

Minutes of the 2016 business meeting of the Association for Written Language and Literacy

AWLL board: Anneke Neijt (president) [attending], Beatrice Primus (vice-president) [absent], Terry Joyce (secretary) [attending], and Lynne Cahill [attending]

Huize Heyendaal, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 12/05/2016

Business meeting initially chaired by Anneke and then by Terry [see agenda item 2]

These minutes are based on both the meeting agenda and notes kindly taken by both David Roberts and Des Ryan, and as confirmed by the new AWLL board [see agenda items 2 +3].

Approximately 18 of the workshop participants joined the business meeting.

Agenda

1. Anneke Neijt expressed thanks to Mijntje Peters and Merijn Beeksma
2. Announcements concerning the AWLL board
3. Initial responses from Terry Joyce and Lynne Cahill
4. Call for opinions about possibly revising current AWLL membership procedures
5. AWLL newsletters
6. Explanation about WLL's special issues of AWLL workshop papers
7. Discussions about the next AWLL workshop (AWLL11)
8. W.v.t.t.k. (Dutch abbreviation of *wat verder ter tafel komt*, "any other business")

1. Anneke Neijt expressed deep thanks to Mijntje Peters and Merijn Beeksma for helping and supporting her as members of the local organization team in Nijmegen

2. Announcements concerning the AWLL board

Firstly, because Anneke will be retiring in June, she has decided to step down from role of AWLL president, and, secondly, because of health issues, Beatrice Primus has decided to withdraw from the board.

The board's proposal was to ask Terry to become the president, which he agreed to, and to ask Lynne to become the vice-president, which she agreed to.

3. Initial responses from Terry Joyce and Lynne Cahill

On assuming their new roles, the first task for Terry and Lynne was to sincerely thank Anneke and Beatrice for their long years of service on the AWLL board, and to praise Anneke and her local team for the diversity and success of the AWLL10 workshop.

Terry acknowledged the need to reconsider the constitution of the AWLL board and the allocations of responsibilities, in the light of Anneke's and Beatrice's regrettable decisions to

step down. As a first step in that direction, Terry and Lynne decided to invite Martin Neef to rejoin the board, which he agreed to. The new board will continue to discuss these matters over the coming months, with a view to possibly inviting some extra board member(s), as well as seeking to encourage wider participation within AWLL operations in the form of some new support roles. To that end, the new board would welcome hearing (both during workshop and by email contact to Terry over the coming months) from anyone who might be interested in becoming more involved in some capacity.

4. Call for opinions about possibly revising current AWLL membership procedures

Terry raised an important concern about AWLL membership; namely, that, despite the fact that AWLL workshops have featured renowned speakers and have generally enjoyed good attendances, AWLL membership remains quite low [subsequently, in response to direct question about membership numbers, it was stated that AWLL website currently lists about 20 researchers who have explicitly expressed their intention to be members].

One possible factor could lie in the present membership application procedures, where the only benefit for members is a discounted subscription rate to the related Written Language and Literacy (WLL) journal, but from which the AWLL receives no financial support. While acknowledging that some may have found the discounted subscription appealing (due to lack of institutional access), it seems equally plausible that some may regard compulsory subscription as a disincentive to join AWLL if institutional access to WLL available (understandably not wishing to pay when unnecessary).

Given these concerns and issues, the new board plans to reconsider current AWLL membership arrangements, and, again invites suggestions and opinions for alternatives, such as possibly establishing some form of regular financial income to support future AWLL workshops and activities, possibly under a two-tier membership system (i.e., with and without WLL subscription), that may help to encourage more researchers to join the AWLL.

5. AWLL newsletters

AWLL newsletters were launched in October 2014, with a second being sent out in September 2015, which included the first call for papers for AWLL10 as its main item. The new board would like to continue distributing newspapers on a regular basis (if possible, every six months or so), as an important aspect of AWLL's contributions to writing system research, but, naturally, this is another aspect of AWLL operations that the board will consider further and could quite feasibly involve creating some new support roles.

Within the context of calling on the community for continual contributions and news, such as information about publications and conferences of interest, one suggestion floated was that

setting up an AWLL blog might be more preferable format for such outreach activities. While some doubts were expressed about the claim that a blog might require less effort to maintain, certainly, there would seem to be merit for AWLL board to further investigate, with a view to establishing and maintaining some form of AWLL blog to either complement or replace regular newsletters.

6. Explanation about WLL's special issues of AWLL workshop papers

Explanation was provided about the tradition of WLL publishing special issue collections of papers from AWLL workshops and about how the workshop's local organizer normally becomes the guest editor (or first guest editor in collaboration with another guest editor). While it is sincerely hoped that this can continue, an immediate issue is that due to her pending retirement, Anneke is not able to become the guest editor for AWLL10's special issue. Thus, it was also mentioned that details of special issue (such as who would be guest editor, as well as timing of call for papers and likely publication date, etc.) would be discussed by AWLL board and confirmed with WLL general editor, Beatrice Primus.

At that point, Anneke asked if there is any information about the special issue for the AWLL9 workshop, and Martin Evertz, who is currently an assistant editor for WLL and attended the business meeting, responded. While he acknowledged that there had been delays due to Beatrice's health issues and some mistakes, Martin Evertz also commented that Beatrice and he are hopeful that the special issue can be published before the end of the year.

Post-workshop update: Given the background issues explained, the AWLL board is extremely pleased to announce that Martin Neef has volunteered to be the first guest editor for the AWLL10 special issue. Martin's long experience as the former general editor for WLL makes this a particular welcome solution at this time. AWLL board is also pleased to announce that Merijn Beeksma, one of the AWLL10 local organizers, has also agreed to be the second guest editor.

7. Discussions about the next AWLL workshop (AWLL11)

The meeting discussed a number of issues relating to the next AWLL workshop, including a candidate location, suitable timings, and the implications of having a workshop theme.

In terms of a candidate location, Constanze Weth expressed a willingness to be the local organizer of a AWLL workshop in Luxembourg. With respect to the issue of timing, it was pointed out that, although past AWLL workshops have been held around the end of September or beginning of October, AWLL10 had been organized in May due to Anneke's pending retirement. So, one issue is whether AWLL11 should be in two years' time (i.e., May 2018) or return to four years after AWLL9 (i.e., September/October 2018) (effectively about 2.5 years

from AWLL10). However, some dissatisfaction was expressed at the thought of waiting so long until the next AWLL workshop.

The issue of whether it is preferable to adopt a specific theme for AWLL workshops is a particularly delicate issue with important implication [also see minutes of previous AWLL business meetings]. Although Constanze suggested that a theme related to multi-lingualism would be potentially appropriate for a Luxembourg workshop, Dave Roberts expressed his feeling that a theme is not necessary. On the one hand, there is potentially some merit for local organizers to adopt a theme relevant to the host institution's research interests (in the interests of funding possibilities and invited speakers), and it can also be advantageous in providing an important focus for the WLL special issue collections of workshop papers. On the other hand, there would also seem to be positive advantages in adopting a general theme that can attract a broad spectrum of researchers (as AWLL10's embracing main theme seems to have done successfully), as some mentioned AWLL10's interdisciplinary nature as a being particularly positive aspect, while others also pointed out that a narrower theme can potentially scare off researchers if they feel their research does not fit in (but, it should also be acknowledged that not all workshop presentations in the past have been particularly relevant to the workshop themes). Clearly, it is important for AWLL board to always strive for some reasonable compromise between a number of competing issues when selecting and approving the themes for future workshops.

Post-workshop update: Although it was announced at the end of the workshop that AWLL11 would be organized by Constanze in Luxembourg in the fall of 2018, given the strong sentiments expressed at the last couple of workshops to hold AWLL workshops more frequently, the AWLL board has decided to temporarily postpone that decision to allow more time to explore both alternative locations and alternative dates (i.e., less than 2 years after AWLL10).

8. W.v.t.t.k. (Dutch abbreviation of *wat verder ter tafel komt*, “any other business”)

AWLL business meetings traditionally end by asking if participants have any other AWLL matters to discuss, but reflecting the importance of agenda items 4 (membership situation), 5 (newsletter and/or other outreach activities), much of this section of the meeting returned to those issues and touched on closely related concerns for developing the AWLL and attracting more members/participants to future AWLL workshop.

For instance, after asking about the number of AWLL members [20 members, as noted above], David Share highlighted the discrepancy between that and the fact that there were about 50 participants to AWLL10. This prompted a suggestion to link membership renewal more closely to workshop participation, as well as questions about the current cost of the

discounted WLL subscription rate [which for 2016 is 55 euros] and whether that includes access to back issues. It was again stressed that under current arrangements with John Benjamins, who handle all the financial aspects, the procedures are effectively only serving as a subscription to the WLL journal, from which AWLL receives absolutely no income, which prompted further comments for AWLL to take more control over the membership procedures [essentially echoing the proposal made, under agenda item 4, for AWLL board to reconsider all aspects of AWLL membership arrangements].

Discussions also touched on outreach activities again, when the suggestion was made again that a blog might be more appropriate than a newsletter. Des Ryan also asked Martin Neef about whether his dictionary project could potentially become a project for AWLL, to which Martin replied that the dictionary that he and Rüdiger Weingarten have been compiling is in German, and while he did not rule out the possibilities of compiling an English version possibly with contributions from AWLL community, he pointed out that it would take longer.

As closely related concerns for the development of AWLL, David Share also asked why are AWLL workshops only held once every two years and only attract a handful of people, like some “wandering outcasts”? Ensuing discussions also included suggestions to explore establishing contacts or collaborations with other conferences or associations, such as Korean society behind the Scripta journal, the large International Reading Association, the somewhat smaller but still very large Society for Scientific Study of Reading, the Idea of Writing workshops or the International Conferences on the Processing of East Asian Languages. Although such efforts were made during AWLL7 in 2010 with a view to organizing a joint workshop for AWLL8, which came to nothing, the AWLL board will further consider such suggestions within their discussions of how to develop AWLL going forward.

While the lively discussions could have, undoubtedly, continued indefinitely, the business meeting was brought to a close at that point, in order that everyone would have time to move to the conference dinner.