

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The achievements of our faculty have been impressive, as usual, as they gave dozens of papers in Europe, Asia and the Americas, produced 45 articles and published two books. In a field that earns very little grant funding overall, the Department's grant PIs brought in a total of \$3,050,000 (awarded over several years). Some highlights include Ellen Kaisse's keynote speech in London; Edith Aldridge's talks in Cambridge, UK and Hong Kong; Sharon Hargus's NSF and Alaska Native Language Center grants and completion of *Ichishkiin Sínwit. Yakama/ Yakima Sahaptin Dictionary* (with

co-author Virginia Beavert); Toshi Ogihara's book now in press with Cambridge UP and publication of my *Language Development and Age*, also by Cambridge UP. Alicia Wassink has NSF support for her Pacific Northwest dialect project, while Emily Bender continued her NSF CAREER award. Emily's fellow computationalist Fei Xia also won a CAREER award and is further supported by two additional NSF projects on which she is the primary investigator (one co-directed with Scott Farrar). Barbara Citko published three single author articles in well respected journals and received a

UW Royalty Research Fund award.

We were very pleased to welcome several new faculty. Lance Forshay is the lecturer in charge of the American Sign Language (ASL) program. Laura McGarrity, a lecturer in phonology, was appointed in collaboration with Communication. Assistant Professor Edith Aldridge joined our syntax team with specialization in Asian and Austronesian languages. Assistant Professor Betsy Evans is part of the sociolinguistic contingent with research on language attitudes and social networks. Acting Assistant

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CLMA REPORT

The Professional Master's in Computational Linguistics program, launched just three years ago, immediately established itself as a strong component of the Department's teaching and research endeavors. One user friendly aspect of the program that is clearly appreciated by

students is its variety of routes to the degree: thesis, report or internship. Of those expected to graduate this summer, three opted to write a thesis while seven took advantage of the Seattle area's internship opportunities at Microsoft, VoiceBox, and startup companies Kiha

Software, EVRI and Positronic Inc. At least one of the latter students has already secured a fulltime position to begin on completion of the internship. (Of the startups, Kiha has our editorial chuckle for its clever website at [http://www.kiha.com/.](http://www.kiha.com/))

MEET FEI XIA

Fei Xia, who is in her third year at UW but says she has not had many opportunities to work with those outside the Professional Master's in Computational Linguistics (CLMA) program, introduces herself to a wider audience by telling how she became interested in linguistics and what projects she is currently working on.

My research area is computational linguistics (CL), also known as natural language processing (NLP) in computer science departments. Being a highly interdisciplinary field, CL requires training in three major fields: computer science, linguistics and mathematics. While computer science was my major in college and graduate school and math is one of my favorite subjects, I did not know much about linguistics until I went to graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn).

I took several linguistics courses in the first two years at UPenn, but I did not fully appreciate the beauty of linguistics until I started working on the Chinese Penn Treebank Project in 1998. In this project, part of my responsibilities as the team leader was to design guidelines for word segmentation, part-of-speech tagging and syntactic annotation. In order to create a good set of guidelines, which explains how various syntactic constructions should be annotated, I read tons of linguistic papers on Chinese syntax and worked closely with a team of linguists. I was especially inspired by Professor Tony Kroch, a well-known syntactician from the linguistics department at UPenn. During our regular meetings, I would first present the data for some syntactic constructions in Chinese, then go over existing analyses and finally argue why I believed a particular analysis was most plausible. Tony often started the discussion with the comment "Fei, you know you are wrong, don't you?" — That's his way of challenging his students to try harder. When I tried to support my position with more evidence, most of the time Tony would find loopholes in my arguments right away. Once in a while, I was able to hold my ground and Tony's eyes would sparkle with excitement and he would say: "This is so interesting! It is just like language X!" He would

then get up, write examples on the whiteboard and explain how those examples were just like the ones in Chinese. It was through this kind of exchanges that I finally started to think and act like a linguist, and Tony's passion for languages was so contagious that I soon became fascinated by the similarities and differ-



ences among languages.

Now that you know how I got into linguistics, I would like to say a few words about my research. There are two major approaches to computational linguistics: the traditional rule-based approach that requires manually crafted rules for representing human knowledge and linguistic generalization, and the data-driven approach that builds stochastic models which are trained on language data. While my dissertation on grammar generation and grammar extraction fall into the first category, my research on statistical machine translation done at the T. J. Watson IBM Research Center belongs to the second. Having experimented with both approaches, I believe that the next major breakthrough in CL will come from hybrid systems that combine the strengths of both, and that linguistic knowledge will be most valuable when building systems for languages that lack a

large number of online resources (e.g., treebanks and parallel data).

One of my current research projects is to create a framework that allows the rapid development of resources and tools for resource-poor languages. I am tackling the problem by bootstrapping language processing tools with initial seeds created by projecting syntactic information from resource-rich languages to resource-poor languages.

In another project, I collaborate with William Lewis and Scott Farrar, and my main task is to expand ODIN, an online database of interlinear glossed text (IGT), by improving the accuracy of IGT detection and language identification. I applied machine learning methods to the task, and the new algorithms work much better than the rule-based approach. The current database contains 166,000 IGT instances from about a thousand languages. I plan to run the new algorithms on millions of documents crawled from the Web, and the size of ODIN is going to increase dramatically. In a third project, I collaborate with several universities in the US and India to build a multi-representation Treebank for Hindi/Urdu. All three of these projects are supported by NSF grants.

In addition to research, I also spend a significant amount of time on teaching and the CLMA program. While the CLMA program has become very successful in the past three years, I hope that more students from the regular linguistics program will become interested in computational linguistics, a field that has much to offer to, and much to learn from, other fields of linguistics.

Visit the CLMA program at
<http://www.compling.washington.edu/compling/>

STUDENT NEWS (ALSO SEE PAGE 4)

AWARDS

Galen Basse, a UW Graduate Student Fellowships doctoral student specializing in syntax, has received a Fulbright Fellowship to Riga, Latvia from September through May. He will be conducting sociolinguistic research on Latvian-Russian bilinguals. Specifically, he will look at the social networks of speakers to see how those networks affect production of contrastive vowel length in Latvian.

Some previous research has claimed that widespread bilingualism in Russian has led to changes in Latvian vowel length and quality. Galen hopes to discover whether those changes actually represent new sociolinguistic norms for the younger bilingual community.

Doctoral candidate **Julia Miller** was awarded her third Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship from the Canadian Studies Center of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies. Julia is part of an endangered language documentation team with members from UW, University of British Columbia and University of Cologne. The Volkswagen Foundation, a

private German agency, has funded their project from 2004 through 2008.

Both the Volkswagen and FLAS awards allow Julia to travel to northern British Columbia to work on the First Nation language Danezaa (Beaver), which is related to Apache and Navajo in the American Southwest. Along with helping speakers document their language, she also collects data for her academic research on the acoustic properties of lexical tone in different dialects of the language.

Reva Robinson, an Honors undergraduate, has received a Killam Fellowship, one of only two awards made in the first cycle of a study-abroad program facilitated through UW's Canadian Studies Center. Her award, which has previously not been available to students on the West Coast, will allow Reva to spend fall quarter at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

Reva says she is looking forward to enriching her studies and gaining life experience in Canada, and is excited about this opportunity be-

cause she has never seen much of Canada beyond Vancouver despite being raised in Seattle.

Her interests include phonetics, phonology and German. After completion of her BA she intends to pursue a Master's degree in computational linguistics.

Michael Scanlon earned the Department's second annual \$1000 Excellence in Graduate Research Award. It was presented by Linguistics Advisory Board Chair Jim Hoard (PhD '67) at the year-end commencement party.

Michael, who has BAs in Music and English from William Paterson University (New Jersey), is now in his fourth year of graduate work. His primary fields of interest are sociolinguistic theory, phonetics, social networks, dialect contact, and language perception and production. He says that what seems to guide most of his thinking concerns the extent to which linguistic output is based on linguistic input, and how social groupings influence that input (in perception) and output (in production).



Basse



Miller



Robinson



Scanlon

Credit: Canadian Studies Center

STUDENT NEWS (ALSO SEE PAGE 3)

GRADUATE DEGREES

The following students have earned the degrees indicated, followed by dissertation or thesis title. "CLMA" indicates the Professional Master's in Computational Linguistics program, in which students complete a thesis, report or internship option.

PhD

Manuel Da Conceicao "Pronominal Affixation and Cliticization in Romance and Bantu Languages"

Jeffrey Stevenson "The Sociolinguis-

tic Variables of Chilean Voseo"

MA

Galen Basse "A Phase-based Approach to Factivity"

Avram Stanley Blum "The Acquisition of Spanish Copular Verbs 'Ser' and 'Estar' by L1 English Learners of L2 Spanish"

Sabrina Burleigh CLMA (internship)

Derek J Gulas "A Phonetic and Phonological Critique of Theories on

Qualitative Ablaut in Proto Indo-European"

Thomas M O'Leary CLMA (internship)

Yohei Sakata CLMA (internship)

Ankit Kumar Srivastava CLMA (internship)

Michael A Tepper "Knowledge-Lite Induction of Underlying Morphology: A Hybrid Approach to Learning Morphemes Using Context-Sensitive Rewrite Rules"

FACULTY NEWS

Edith Aldridge and Betsy Evans joined several dozen others in mid-June for the 11th annual UW faculty field tour or "five-day trek across the state." (*Trek* is apparently not to be taken seriously. One website refers to travel aboard the large,

modern bus as "1 state, 5 days, 500 pounds of junk food. Infinite possibilities.") Seriously, the expense-paid tour lets faculty new to the state and the university meet other new faculty, learn more about where most UW students come from, explore our

geography, history and society and talk one-on-one with university administrators. As for the latter, rumor has it that Provost Wise could tell some tales. The paparazzi captured a shot of possible conspiracy below, but details remain undisclosed.



Edith

Betsy

Provost Wise

REFLECTIONS

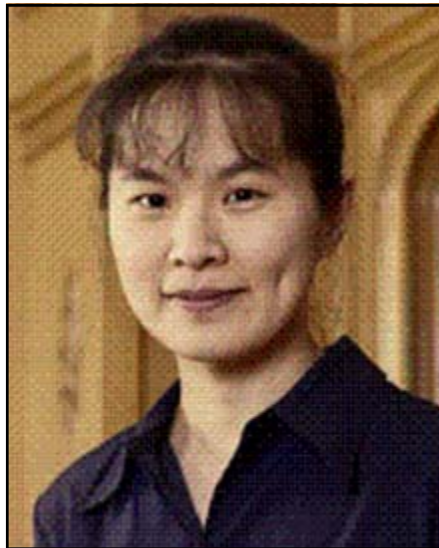
When Chia-Hui Huang appeared in our pages in late 2005 (<http://depts.washington.edu/lingweb/info/issue41.pdf>) she was an acting assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Now back in Seattle, where she is with Getty Images, Chia-Hui shares her experiences as a student in the Department.

In the spring of 1996, when I finished my last undergraduate linguistics course at the University of Iowa, I said to myself, "This was really good, but I want more." Before I officially finished my undergraduate studies, I was already dreaming of the day I would join the UW Linguistics Department. Little did I know that what I would learn and experience in the subsequent years at the UW would make a meaningful and ever-lasting impact on my life.

The Early Years. My first year in the program was definitely the year of awakening. I came to realize that I didn't know how to write a proper research paper or constructively critique an article. I also came to realize the amount of time I spent studying was definitely NOT enough. More often than not I would spend my evenings and nights studying at Suzzallo Library. Every night at quarter till midnight the PA system would come to life indicating that the library was about to close. Despite the familiarity of this announcement, I would still feel a sense of panic. No matter how much work I still had to do, I had to find somewhere else to do it. As I walked to the bus stop I had the recurring thought that whoever decided there should only be 24 hours in a day, was definitely not a graduate student.

It wasn't all just work and more work in the early years. There were many fun and light-hearted moments that I still savor. One occasion that stands out was the quarterly Pub Crawl. Early on a Friday evening, starting at the north end of the Ave, we would work our way from bar to bar, until we reached the College Inn at the south end of the Ave. The conversation would

invariably start out with lightweight topics such as [ɔ̃fən] vs. [ɔ̃fən], and progress toward a passionate (yet civil) discussion of subjects ranging from 'do we really need LF?' to the existence of UG. By the mid point of the crawl civility tended to fade somewhat and the divisions would form. Shouts of, "Hey, no mentioning of the S-word around here."



Credit: Kathy Sauber

could be heard. (Or the P-word, depending on the specialty of the individual, phonology or syntax, respectively.) Nonetheless, by the time the group reached the College Inn late in the evening (or early in the morning), we all gave linguistics a break, and talked about something personal that brought us to that place in our lives.

The People. In the fall of 1996 Fritz Newmeyer was the Department Chair. The faculty consisted of Michael Brame, Heles Contreras, Sharon Hargus, Julia Herschensohn, Ellen Kaisse, Soowon Kim, Jurgen Klausenburger, Toshiyuki Ogihara, Judith Strozer and Karen Zagana.

The courses offered by the Department at the time covered most of the core areas of linguistics. The curriculum became even more complete when Alicia Beckford Wassink and Richard Wright joined the Department a few years later. I had the pleasure of taking classes from many of them, but most of my coursework was with Alicia, Julia and Karen who were the members of my dissertation committee. Alicia brought the long awaited Sociolinguistics to the Department and offered a variety of courses in this field. The classes I took from her included Sociolinguistics I and II, Pidgins and Creoles, and several seminars on language variation, language change and language contact. Being her student and having the opportunity to be her TA, I was constantly amazed by the thoroughness in her preparation for each lecture and the methods she had to make the course content more accessible to students.

Julia Herschensohn was on sabbatical when I joined the Department so I didn't meet her and take her classes until a couple years later. Before I took her classes everybody told me, "Oh, you have to take Julia's class. You will love it, she is awesome." Everybody was right. What everybody didn't tell me was her amazing attention to detail and the breadth of knowledge she possessed. Julia could give us references on the fly or point us in the right direction regardless of the type or the scope of the topic. Most of the courses I took with Julia were seminars, which offered a wide range of topics including second language learning, the Critical Period Hypothesis, language universals, language change, etc. These

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REFLECTIONS, from p. 5

were the kinds of seminars that students with different theoretical interests could take and still be able to contribute to the discussion. It is an extremely difficult task to guide a group of students with such diverse interests and expectations, and still make them feel that they could contribute meaningfully to the class. But that was what Julia pulled off on a weekly basis.

Karen Zagona was one of the professors I had during my first quarter at the Department and she was the chair of my dissertation committee when I graduated. I took a variety of courses with her which included Spanish History, Spanish Phonetics and Phonology, Syntactic Theories and several seminars on syntax. As a student I always craved brainstorming sessions in her office. Very often I would show her two possible solutions I had to account for structure X. One seemed OK and safe, and the other seemed radical but could be something better. She always encouraged me to go with the radical one as long as I could find supporting empirical evidence, and be able to point out potential problems with the analysis. I remember a conversation I had with Karen when she told me how lucky we were to get to do so much thinking in our work. The ability to think analytically leads to the ability to think rationally and this has a big impact in our daily lives. As I moved on to other places, met more people and experienced more things in life, I couldn't agree with Karen more.

Teaching. Teaching was a significant part of my experience at the Department. I am extremely grateful to the Department for giving me several teaching assistantships while I was in the PhD program. I had the pleasure to TA for different faculty members

and learn from their unique teaching styles. I even had several opportunities to teach stand-alone courses. When I started teaching, I pictured myself as a Borg from Star Trek, assimilating all my students into linguistic drones with linguistics cybernetic implants in their brains. Slowly I realized as a teacher I could not expect all of my students to love linguistics or to pursue a career in linguistics. What I needed to do was to give them something that would benefit them regardless of their feelings toward linguistics or their career choices. In the spring of 2002 I attended a workshop organized by the Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR). In this workshop the director of CIDR at the time, Dr. Don Wulff, shared with us his experience talking to graduate students and faculties while he visited campuses across the nation. One common theme he noticed was that the excitement and eagerness observed in first year grad students were rarely seen among the veteran students. He suggested the easiest way to help our students was to never hesitate to show them how much we cared about what we did and the passion we had for our own fields. In doing so, that kind of enthusiasm became a source of inspiration for our students which was something they could take with them for the rest of their lives. Dr. Wulff passed away earlier this year, but his words live on. At that moment I realized I didn't have to look far for role models. My advisors and other faculty members at the department, many of them in their own ways, had shown their passion for linguistics. All I had to do was follow suit.

Tidbits. Needless to say there were more people and events that contributed to my experience at the

department. I remember the seminar taught by Soowon Kim in which he took us all the way from defining a research topic, working with informants, and submitting abstracts to finally presenting at a conference. Another memorable seminar was taught by Heles Contreras where we read the article "An Interview on Minimalism with Noam Chomsky" by Belletti and Ricci. My classmates and I had debates over this article that lasted after class hours and continued for weeks afterwards. I also recall very fondly the Algebraic Syntax series taught by Michael Brame. It was without a doubt fascinating, but surprisingly straightforward. I will always remember cheering for the Mariners while grading papers at Padelford, and hearing the same cheers coming from Toshiyuki Ogiwara's office after an important homerun. I still savor the memories of the TA office at Lewis Annex (affectionately referred to as the Trailer Park) where I shared with my fellow grad students many bouts of laughter and hair-pulling discussions. I miss hearing Jurgen Klausenburger's insightful commentary on current events and his analysis of the World Cup. I admire the determination of Sharon Hargus in pursuing her research as well as her incredible efficiency, an attribute I hoped to acquire while I was her TA. I am grateful to Richard Wright for giving me the opportunity to be one of the student organizers for WECOL 2001. During this conference I learned skills that I continue to apply on a regular basis, and met and worked with the most incredible people.

The time I spent at the Department was exciting and meaningful. The people I met and the events I experienced there, in big and small ways, have enriched my life and helped define me as a person.

GRADUATION PARTY 2008



Additional photos can be found at
<http://s304.photobucket.com/albums/nn161/toadstool52/gradparty/>



Letter, from p. 1

Professor Scott Farrar, a colleague in the computational group, has worked in archiving of endangered languages.

Our Computational Linguistics program continues to thrive, graduating several MAs each year. We are also very excited about our new program in ASL, whose classes rapidly fill at the beginning of registration and then generate long waiting lists. Lance has attracted hundreds of students, implemented a dynamic language program, established protocols for placement and instituted extracurricular Deaf Cul-

ture activities such as a weekly lunch gathering and visiting speakers. He and Adjunct Professor Richard Ladner co-taught a new course on Deaf Studies this past spring, which also reached maximum enrollment and had a waiting list. UW students clearly have a very strong interest in ASL and we are enthusiastic about the courses we can now offer. In the long term, we hope to establish a research focus in ASL as well as the language program.

The Departmental has engaged in a number of interfacing and interdisciplinary activities. We taught

courses cross-listed with Computer Science, Germanics, Psychology, English, Anthropology and Slavic. We co-sponsored, with the College (funded by an Exchange grant) and the Simpson Center, a series of six lectures—Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Early Bilingualism—each very well attended, sometimes with standing room only, and each followed by a reception at the Simpson Center. Finally, in December I gave a lecture at the Center in the new book series.

Julia Herschensohn

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