

**Minutes of the 2014 business meeting of the  
Association for Written Language and Literacy**

AWLL board: Anneke Neijt (president), Beatrice Primus (vice-president), Terry Joyce (secretary)  
Brighton, United Kingdom, 04/09/2014

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The 2014 AWLL business meeting was chaired by Anneke and facilitated by Terry. Bor Hodošček kindly consented to Terry's request to take down some notes during the meeting. About 11 of the workshop participants joined the business meeting.

**Agenda**

1. Thanks to Lynne Cahill for organizing the AWLL09 workshop
2. Comments about Written Language and Literacy's (WLL) special issue for workshop
3. Announcement concerning the general editorship of WLL journal
4. Announcement concerning AWLL board
5. Discussion about the next AWLL workshop (AWLL10)
6. W.v.t.t.k. (Dutch abbreviation of *wat verder ter tafel komt*, "any other business")

**1. Thanks to Lynne Cahill for organizing the AWLL09 workshop**

The AWLL board and all workshop participants expressed deep appreciation for Lynne's efforts in organizing the successful workshop.

**2. Comments about Written Language and Literacy's (WLL) special issue for workshop**

It was announced that Lynne has kindly agreed to take on the role of first guest editor for a special issue related to the workshop theme of "Orthographic databases and lexicons". In response to a question about time schedules, it was noted that the WLL special issues related to AWLL workshops usually take about 2 years to reach publication, but it was also explained that further information would be circulated in due course.

[PS: Lynne subsequently invited Terry to join her as a second guest editor for the special issue, which he accepted with pleasure. Therefore, Lynne and Terry will contact Beatrice in the near future to discuss plans for the special issue]

**3. Announcement concerning the general editorship of WLL journal**

Being unable to attend the AWLL09 workshop himself, Martin Neef requested (in recent email communication to Terry) for the following announcements to be made. Martin will step down as the general editor of WLL journal, with volume 18, issue 1 being the last issue under his general editorship. Moreover, Beatrice will take over the role of WLL's general editor (effective from Vol. 18, issue 2). Regrettably, circumstances prevented both Martin and

Beatrice from attending the workshop and announcing about this matter in person.

#### **4. Announcement concerning AWLL board**

During preparatory discussions prior to the business meeting between attending board members (Anneke and Terry), it was agreed that, looking to the longer-term future of AWLL, it would be prudent to gradually instigate some restructuring of the AWLL board. As a positive step in that direction, Lynne was invited to join the AWLL board, and she graciously accepted. In addition to announcing Lynne's joining of the AWLL board during the business meeting, both Anneke and Terry stressed how greater participation from all AWLL members would be most welcomed. This prompted some questions about the responsibilities of being a board member which were responded to. It was explained that the board's main task is to organize the biannual workshops. It was also explained that AWLL has no sources of finance. Although John Benjamins offers a reduction on annual WLL subscription to AWLL members who make their original subscription application with application form available at AWLL website, AWLL receives no part of the subscription fees. Terry also mentioned the plan to launch an AWLL newsletter in the near future (certainly by the end of 2014) and stressed that its success would depend on all AWLL members regularly providing Terry with news and information to create regular newsletters with meaningful content.

These discussions also prompted some questions about the objectives of AWLL with the implication that there are a number of areas that AWLL could be addressing, such as spelling, dialects within orthography and current issues within writing. Some participants also asked about AWLL's willingness to diversify its interests to encompass a wider range of scripts, minority languages and geographical locations. Responding specifically to the issue of interest diversity, Anneke explained that AWLL had attempted at 2010 Paris workshop to reach out to the International Society for the Study of Speech and Writing in Context (ICSWC) via a guest representative to explore the proposal to hold a joint workshop, but, unfortunately, that particular endeavor had stumbled. Some participants also voiced a concern that AWLL appears to be somewhat Euro-centric, as all its workshops have been held at European locations, and some asked where AWLL might go in the future. Reflecting Terry's affiliation and the considerable number of Japan-related participants (six of the workshop participants), Japan was noted as a strong contender for an AWLL workshop at some time in the future.

Concluding this section of the meeting, Anneke and Terry stressed that Beatrice would be contacted in order to continue these discussions about AWLL and the constitution and roles of AWLL board members.

## 5. Discussion about the next AWLL workshop (AWLL10)

Initial discussions focused more on candidate themes for the next workshop. In response to a question about whether a specific theme is desirable, Terry explained that the main rationale is that the workshop-related special issues of WLL really require a theme to make them “special” from the regular issues. It was, however, also acknowledged that particular themes may have less appeal or seem less relevant for some former workshop participants. On the other hand, it was also noted that traditionally, perhaps, only about half of the submissions specifically address the workshop theme, with the remainder tackling more general topics of AWLL interest.

In their preparatory discussions for the business meeting, Anneke and Terry had agreed that, both reflecting the minor landmark of AWLL’s 10th workshop and the need to attract many participants, it would be most appropriate to have a more general theme that attempts to reflect on the current states of writing systems and literacy research. Starting from these sentiments, a number of theme proposals were suggested (numbered only in indication of development of discussions): (1) “The mysteries of writing systems: Vital but only poorly understood!”; (2) “Issues in writing systems research”; (3) “Wonderful world of writing systems”; (4) “Diversity and variations in writing systems”; (5) “The effect of literacy on language behavior”; (6) “Non-standard spelling in the writing systems of the world”; (7) “The place of experimentation in writing systems research”; (8) “Empirical approaches in writing systems research”; (9) “Place of empirical evidence in writing systems research” (although it should be noted that last 3 listed in notes seem to be more playing with alternative wordings).

Recognizing that it is important for the local workshop organizer to be totally comfortable with the workshop theme and that AWLL board would need to continue discussions about who could be the local organizer for the next workshop, Anneke and Terry thanked the participants for their helpful suggestions.

## 6. w.v.t.t.k (Anything else)

There were only 2 topics under this agenda item during the meeting, which were both introduced by Terry.

[PS: This section also includes a brief record of the panel discussion session of the following day, which, in terms of both its topic and spirit, may be regarded as a continuation of the business meeting discussions.]

(1) *Introducing enhanced interactive search functions for AWLL’s Online Research Bibliography for Written Language and Literacy (ORBWLL)*

As announced at 2012 AWLL08 workshop in Oldenburg, ORBWLL (which is being compiled by Terry) was first included as part of the AWLL website in September 2012. Initially, ORBWLL was

only available as PDF files. However, with much appreciated help from Bor, enhanced online access was added in March 2014 (<http://faculty.tama.ac.jp/joyce/awll/orbwll/access.html>). In addition to separate dynamic A-Z lists, there is also a new interactive search function. Moreover, the ORBWLL data was recently updated in July 2014, and the latest version consists of 5,655 entries, with 35,249 citations based on 2,000 source bibliographies. It is sincerely hoped that the AWLL community and writing systems researchers will find this resource of value in their research.

*(2) Announcing recent launch of De Gruyter Open Access book series on writing systems*

De Gruyter Open Access has recently launched a book series on writing systems, which will be edited by Terry (<http://degruyteropen.com/oawritingsystems/>). Some explanation about the Open Access approach to academic publications was given, noting how OA books are made available to world online at website maintained by De Gruyter.

As explained at the homepage for the book series, it aims to publish research monographs, edited collections, and reference works about the diverse writing systems of the word from a wide spectrum of perspectives. Accordingly, Terry invited the AWLL community to seriously consider submitting book proposals for the series. Terry also called for AWLL members to consider joining a small editorial advisory board to help in developing the book series with him.

*(3) Panel discussion on workshop theme of “Orthographic databases and lexicons”*

Lynne and program committee had decided to conclude workshop with a panel discussion on the workshop theme. As recorded in minutes of 2010 and 2012 AWLL business meetings, Beatrice had previously made proposals for project to create database of writing systems and the abstract submitted by Nanna Fuhrhop also promised some further proposals in that direction. Although both Beatrice and Nanna were, unfortunately, unable to attend the workshop, the panel discussion session started by referring Nanna’s abstract and some explanation was given about the questionnaire that Beatrice has shared at previous workshops.

As with previous workshops, AWLL09 participants expressed much interest in contributing to the project, but, in the absences of both Beatrice and Nanna, the discussions focused more on some general issues related to contributing information to the database, such as who (only academics or anyone with some academic moderating input?), how (questionnaires or free-forms, etc.), and what (consistent coverage of information and for which writing systems?). The lively discussion clearly indicated the participants’ goodwill and enthusiasm towards the project, but important issues of consistency and moderation were also noted for a genuinely useful resource to emerge. All board members present agreed to consult further with Beatrice about the project and to continue exploring ways to actually implement it.