

Dear LSSA Members

Greetings from the chair. I trust that the academic year is going reasonably well.

This overdue letter is to say that we had a wonderful conference in January in the winelands of Stellenbosch, amid sweltering temperatures. Thanks again to the team from Stellenbosch for their pleasantly efficient efforts. Many of our members participated in the back-to-back international Pragmatics conference.

We had a successful, quorate AGM. As we had had elections of Executive Members in 2007, there were none this year. (Next year you will need to choose a new President as I will be stepping down after 8 years. No third term or life rule for me, thanks). So you need to start thinking about a suitable replacement who will ensure that our society remains the reasonably strong organisation and forum for academic language research that it is. I asked the members to ratify some changes within existing portfolios that had been mentioned at the July conference of 2007.

Marné Pienaar and Trish Watson had indicated that they would not be available to continue as editors. Although we did so at the meeting, may I again record our gratitude to these colleagues for their excellent work over the last 4 years. Our new editorial team ratified by the membership is: Jackie Naudé (UFS), Christa van der Walt (Stellenbosch) and Dominic Mwepu (UCT/CPUT). This is a promising team with local and international experience: our thanks to them.

Jackie Naude, who has done a sterling job as secretary-cum-treasurer for a long time, will obviously step down from this post. I want to thank Jackie for his unstinting hard work over the years; and his willingness to be our new editor. The position of secretary is held by Cobus Snyman and that of treasurer by Nikiwe Matebula, both of whom have worked with Jackie at UFS. For the record the other personnel on the Executive are: Britta Zawada (UNISA), Mark de Vos (Rhodes), Kiran Pienaar (Rhodes), Ron Simango (Rhodes), Ondene van Dulm (Stellenbosch), Leandra Ehlers (UFS) and Leketi Makalela (University of Limpopo). The Executive nominated Marné Pienaar as Deputy president.

Nikiwe will be presenting formal minutes before our next conference. In the meantime the most important points that I recall are:

- The venue for the next conference (sometime in 2009) has not been finalised yet, but three universities are in the running: UWC, Pretoria and UNISA. I hope to have a decision by June this year.
- We learnt of the death of two prominent linguists in 2007. William Branford (Rhodes) was an active member of our society for a long time and a leading linguist of South African English. R.K. (Bob) Herbert, died in a drowning accident in the U.S.A. Whilst – to my knowledge – not a member of our society, Bob was active with ALASA and did much to build links between

Sociolinguistics and African Language Studies. We pass our condolences to their families. (Obituaries will soon be posted on our website).

- The Young Linguist Award: For various reasons the committee did not see its way clear to making an award for 2008.
- The Prestige Award: No nominations were made for 2008. Members are welcome to make suggestions in preparation for 2009.

Finally, members are welcome to convey information about projects, hard-to-find publications of theirs, and any other snippets of linguistic interest via our e-list and website. I expect to post some very soon, regarding a submission to the next census takers and an upcoming conference.

Best wishes for the rest of 2008.

Raj Mesthrie