

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

In this past year of financial upheaval, you may have missed receiving our newsletter. Our department, like all at the University of Washington, has had to undergo major cuts—20% of our TAs were eliminated and in addition we reduced our budget by 8%—so mailing a printed newsletter seemed like a bit of an indulgence. Nevertheless, we wanted to update our alumni and friends and let you know that until the financial situation improves we are discontinuing the print newsletter and periodically posting news from the department at <http://depts.washington.edu/lingweb/index.php>.

Despite the gloomy economic climate, we've persevered in our mission of research and teaching, while aiming for community involvement and diversity.

Our research mission is guaranteed by the superior productivity and recognition of our faculty. Since 2005 they published six books and nearly 200 articles, while bringing in millions of dollars in grants. In a field that earns very little grant funding overall, seven grant PIs in our de-

partment tallied a total of \$3,050,000 last year to study Hindi, Russian, Athabaskan and Pacific NW English. Our faculty are invited to speak at universities throughout the world, serve on editorial boards of the most prestigious journals in the field and hold offices in professional organizations. Excellence in research translates into the classroom where linguists provide models of experiential learning, often based on their own investigations.

Diversity is important to the discipline of linguistics because the central focus of the field "is to understand the human capacity for language." Our faculty and graduate students conduct scholarship and teaching—both in large introductory and in specialized classes—on issues of diversity such as indigenous language preservation, African-American English, and Deaf Studies. During the past two years we have established a program of American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Studies whose classes immediately fill at the beginning of registration, and then generate long waiting lists (hundreds of students). The ASL pro-

gram has generated nearly \$50,000 in donations.

Our computational linguistics faculty is doing pioneering teaching and research in this emerging area (CL), with our professional master's degree one of the few in the world. The CLMA program, having grown over the past five years to the current enrollment of 62, has awarded 24 degrees; CL doctoral students number seven. Our CL faculty are highly valued instructors and researchers, all three grant-funded (two with prestigious NSF CAREER grants). They are integral to our department in collaborating with colleagues on research projects, graduate student supervision, and sharing of resources in our three labs (CL, Phonetics, Sociolinguistics).

Good news for the department also included several awards: one of two honorary Doctorates at the 2009 Commencement for Yakama Elder Virginia Beavert (who frequently collaborates with Sharon Hargus); R1edu national award for Prof. Emily

See *LETTER*, p. 3



Inside this issue:

Alum news	2
Honors and awards	3
Student news	4
Musical note	4
Obituaries	5

Our many thanks to Jim for his years of editing the Newsletter!!

ALUM NEWS

Susannah Levi (PhD 2004: *The representation of underlying glides: A cross-linguistic study*) sent us this retrospective update from New York University, where she is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders.

Like many of those looking at linguistics as a field of study, I entered linguistics with little idea of what I was getting into. What I tell people is that my background in mathematics and French literature led me to seek a field of study which would combine my interests in language, structure, and logic. But the truth is, I



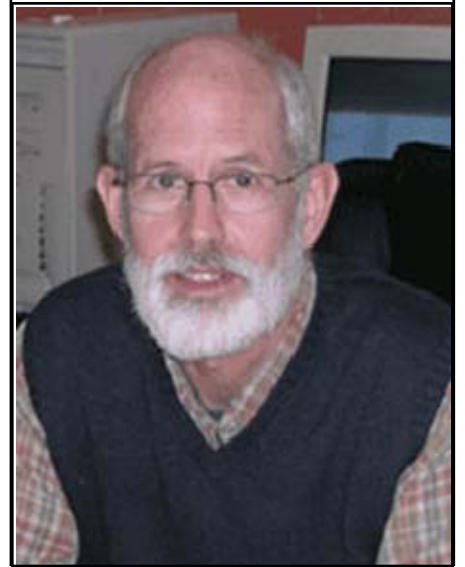
was naïve. Like most of the rest of the world I thought that entering a linguistics department would allow me to learn several languages without anyone bothering me. I was lucky to discover that linguistics was much more than simply learning languages – as it turns out I'm not that good at it.

My first year at UW was also Richard Wright's and Alicia Wassink's first year and the beginning of a very strong phonetics/phonology community. I was lucky to have classes from both Ellen Kaisse (who became my advisor) and Sharon Hargus in my first year and to do research on speech perception with Richard Wright. With Ellen's guidance and sage advice, I tended towards lan-

guages associated "with good food and warm climates". UW's longstanding strength in phonology drew me in; I completed my master's thesis on Turkish Vowel Harmony and eventually my dissertation on the cross-linguistic phonological patterning of glides. The burgeoning phonetics community at UW and the clear integration of phonetics and phonology in the field kept bringing me back to phonetics. I took courses on speech perception and acoustics from Alicia, Richard, and Sharon. To gain a fuller understanding of language processing from a perceptual point of view, I was encouraged to take classes in speech and hearing sciences and psychology. I was thankful for the opportunity to cross 15th Avenue and have a class in a building closer to the coffee and copy shops (both of which I frequented).

My time in Seattle was largely spent doing things related to school, but I did manage to appreciate and explore the city. One of my favorite conversation topics was the best combination of busses to get from one place in the city to another. (Thank you, U-pass!) The west coast at first felt very far and foreign to me, but thankfully my brother and his family lived on Whidbey Island. The short ferry ride always felt like I was entering a different world. Living in a little apartment next to campus kept me (unfortunately) animal-free, so I was always happy to spend a little time with his animals, which variably included dogs, cats, rabbits, goats and chickens. Thanks to Ellen's and the department's and the university's support, I also received a FLAS to spend a summer in Turkey where I finally got the kind of summer weather I'd been missing and where I collected the production data for my first generals paper on stress in Turkish.

The Department gratefully acknowledges a generous gift of \$5,000 from **Clancy Clements**, whose study at UW began in 1982 and culminated in a PhD in 1985 (*Verb Classification and Verb Class Change in Spanish*). Clancy's career has been almost entirely at Indiana University, where he is a professor in Linguistics (.5) and Spanish & Portuguese (.5). He took 3 semesters away from IU, however, to chair the University of New Mexico's Spanish & Portuguese Department from January 2006 to June 2007.



I did grow to love my time in Seattle (despite a few years in the middle where I absolutely hated the rain), but I wanted to get back to the other side of the Mississippi. I vowed I wouldn't take another red-eye flight again. I applied for faculty positions as I was finishing my dissertation, but I kept thinking that this would be the ideal time to learn something new. Luckily I didn't get a teaching position that year and instead followed Richard's footsteps by taking a post-doctoral position in the Department of Psychology at Indiana University where I was able to take my knowledge of linguistics and use it to tackle problems in speech perception and

See LEVI, p. 3

HONORS AND AWARDS

In June 2009 UW conferred on Yakama tribal elder **Virginia Beavert** an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree for her pivotal role in the preservation and documentation of Sahaptin, the ancestral language of the native people of central Washington and Oregon.

Beavert holds a Bachelor of Anthropology degree from Central Washington University and a Master of Education degree in Bilingual and Bicultural Education from the University of Arizona. Her scholarship extends over the past 30 years and is recognized throughout North America and increasingly throughout the world. She is the author and co-author of numerous scholarly articles on Sahaptin and has taught the language for more than a quarter century at various colleges and universities in the northwest, including Central Washington University, Yakima Valley Community College, Heritage University and the University of Oregon.

Although Beavert's work directly benefits the Yakama and other Sahaptin tribes, it also provides a model for other indigenous peoples faced with a vanishing language.

In April of this year UW Press and Heritage University are scheduled to jointly publish her life's work, the first comprehensive dictionary of the Sahaptin language (see <http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/search/books/BEAICH.html>).



Assistant Professor **Emily Bender** has received the 2009 R1edu Award for Distinguished Faculty Contributions to Online Learning. She is recognized for her groundbreaking work in development of the UW online master's degree program in Computational Linguistics. Through use of cutting edge web conferencing technology, students have the option of joining, live online, a classroom-based course held on campus.

Bender's use of web conferencing technology, employing live video and two-way audio, allows online students to participate in class in real time. Students can "raise their hand" and ask questions or engage in discussion.

"This approach opened the degree program to new audiences who are geographically remote from the classroom or who cannot otherwise attend afternoon courses on campus," noted David Szatmary, UW Vice Provost for Educational Outreach. "It also allows increased flexibility for local students, who can choose to be present in the classroom one day and, depending on their work or travel schedule, attend online the next day."

Imre Solti, MD, CLMA student and Senior Fellow in the Division of Biomedical and Health Informatics, has been awarded a prestigious K99 grant from NIH and the National Library of Medicine. The goal of the grant is to semi-automate the clinical trial eligibility screening process.

The grant covers an initial two-year mentored training phase for Dr. Solti at the University of Washington under the guidance of Drs. Gennari and Tarczy-Hornoch. During the second phase the grant covers three years of protected independent research time for Dr. Solti contingent on his successful application for a tenured track faculty position in a domestic academic

institution and availability of NIH funds.

Dr. Solti is using the K99 phase to round out his bioinformatics training with Computational Linguistics course work and lay the groundwork for his independent research. The goal of the research is to semi-automate the clinical trial eligibility screening process for patients using Computational Linguistics methods on the patients' narrative text notes in the electronic medical record. The ultimate aim is to create an informatics module for patient portals, personal health records and electronic medical records that is capable of providing individualized and patient-centered clinical trial recommendations in a largely automated way.

Julia Miller has been awarded the \$1000 Excellence in Graduate Research Award. She is currently working on her dissertation, which focuses on the acoustic properties of tone in Dane-zaa, an endangered First Nations language spoken in NE British Columbia and NW Alberta, Canada. Secondary goals of this project cover pitch normalization, 'marked' versus 'unmarked' tone and correlates to tone other than fundamental frequency. Miller has held the Volkswagen Foundation Fellowship for several years and has presented at numerous international conferences.

Alum **Scott Drellishak's** 2009 dissertation (*Widespread but not universal: Improving the typological coverage of the Grammar Matrix*) was selected by the Graduate School to be forwarded to the Western Association of Graduate Schools (WAGS) for its annual WAGS/UMI Innovation in Technology Award competition. The award includes \$1,000 to the recipient and travel expenses for the student and student's adviser to receive the award at the March meeting of the Association.

STUDENT NEWS

The following students have earned the degrees indicated. "CLMA" is the Professional Master's in Computational Linguistics program.

PhD

Dormer, Anya "Feature Valuation Without Deletion: Evidence from Aspect and Tense System of Russian"

Drellishak, Scott "Widespread but Not Universal: Improving the Typological Coverage of the Grammar Matrix"

Li, Kening "The Information Structure of Mandarin Chinese: Syntax

and Prosody"

Kilanski, Kelley "The Effects of Token Frequency and Phonological Neighborhood Density on Speech Production for Native and Non-Native Speakers of English"

MA

General linguistics

Churng, Sarah R.

Galperina-Radu, Ioulia

Goodenkauf, Justin Mitchell

Krein, Kristi R.

McCloy, Daniel Robert

Nisonger, Brian E.

Oxley, Meghan A.

Ridenour, Jeffrey M.

Yip, Chak Lam

CLMA

Amundsen, Thomas

Georgi, Ryan A.

Goodman, Michael W.

Halgrim, Scott Russell

Landan, David B.

Larsson, Erik S.

Mitchell, Margaret

New, Robert D.

O'Hara, Kelly A.

Sternberg, Nate

Robert G. Thilo

Letter, from p. 1

Bender; WAGS Dissertation nomination for Dr. Scott Drellishak; the K99 grant from NIH for CLMA student Imre Solti; and the Excellence in Graduate Research Award to Michael Scanlon. We have also been very pleased to receive numerous gifts from our gracious donors, even in this difficult time, particularly the generous gift of \$5000 to our Graduate Fellowship Endowment from Dr. Clancy Clements.

It has been a tumultuous year, but also one of great honors and joys. Our faculty, staff and students are all very supportive of one another and proud that our department is such an important force on the campus, in the community and in the world. We encourage you to keep up with our activities and to come to our colloquia when you have an opportunity.

Cordially,

Julia Herschensohn



The editor is grateful for the opportunity to put out the newsletter from late 2003 up to the present issue. Henceforth we join some major publishers in curtailing a print version and folding material into our existing website. Readers are invited to keep up with Department goings-on by periodically following the News link at <http://depts.washington.edu/lingweb>



Levi, from p. 2

language processing. I then spent a year at the University of Michigan teaching phonetics courses while Pam Beddor (coincidentally(?) Alicia's advisor) was on leave. I had been told by many—including Sharon and Ellen—that a career in academics requires persistence and a little luck. After five years on the job market, including three years in Bloomington (east) and another in Ann Arbor (easter), I was lucky that a job opened at NYU (eastest) and even luckier that I got it.

When I first left UW I thought I

would be unhappy to end up in a speech and hearing department, but after several years of research combining my theoretical training with psychological testing methods, I'm very happy here. I am able to draw on my linguistic knowledge (such as what phonological processes are natural—but how natural is it really?), and apply it to different populations (such as those with deficits in language learning or language processing). Now that I'm finally settled in a job, I've been able to get rid of my packing boxes and get a puppy.

OBITUARIES

Sol Saporta

Longtime Department chair Sol Saporta—scholar, teacher and activist, whose mantra was “Don’t let school stand in the way of your education”—passed away on October 21, 2008. The author of numerous articles and books, Sol was once described by a book reviewer as “a linguist, humorist, and inveterate gadfly.” Sol spent 30 years on the faculty of the University of Washington where he influenced the lives of countless students and aggravated almost as many university administrators. Born in New York City in 1925, Sol earned his BA from Brooklyn College and his MA and PhD from the University of Illinois. He retired from the University of Washington in 1990 but remained active in education, teaching classes at Seattle Central Community College and Lifetime Learning. An enthusiastic fan of thoroughbred racing, Sol was a fixture at Longacres Racetrack and later at Emerald Downs where he always looked forward to the company of friends, fellow bettors and racetrack staff. Sol was preceded in death by his wife Raquel. He is survived by his son David (Susie Tull), son Victor (Kate Saporta), daughter Terri, daughter Hillary Hubacker, and grandchildren Carson, Grant and Chela Saporta. See www.solsaporta.com for more information. In lieu of flowers Sol would rather you voted or protested. Or put \$2 on a long shot.



Adapted from The Seattle Times (10/26-31/2008).

Thom Hess

Department alumnus Thom Hess died on August 27, 2009. His impact on Native American linguistics will be deep and lasting, for although his work was geographically limited to a few Amerindian languages of the northwest, his topics were wide ranging and few could match the depth of his insights or the clarity with which he expressed them. A native of Michigan, Thom did his undergraduate work at the University of Colorado



(1959) and his Master’s (1964) and PhD (1967) at UW. His dissertation, *Snohomish Grammatical Structure*, is the first detailed description of the Snohomish dialect of Lushootseed, the language to which he would dedicate many years of his professional life while teaching at the University of Victoria (British Columbia). Thom typically concentrated on pedagogical works useful to the Native language communities where he obtained his data, such as his *Lushootseed: The language of the Skagit, Nisqually, and Other Tribes of Puget Sound*, co-authored with his longtime consultant Vi Hilbert. Pedagogic or scholarly, his writing style remains accessible yet mature. As such he was a teacher in the purest and best sense of the word, and among his many students he has a reputation for generosity and fairness.

Adapted from Jan van Eijk: Linguist List (<http://linguistlist.org/issues/20/20-3455.html>).

Frances Nostrand

Frances Nostrand, who with her husband Howard Nostrand funded the generous Nostrand Professorship in Linguistics, passed away on January 17, 2009. On completion of her secondary education at the Universities of Rochester and Lyons, France, Fran began her teaching career as a high school French instructor in the Rochester area. In 1940 she married Emerson Creore and they moved to Seattle, where Fran taught French at The Bush School and ultimately became an instructor in UW’s Romance Languages Department. Her marriage to Emerson ended amicably; in 1967 she married Howard Nostrand, to whom she remained married until his death in 2004. Kindred spirits, they shared with each other and with their countless friends a love of French culture, academia, the arts, music and a commitment to world peace and understanding among diverse cultures. Both were honored by the Government of France for their unique contributions to the teaching of the French language in conjunction with French culture. Fran was also a longtime member of the Seattle Alliance Français and a founding member of the Seattle-Nantes Sister City Organization. In February 2009, on the 96th anniversary of her birth, Fran’s remarkable and wonderful life was celebrated in a service held at Suzzallo Library. The Department is ever grateful for Fran’s support and generosity.



Adapted from The Seattle Times (1/30-31/2009).

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