

UW LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT

Volume 2, Issue 2

April, 2004

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As spring approaches, I'm pleased to write on activities of the Department during the past autumn and winter.

Autumn quarter was quite busy with three promotion cases (see faculty news, p. 5) and a search for a new computational linguist. Another highlight of this year is the fact that the \$500,000 endowed professorship by Howard and Frances Nostrand to the Department passed the \$250,000 threshold, and Fritz Newmeyer has been named the first holder of the professorship. We are greatly saddened that Professor

Nostrand will not be able to join us in celebrating this important event at a lecture and reception on June 2 (see obituary, p. 7).

Linguistics faculty have been busy giving papers at institutions of note in Europe and the USA. Fritz Newmeyer is spending his sabbatical year in France and Germany where he's been delivering talks in English and French; he returns in late April to Seattle. Emily Bender, and Ellen Kaisse and graduate student Susie Levi gave talks at the LSA in Boston, an anniversary meeting that attracted over a dozen faculty and grads from UW. Mike



Brame talked about Shakespeare's identity in Carmel, California, and as I write Jurgen Klausenburger is about to head off for the UK to give a talk on morphology. Sharon Hargus's massive 1100-page grammar of Witsuwit'en is to be published by UBC Press.

We made substantial progress in the development of
See Letter, p. 5

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Editor's note

In this issue Julia Sableski Falk (PhD '68) inaugurates a new occasional feature that we call "Reflections." We hope it will be of interest to older and younger readers alike. Please let me know if you would like to contribute your own reflections (mvarmagost@earthlink.net).

Jim Armagost

FUNDING NEWS

A very special thanks to professors Richard Wright and Julia Herschensohn, whose recent generosity, augmented by a one-to-one match from the College Endowment Fund, has made \$1,450 available to Department graduate students for conference travel, fieldwork and other research related needs. The Department is also grateful for gifts from the following corporate and individual contributors during fiscal year 2002-2003.

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See Donors, p. 5

FACULTY RESEARCH

SAN DIEGO NATIVE SHARON HARGUS BRAVES COLD WEATHER TO DESCRIBE AN ALASKAN LANGUAGE

Little did I know when I decided to pursue a career in linguistics that it would take me to villages along the banks of the lower Yukon River where the only travelers that don't arrive by bush plane or river boat are the mushers and their dog teams participating in the Iditarod. But that is the home territory of speakers of Deg Xinag, a language of the Athabaskan family (related to Navajo, for example). Although historically spoken over a wide area, there are now about 25 remaining speakers, most of whom are in their 70s and 80s.

In 2002, I received an award from the National Science Foundation (Arctic Social Sciences Research Program, Office of Polar Programs) for research on "Deg Xinag Lexicon and Grammar" (grant no. OPP 0137483). I am currently concluding year two of this three-year grant. It provides funding



The audio equipment used for field research is delicate and sophisticated albeit heavy. It's much easier for me to transport when there's snow on the ground. Photo by Donna Miller, Anvik, Alaska, March 2003.

for me to travel twice a year to the communities in Alaska where the language is still spoken. I regularly work with about eight of the remaining speakers. The grant has also provided Research Assistant support for graduate student Julia Miller to help especially with the processing of audio recordings.

The main types of research supported by this grant are lexical (dictionary development), grammatical (description of the rules of the language) and textual, in keeping with the time-tested Boasian tradition of language documentation. The grant also supports development of an "audio grammar," a traditional grammar accompanied by sound recordings, ideally of every word and sentence in the grammar. To this end I have investigated such topics as acoustic and auditory properties of fricatives (joint research with Richard Wright), compensatory lengthening induced by voiced continuants followed by schwa, motion verb derivational potential, the form and function of the optative, and inanimate subject functions of a prefix *y*.

Observation of sentence patterns in texts is an important step in formulating questions about syntax that can then be answered by elicitation of speaker judgments of grammaticality and/or meaning. One can never have too many texts, and I have transcribed and translated a long text which I received an audio recording of in 1992. It is a poor recording because of the equipment used and because the speaker had some kind of laryngeal dysfunction, but a year ago I was able to rerecord the text with speaker Edna Deacon, who was actually present at the original recording. I now have a reasonable transcription and transla-



Speakers Edna Deacon (left) and her sister Lucy Hamilton are wired for sound as they patiently participate in elicitation sessions. Edna and Lucy both wear lavalier microphones. My husband Dave Nelson designed and built the chest mount that Edna is wearing. This system helps keep the cord from generating noise that can be picked up by the microphone.

tion of most of this text, but will continue to refine it as I use it and other text transcriptions to document syntactic patterns.

Linguists are interested primarily in grammar, but lexical and grammatical research are really two sides of the same coin. Lexical research adds depth to grammatical results as well as produces a dictionary—which community members are typically more interested in than the grammar. (In my experience, community members typically care deeply about only two of the products that linguists can develop, writing systems and dictionaries.) New lexical data are filed after each field trip, allowing new words to be collated with previously recorded words, which often leads to new questions.

My lexical files are formatted for processing with Lexware, a set of programs for the production of bilingual dictionaries written by Professor Robert Hsu (University of Hawaii, now residing in Seattle). Throughout the year, I have been working with him on customized output formatting for the Deg Xinag dictionary. He has suggested many improvements in the organization of information in the dictionary files, one of the advantages of working with a software developer who is also a linguist.

REFLECTIONS

We're pleased to introduce a new occasional feature in which graduates look back at their experiences in the Department, the University and the field. And we're especially pleased that Julia Sableski Falk—who appears to be the first woman to have received a PhD from the Department—is inaugurating this feature. Here's Julia...

UW LINGUISTICS REMEMBERED

Half way through my first year of graduate study, I was ready to leave Seattle. It was mid-February 1964 and I had not seen the sun since Thanksgiving. I'm not saying that it hadn't come out; perhaps I had been in class or at the library and missed it. A friend came to the rescue and we drove up to the Cascades, above the low cloudbank and into a bright and glorious day. It was enough. I stayed for two and a half more years before leaving in late summer 1966 for my first, and only, faculty position at Michigan State University.

I had an apartment in an old brick building on the corner of 41st and Brooklyn, less than a five minute walk to Denny Hall where the Linguistics Department was then located. We had some classes in other buildings, and everyone hung out at the HUB or at Suzzallo Library. There weren't many places to eat along the Ave; I can remember only a coffee shop, a Chinese restaurant, a place with delicious prime rib sandwiches, and a Japanese restaurant too expensive for a student budget. Trips downtown were rare, usually for a concert, play or art exhibition. I didn't have a car, nor did most of the other single students. One guy did, but it was so old none of us trusted it to take us as far as Pike Place Market.

I had come to Seattle from Washington, DC, an undergraduate linguistics major at the Institute of Languages and Linguistics at Georgetown University and a job at the Center for Applied Linguistics. It was a long way, and it had taken three slow propeller-driven planes nearly 15 hours to cross the country. The UW linguistics department seemed isolated and somewhat chaotic, but also quite wonderful with its small classes (usually from four to eight students) and the vitality of a young faculty (a majority not yet forty years old) in the process of creat-

ing a new program.

Under Title IV of the National Defense Education Act of 1958, new and expanding graduate programs in certain areas deemed important to the national interest were given a development stipend of \$2,500 per year for each student recipient of an NDEA fellowship enrolled in its program. As a fellow in linguistics, I received \$2,000 in my first year, \$2,200 the second, and \$2,400 the third, more than enough to cover my costs. I don't recall exactly how many NDEA



fellows were at UW during the time, but I believe at one point there were three of us. That meant the institution each year had enough supplementary funds to hire an additional junior or visiting faculty member.

For 1963-64, my first year, I recall just six regular faculty members. Sol Saporta was chair of the new department, but the senior faculty were Li Fang Kwei and Carroll E. Reed. Larry Thompson, William Wyatt, and William Jacobsen completed the roster. It was typical of those years of development that no one held an appointment solely in linguistics. Saporta was jointly appointed in linguistics and

Romance languages, Li in Asian languages and linguistics, Reed in German and linguistics, Thompson in linguistics and Russian, Wyatt in classics and linguistics, and Jacobsen in anthropology and linguistics. Indeed, nationwide, this is how linguistics programs were being constructed in the years of growth—by assembling a faculty with linguistic backgrounds from various programs already established on campus and making new appointments jointly with such programs. Generative grammar was new and attractive, but American structuralism remained strong, just a generation removed from its founders. Li had studied with Edward Sapir at the University of Chicago, Reed had known Leonard Bloomfield.

As might be expected, the resulting program was something of a hodgepodge (perhaps I should say it was eclectic). My first year courses included Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin with Wyatt, field methods on the Makah language with Jacobsen, generative syntax with Saporta, and methods of comparative linguistics with a visiting professor from Europe who taught by reading aloud from a book. Many of these I took with Elaine Phelps, my friend over all these years. I can still hear us chanting in Sanskrit: *āsīd rājā, nalo nāma* ... ("there was a strong king, Nala by name ...").

In my second year, I had South East Asian Linguistics with Li and Thompson, dialectology with Reed, two seminars in Romance linguistics with Heles Contreras who joined the faculty that year, and several courses with visiting faculty, including Charles Ferguson, whom I had known as director of the Center for Applied Linguistics. The only woman instructor in my entire graduate or undergraduate career was Antonina Filonov (later Gove), newly arrived from doctoral studies at Harvard; she taught a

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COMPLING SYMPOSIUM

The Computational Linguistics Symposium announced in the previous newsletter gives every appearance of being highly successful. Sponsored by Microsoft and the departments of Linguistics and Germanics, all meetings feature one speaker from MS and one from UW, each discussing an aspect of their current research.

The autumn and winter meetings, funded by the generosity of Lois and Alan Bauer, were held at UW and drew audiences of 100 and 80, respectively. A spring meeting at MS, funded by their Natural Language Group, also drew 100 attendees. This meeting included three demos that generated considerable MS-UW interaction—one of the hoped-for outcomes of the symposium series.

Presenters at the meetings were as follows:

Autumn

Andrea Jessee, MS Natural Language Group: "Grammar checking in Microsoft Office XP" and Emily Bender, UW Linguistics: "Grammar Checking in the Arboretum: Finding and Curing Trees."

Winter

Robert Moore, MS Research: "Two Paradigms for Natural-Language Processing" and Lesley Carmichael, UW Linguistics: "Prosodic Fortification in Error Resolution."

Spring

Thierry Fontenelle, MS Natural Language Group: "A large bilingual lexical resource for word sense disambiguation" and Mari Ostendorf, UW Electrical Engineering: "Web-based Corpora: Modeling Language vs. Gathering Counts."

Demonstrations by Thierry Fontenelle of his lexical resource, Rich Campbell of the NLP group's machine translation system and Michael Gammon of SmartMail (automatic extraction of tasks from email text).

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course on linguistics and poetic language, based on work by Roman Jakobson.

There wasn't much discussion about which courses were required. We took what was available and what the department chair told us to take. Looking back now, and even at the time, it is surprising how much historical linguistics there was—I was required to take six full quarters of historical classes, two of which I completed when I attended the Linguistic Institute at the University of Michigan in Summer 1965. It was expected, at UW and throughout graduate programs across the country, that students would attend at least one Linguistic Institute, sponsored by the Linguistic Society of America and in those years held annually, each summer on a different university campus. One of the highlights of my student days was the three-day train trip from Vancouver to Detroit which I took with my friend and fellow student Joan Markessinis, also on her way to the Institute. The Institute provided a wonderful opportunity to meet students and faculty from all over the country, to take and audit courses, to attend special lectures and demonstrations, and—most importantly—to sit around big tables at the student union and talk about linguistics nearly all day long. I came to regret not having also gone to the Institute in 1964 at Indiana University, but at the time I had thought it more important to work with a Peace Corps training program on the UW campus. It was my one chance to gain some teaching experience. The NDEA fellowship required full time enrollment, which meant four to five courses per quarter, and did not permit fellows to hold teaching assistantships during the academic year.

I had come to UW with an interest in generative grammar, a subject barely touched upon at Georgetown, and was disappointed to find that there were few courses with that focus, only those taught by Saporta and then Contreras. They were generous with their time, however, and I managed to write a master's thesis on

generative phonology and a dissertation on generative syntax, both on Spanish, both under Saporta's direction.

While I would have preferred more concentrated work in theory, it turned out that some of my other work was very valuable in the long term. Those historical linguistics classes, as well as a seminar on J. R. Firth and the Prague School given by Ferguson, were a good foundation for the research on the history of linguistics that became my specialization many years later. Also, the required linguistic colloquia, one at the master's level, two for the doctorate, provided great experience in working up material for public presentation. This was essential since few graduate students went to national conferences due to the expense and difficulty of travel in those days. I did one colloquium each on my thesis and dissertation research. The third was an analysis of some Mon-Khmer data from Professor Li's handwritten field notes collected many years before. These colloquia enabled us to follow the ongoing research of the faculty and other students, adding immensely to the cohesion in the department. I have always thought they were one of the best features of the UW program—and the gatherings that followed at a local tavern were a great way to continue the discussion and to end a day.

In my third year, I prepared for and took my general exams, which at that time consisted of three to four days of written examinations over a student's main areas of coursework and research. I had heard that previous students had 15 to 16 hours of writing over three to four subjects, and I was more than a little upset to find that my generals had been set up for more than 20 hours and included not only phonology, syntax, dialectology and historical linguistics, and Romance linguistics, but also South East Asian linguistics. The first four made sense to me, but the last was a mystery. I went to Li Fang Kwei, who could not understand why I was to be examined in an area that was not one of my concentrations. He reas-

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LETTER, from p. 1

Computational Linguistics, hiring Emily Bender (PhD Stanford University) to fill the permanent position after an international search. She has proposed a curriculum and program for the new Computational Linguistics MA. David Szatmary of UW Outreach has worked closely with the Department and with an advisory board assembled from around the country, to create a stand-alone MA that is academically sound, attractive to students and financially self-sustaining. We continue to foster relations with Computer Science, Microsoft (see compiling symposium, p. 4), and Electrical Engineering for whom three of our graduate students are working as RAs this year.

We continue our traditional professional / social functions of the weekly colloquium, Autumn dinner and Spring Graduate Celebration in the Faculty Club for our students earning the BA, MA or PhD. As always, we welcome alumni, Friends of Linguistics and members of the Advisory Board at these events.

Please make sure that your Linguistics friends are also receiving the newsletter. I encourage you to stay in touch by sending us news of your whereabouts and activities as well as feedback on the newsletter. We would also appreciate having your email address for our records. For all of these matters you can use the contact form on the back page or email us at the address given there.

Julia Herschensohn

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sured me that there was no need to worry, and when I saw that he had asked me only a single question, I smiled: "Write as much as you know about South East Asian Linguistics."

At the time I passed the generals, in March 1966, I already had accepted a position on the faculty of the new linguistics program at Michigan State University, one of several positions I had been offered. The NDEA and the ballooning of the college-age population as the result of the post-World-War-II baby boom made jobs plentiful. Nearly everyone was off teaching before finishing a dissertation, and established faculty easily found new opportunities. By the time I returned to the UW campus in June 1968 to defend my dissertation, Filonov, Jacobsen, Reed, Thompson and Wyatt had all moved on to other universities; Li left the next year. In the five years since I started my graduate studies, the linguistics program at the University of Washington had become nearly unrecognizable.

Julia Falk is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, Michigan State University, and lives in La Jolla, California, where she holds a courtesy appointment as visiting scholar in linguistics at UC San Diego. Recent publications include *Women, Language and Linguistics: Three American stories from the first half of the twentieth century* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999) and 'Turn to the history of linguistics: Noam Chomsky and Charles Hockett in the 1960s,' *Historiographia Linguistica* 30.129-185(2003). Julia's email address is jsfalk@san.rr.com.

DONORS, from p. 1

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FACULTY NEWS

Congratulations to Richard Wright on his promotion to associate professor with tenure effective this September. Meanwhile, the feedback has been positive as we await official notification on the promotion of Karen Zagona and Sharon Hargus to full professor.

Congratulations also to Mike Brame on having completed his last quarter of teaching as he nears retirement in mid-December. It's been a while since he moved up from UT, Austin in part, he said, for the mycology. And how many other young faculty over the years have been told to consider the

view of Mt. Rainier as part of their salary? Whether it was the mushrooms or the mountain or something else entirely, thanks, Mike, for sticking around.

Announcement of appropriate celebratory festivities is pending.

LINGUISTICS ADVISORY BOARD

What is the Advisory Board?

Three years ago the Department completed drafting its Strategic Plan, which articulates the Department's intellectual and social mission and identifies key challenges and opportunities facing it as it attempts to further strengthen its position as one of the world's leading theoretical linguistics departments.

A companion document, the Development Plan, lays out financial and other goals whose objective is the successful ongoing stewardship of the Department's teaching, research, and community outreach functions for future generations.

The Development Plan recognizes the importance of volunteers, who "will lead continuous and ongoing efforts to establish and grow community outreach, communication, fund raising, events, and other activities..." To these ends the Linguistics Advisory Board was created.

For the full text of the Strategic Plan and Development Plan, point your browser to <http://depts.washington.edu/lingweb/info/mission.html>

The Board's efforts currently range over the following areas:

Alumni: Creating initiatives to include increasing numbers of alumni in Department activities, events, communications and fundraising.

Friends: Creating strategies to identify new constituencies for the Department; identifying individuals sympathetic to the Department's goals and making a personal appeal of support—time, talent, or financial—for the Department to meet annual fundraising objectives.

Gifts: Cultivating and eventually soliciting endowed gifts for the long term growth and stability of the Department.

Communication: Helping Department staff produce the newsletter, maintaining the Department website and devising other strategies for commu-

nicating the Department's activity to current and new constituencies.

Events: Working with Department staff to create an annual calendar of events that allows community members to share in the activities of the Department.

Recent changes to Board

Mark Haslam has stepped down from active participation but remains "a reserve member or friendly resource" available when his technical expertise is needed. Thanks, Mark, for your founding role and for all your help with the website. We're glad you'll be staying in touch.

The Board welcomes two new members:

Kristin Denham (PhD Linguistics, '97) is an Assistant Professor of Linguistics in the English Department at Western Washington University. She teaches linguistics courses in the English Department as well as in the interdepartmental Linguistics Program. Her dissertation was on optional *wh*-movement and she continues to work on *wh*-movement and focus. She has also expanded her research to include work on linguistics in education. She has published articles on *wh*-movement, as well as a book and articles on ways to integrate linguistics into K-12 education. *Language in the Schools: Integrating Linguistic Knowledge into K-12 Teaching*, co-edited by Kristin and her WWU colleague Anne Lobeck, is forthcoming from Lawrence Erlbaum.

Richard Wojcik (PhD Linguistics, '73) is an Associate Technical Fellow of The Boeing Company's Phantom Works R&D unit. After receiving his doctorate from Ohio State University he taught a wide variety of linguistic subjects at Columbia University, Barnard College and Hofstra University. His special interests have included Slavic linguistics, the history of linguistics, Breton syntax, lexical semantics, phonological theory, controlled languages and computational linguistics. In 1987, he joined Boeing to work on Natural Language Processing applica-

tions. He was a principal developer of the Boeing Simplified English Checker—the best known product of its type on the market—and now serves as its Product Manager. He also chairs the US industry panel that helps regulate the writing standard for aircraft maintenance manuals. In addition to Simplified English, he has worked on a number of Natural Language Processing projects in the areas of text mining, semantic processing, and speech processing.

These changes bring Board membership to the following eleven, all of whom are happy to respond to questions or accept suggestions concerning the Board's activities.

Nancy Ackles
ackles@u.washington.edu
Jim Armagost
mvarmagost@earthlink.net
Kristin Denham
kristin.denham@wwu.edu
Michael Gamon
mgamon@microsoft.com
Phil Harrison
philip.harrison@pss.boeing.com
Jim Hoard
jim_hoard@hotmail.com
Jeffrey Kallen
jkallen@tcd.ie
James Lyle
jlyle@microsoft.com
Tatsuya Suzuki
tacchan@ic.nanzan-u.ac.jp
Alice Taff
taff@u.washington.edu
Rick Wojcik
richard.h.wojcik@boeing.com

FELICITAZIONE

Congratulations to Cinzia Russi (PhD '03), who has accepted an Assistant Professor position in the Department of French and Italian at the University of Texas, Austin.

In her dissertation Russi dealt with the grammaticalization of Italian clitics (Jurgen Klausenburger, advisor).

OBITUARY: HOWARD LEE NOSTRAND

Howard Lee Nostrand, Professor Emeritus of Romance Languages and Literature, died on March 13, 2004. During his long year career Professor Nostrand dedicated himself to the improvement of intercultural understanding among peoples of the world. As a founding member and later chairman of the Seattle Committee for a Community of Democracies, he promoted democracy and cultural awareness at the local level. He was also instrumental in establishing the Seattle-Nantes sister city organization, in bringing the Lyon School exhibit to the Frye Art Museum and in many other formal and informal cultural exchange activities.

Professor Nostrand was born in New York City in 1910. He received a BA at Amherst and an MA at Harvard before his interests led him to France, where he earned his doctorate at the Université de Paris in 1934 with a dissertation on French classical theater. Upon his return to the States he taught at the University of Buffalo, the US Naval Academy and Brown University before accepting a professorship at the University of Washington in 1939. Over the next twenty-five years, as chair, he built the Department of Romance Languages and Literature.

During World War II Professor Nostrand served as the State Department's cultural attaché in Lima, Peru. In the period of anti-communist excesses following the war he was instrumental in successfully challenging

Washington's loyalty oath law (see sidebar).

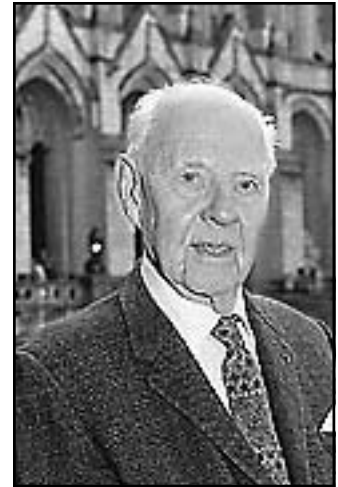
Professor Nostrand retired from the faculty in 1979 but continued to be an active scholar. Altogether he authored or co-authored over 100 publications on issues of language competence and cultural competence. His most recent book, *Finding Common Ground: From the Polarizing Mind-set to Productive Discussion* (Mellen Press) will appear this spring.

He was a founding member of the Pacific Northwest Conference on Foreign Languages. He has been honored by the French *Palme Académique*, *Légion d'Honneur* and *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, as well as by the American Association of Teachers of French, the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages and the Washington Association for Language Teaching.

Professor Nostrand is survived by his wife Frances Brewer Nostrand; his sons David Nostrand of Sheridan, Wyoming, Richard Nostrand of Norman, Oklahoma, and Robert Nostrand of San Diego, California; and eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

In lieu of funeral services a celebration of Howard Nostrand's life was held on April 18. Memorial gifts may be directed to the University of Washington for the Howard and Frances Nostrand Endowed Professorship. Mail donations to the College of Arts and Sciences, Box 353765, University

of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-3765.



EXEMPLARY ACTIVISM

In 1955 Howard Nostrand and professor of American history Max Savelle, supported by the ACLU, volunteered to be complainants in a suit against the University challenging the constitutionality of state employee loyalty oaths recently mandated by the legislature. In this "friendly test" the professors kept the Administration informed of the suit and the reasons for it. They won in Superior Court and the judgment was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court of Washington in 1959. In 1964 a second case, supported by the ACLU and UWAAUP, was heard by the US Supreme Court. The Court again ruled for the plaintiffs—sixty-four employees representing all levels of the University from graduate teaching assistant to tenured faculty member to secretary-typist. The Court's 7-2 decision found, in part, that the language of the loyalty oaths was unconstitutionally "vague, uncertain, and broad."

Are you one of the many people who put their pocket change in a jar to spend as "mad money"? If so, consider using it to become a Friend of Linguistics instead. You can do this by returning your tax deductible gift in the enclosed postage paid envelope or by completing our online gift page. Point your browser to https://secure.gifts.washington.edu/common/gift.asp?page=funds&source_typ=2&source=EBF

CONTACT INFORMATION

Department of Linguistics
 Box 354340
 Seattle WA 98195-4340
 Phone 206-543-2046, Fax 206-685-7978
 Email phoneme@u.washington.edu
 Undergraduate advisor
 Kening Li, lingadv@u.washington.edu
 Graduate advisor
 Ellen Kaisse, kaisse@u.washington.edu
 Department Chair
 Julia Herschensohn
 Administrator
 Kathryn Speranza



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