EDITORIAL

In a previous column (*Diachronica* 16.1: iii–iv), I promised to describe the editorial process that leads to issues such as this one, the third now that I have been responsible for. While I don’t believe that our practices are substantially different from those of most journals, still it may be of interest to our readers to see just what is involved.

The process begins with the submission of a paper. Usually these come out of the blue, as it were, with no “warning”, though sometimes authors sound me — or one of my fellow collaborators on the editorial “junta” — out about a possible paper they are thinking of submitting to the journal. Such warning is not necessary, though it does give us the opportunity to discuss with the author whether *Diachronica* is the most appropriate journal to aim for (since we are most interested in papers which will have the greatest general appeal to diachronically inclined linguists) and to make informal suggestions about points that might be made, the focus of the paper, and such. No promises of any sort are made except to give the submission our fairest consideration.

“Fairest consideration” means first of all previewing the paper myself and discussing it with my co-editors in order to determine at the outset that the paper really is appropriate for us to consider (a few submissions are not, for a variety of possible reasons but mostly having to do with not being of sufficient general diachronic interest) and then to decide what is probably the most important step: finding and securing the very best outside evaluators for a given paper that we will be considering. Several factors go into making an outside evaluator an appropriate choice: above all, sufficient expertise in the subject area of the paper, of course, but also no connection with the author that would cause a conflict of interest, ability and time to do a solid job of reviewing (which, as most academic readers know, is no small consideration), a reputation for fairness and promptness, and the like. We often turn first here to our editorial board, the 18 members of which help
considerably in the review process and provide helpful advice on other journal-related matters as appropriate. We aim to have two outside reviewers for each paper we consider, though on occasion, especially if the subject matter covered reaches into a number of different areas, we seek additional readers. The readers’ reports, coupled with our own reading of the paper, form the basis upon which we make a decision concerning publication.

It is rare for a paper to be accepted outright in this first “round” of consideration more or less as is. Generally, when we accept papers at this point, we accept them conditionally, the conditions being that the comments of the readers and the editors must be incorporated into a revised version of the paper. However, the most usual outcome of the first round of consideration is that we return the paper to the author with a recommendation that it be revised and resubmitted. Such papers are ones that we feel hold some promise but which need additional working — and reworking — in order to be able to be judged more adequately. In such cases, as also with conditional acceptances, we usually ask authors when they resubmit the paper to tell us just how they responded to various comments, and we provide guidance to authors if readers’ comments — as they sometimes do — produce conflicting imperatives. Occasionally also, of course, we simply return a paper after the review process, declining to publish it and not inviting a resubmission.

Papers that are resubmitted for a second consideration may or may not be sent out for an outside review, depending on the editors’ views on how successfully the author has addressed the concerns brought out in the first review. The second submission is usually “do or die” for the paper, but in exceptional cases, e.g. where we can see that just a bit more work will result in a publishable paper, we give the author yet another chance to fix the paper up. Our guiding principle in all cases is to come up with papers of high quality which advance the field and which will be of interest to diachronically-minded linguists. We feel that the process as it is, involving outside experts taken together with the editors’ own judgment and experience, guarantees fairness and ensures the quality of the outcome.

In a sense, though, while getting a paper accepted is by far the most significant event for the author, at that point the work is just beginning, since a version of the paper that strictly adheres to *Diachronica’s* style is needed for the production phase. That, however, is a topic for another editorial column.

I should mention in closing that this issue is a few months late, due in part to my still needing to master certain aspects of the editorial and the
production processes, but our hope is that 17.2 will be able to come out in an accelerated fashion soon after this present issue, so that Volume 18 (2001) will be on schedule.

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