useful practice.
6. working with the Executive Committee on a plan whereby the Associate Editors are paid a modest honorarium for their efforts, by way of professionalizing somewhat their position and, more importantly, recognizing the extraordinary work they do (on which see also below)
7. helping in the development of a number of innovative practices and policies with regard to Book Reviews (BRs) and Book Notices (BNs), and more generally the processing of books sent to the journal for possible review. Here I draw on the fine summation of the year provided to me by Stanley Dubinsky, my Review Editor *extraordinaire*:
 - i. length of BRs changed from 1200-1500 words to 1200-2000 words
 - ii. only BRs commissioned by the editors (i.e. no unsolicited BRs)
 - iii. new formatting requirements (standardized use of cover page and inclusion of ISBN and price on first page)
 - iv. restrictions on potential reviewers with outstanding BRs/BNs: Requests for additional books will not be considered if the individual making the request has outstanding BRs or BNs that have not been submitted to and accepted by the Book Review Editor.
 - v. restrictions on the numbers of BNs per contributor: The number of singly authored BRs and BNs by any one reviewer may not exceed 10 per year. Also,

a single reviewer may appear as the (co-)author on as many as 15 submissions in one year. This means that in addition to 10 singly-authored BRs/BNs, a reviewer may additionally have 5 co-authored reviews/notices in one year.

- vi. an internal policy on the number of assignments (for BNs): 1 or 2 books for first time reviewers, and a maximum of 5 to any contributor at any one time
- vii. enforcement of a policy on duplication: Undertaking to write a Book Review or Notice for *Language* entails a commitment on the part of the reviewer not to publish a review or notice of the same book elsewhere without the express permission of the editors of *Language*.
- viii. the instituting of new procedures for commissioning Book Reviews: (a) a list of books for full review is developed quarterly by the editorial board, (b) book authors are contacted for a list of potential reviewers, (c) reviewers are invited to take on the assignment
- ix. development of a *Language* Book Review website that includes policies, FAQs, formatting guidelines, a link to the current BN list, a link to the copyright agreement form, and a link to an online BN request form
- x. coordination of the Recent Publications list with the BN list, such that a new BN list is available every three months on a fixed schedule (Feb/May/Aug/Nov)
- xi. the developing of procedures for retiring books from the BN list, and distributing remaining books
- xii. the working out of a new arrangement with one publisher (Blackwell) on a trial basis to notify the journal of new publications, and to ship books to reviewers on request (to be expanded in 2003), a new practice which has occasioned the change of the name of the section previously called 'Publications Received' to 'Recent Publications' (as not all recent publications are received directly).

Other accomplishments for the journal, though not involving my agency in any way in that they involve work undertaken by my predecessors and continued in the background as far as I have been concerned, are the on-going movement, begun under Mark Aronoff's editorship, to on-line access for the journal through JSTOR (a subscription service, accessible through most university libraries, ultimately covering all back issues) and Project Muse (for current issues), and the production of a 75-year index for the journal covering all issues in the 20th century, under Mark Aronoff's direction, due out in 2003.

While it is of course more pleasant to list various accomplishments, I must make mention also of two areas where improvement is clearly needed.

1. The first three issues of the year came out late, as indicated above; this was due in part to the transition and to the steep learning curve that my staff and I faced. Still, we know we can do a better job of staying on top of the deadlines, and are working towards a publication cycle for each issue that will ensure that each will be ready for printing early in its designated month of publication and thus ready for mailing before the end of the month. Happily, we have been able to institute this new timetable for the December 2002 issue.

2. The review process often takes far too long; it is, admittedly, an involved procedure, with several carefully defined stages: deciding whether to review or not; farming the paper out to an associate editor; identifying reviewers; waiting for the reviewers' reports to come in; asking the associate editor to digest and interpret these reports and make

his or her own recommendation on a paper; and finally, deciding for myself on a paper, based on the reports and my own reading of the paper. Thus, even under the best of circumstances the process would generally take no less than four months. Still, too many papers, it seems, slip into a time frame of five, six, seven, or more months, owing to delays at any of the stages (and not the least of which is delay on my part in getting to a given paper). We are doing what we can by way of setting deadlines, gently nudging reviewers, trying to identify prompt reviewers (some have been remarkably dilatory in their execution of their promise to review a paper!), trying as needed to accommodate reviewers who present special circumstances (e.g. linguist X is the right and by far the best person to do the review but can't undertake it until two months hence), and so on, but it is a constant battle. I offer my apologies to any authors who feel slighted by the length of time and can only plead that this process is one that gives me confidence that the best decisions are made and one that ensures fairness to the authors.

My work as editor would not be possible without the contributions of the Associate Editors, who read and pass judgment on papers, make recommendations of reviewers, and provide general advice as needed. I especially appreciate all they did to make my inaugural year such a smooth and pleasant one. They deserve special thanks, and so I mention them here by name: Eugene Buckley, Donna Gerdts, Adele Goldberg, Helen Goodluck, Marie Huffman, Keith Johnson, John McWhorter, Shigeru Miyagawa, and Richard Oehrle, and I need to mention here also Masha Polinsky, whose term as Associate Editor ended in January 2002 just as my editorship was beginning, but who nonetheless completed work on several papers whose time came after the end of her term and thus extended her work into the spring of 2002.

With regard to Associate Editors for the coming year, since several rotate off as of December 31, 2002, new appointments will be made; a change here, beyond that in personnel, is that two additional positions will be added, thanks to the willingness of the Executive Committee to expand the roster of associate editors: whereas in 2002 there were nine, in 2003 there will be eleven.

The LSA support—both moral and logistical and otherwise—has been invaluable, and thanks are especially due to Maggie Reynolds (as always) for advice on virtually everything associated with the journal and the office, and to Mary Niebuhr for her copyediting skills on BRs and BNs. And, with regard to copyediting, Frances Kelly deserves thanks for her tireless efforts in whipping articles and other material into the strict *Language* format guidelines. Finally, Priscilla Mullins provided able proofreading assistance, filling the large shoes of Kate Fenton, the mainstay of *Language*'s proofreading for so many years before her death this past autumn (see my Editor's Department from the December issue, 78.4, especially pp. 617-18).

Special thanks are due also to my office staff: Audra Starcheus, Steven Hartman Keiser, and Hope Dawson who served the journal, the Society, and the profession nobly throughout the year. I truly could not have managed this year without them.

And, last but not least, recognition of the reviewers is critical, for they are in some sense the true front-line for quality control with regard to the journal; they are the experts whose opinions are crucial for making *Language* the leading journal in our field that it is today. The following reviewers submitted reports to our office between January 1, 2002 and October 31, 2002 (* indicates that the individual was responsible for more than one report):

Barbara Abbott	Hana Filip	Ceil Lucas
Farrell Ackerman	Elaine Francis	Martin Maiden
John Alderete*	Andrew Garrett	Rajend Mesthrie
Leonard Babby	Carol Genetti	Salikoko Mufwene
Mark Baker	Anastasia Giannakidou	Terrance Nearey
Patrice Beddor	Ted Gibson	Michael Noonan
Catherine Best	Giuliana Giusti	David Odden
Rajesh Bhatt	Cliff Goddard	John Ohala
Douglas Biber	Ives Goddard	Doris Payne
James Blevins	Chris Golston	David Perlmutter
Paul Boersma	Georgia Green	Colin Phillips
Melissa Bowerman	Steven Gross	Martin Pickering
Chris Brew	John Hajek	Carl Pollard
Dunstan Brown	Mary Hare	Shana Poplack
Wayles Browne	Bruce Hayes	Amanda Pounder
Joan Bybee	Kirk Hazen	Richard Rhodes
Gregory Carlson	Marti Hearst	Don Ringe
Andrew Carstairs-McCarthy*	Jeffrey Heath	Thomas Roeper
Eugene Casad	Randall Hendrick	Ivan Sag
Young-mee Yu Cho	Robert Hoberman	Mamoru Saito
Sandra Chung	Hans Henrich Hock	Gillian Sankoff
Harald Clahsen	Peter Hook	Beatrice Santorini
Jennifer Cole	Laurence Horn	Armin Schwegler
Greville Corbett	Grover Hudson	Chilin Shih
William Croft	Elizabeth Hume-O'Haire	John Singler
Peter Culicover*	Gregory Iverson	Royal Skousen
Amy Dahlstrom	Ray Jackendoff	William Snyder
Mary Dalrymple	Wesley M. Jacobsen	Lawrence Solan
Stuart Davis	Celia Jakubowicz	David Solnit
Kenneth de Jong	Kyle Johnson	Andrew Spencer
Gary Dell	Judy Kegl	Leon Stassen
Holger Diessel	Steve Hartman Keiser	Susan Steele
Anna Maria Di Sciullo	Andrew Kehler	Gregory Stump*
David Dowty	John Kingston	Alice G. B. ter Meulen
Elan Dresher	Jaklin Kornfilt	Alan Timberlake
Stanley Dubinsky	Zoltán Kövecses	Natsuko Tsujimura*
John Du Bois	Susumu Kuno*	Juan Uriagereka
Nick Enfield	William Labov	Irene Vogel
Thomas Ernst	William Ladusaw	James Walker
Joseph Eska*	Ronald Langacker	Thomas Wasow*
Nicholas Evans	Randy LaPolla	Laurel Watkins
Daniel Everett	Beth Levin	Frank Wijnen
Julia Falk	Robert Levine	Margaret Winters
Donka Farkas	Yafei Li	Anthony Woodbury
Patrick Farrell	Feng-hsi Liu	Sandra Wright
Christiane Fellbaum	Paul Lloyd	Lee H. Wurm
Claudia Felser	Linda Lombardi	Moira Yip

I thank them all on behalf of the journal and of the field.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian D. Joseph

Columbus, Ohio

December 5, 2002