

Minutes of the 2019 business meeting of the Association for Written Language and Literacy

AWLL board: President - Terry Joyce; vice-presidents - Lynne Cahill and Dorit Ravid

Faculty of Classics, Cambridge University, UK, 27/03/2019

Business meetings are held during every AWLL workshop as an informal forum for discussing matters pertaining to AWLL and its workshops; this one was chaired by Terry and Lynne.

These minutes are based on both the meeting agenda and notes kindly taken by David Roberts, as confirmed by AWLL board.

Approximately 25 of the workshop participants attended the business meeting.

Agenda

1. AWLL board expressed thanks to the local organizers, Anna Judson and Robert Crellin
2. Comments about Written Language and Literacy's (WLL) special issue for AWLL12
3. Revision proposal concerning AWLL 'membership'
4. Comments about the next AWLL workshop (AWLL13)
5. AWLL newsletters + social media
6. Other matters [inviting participant suggestions and comments]

1. The AWLL board, on behalf of all AWLL12 participants, expressed appreciation for the local organizers, Anna Judson and Robert Crellin, for their wonderful preparations for AWLL12

2. Comments about Written Language and Literacy's (WLL) special issue for AWLL12

AWLL's tradition is that, unless circumstances dictate otherwise, the local organizers of an AWLL workshop will become the guest editors for the workshop's special issue in the connected WLL journal. However, when the board recently consulted with Anna and Robert, while Anna expressed her willingness to take on the guest-editing task, Robert responded that, due to research project commitments, he felt unable to do so.

Accordingly, AWLL board decided to approach a suitable AWLL12 participant to join Anna, and we are most pleased to announce that Amalia Gnanadesikan has graciously agreed to also guest-edit AWLL12's special issue. Anna and Amalia will distribute a call for papers (open to both oral and poster presenters) in due course, but, in the interim, it should be noted that these special issues generally consist of 6-7 workshop papers (dependent on lengths) that the editors deem to be particularly relevant to the workshop's theme, such that less relevant manuscript will be directed to the general editor, Dorit Ravid, to be considered for a regular issue.

3. Revision proposal concerning AWLL ‘membership’

As discussed at both AWLL10 and AWLL11 business meetings, at some point in the distant past, AWLL membership came to be based on a discounted subscription to the WLL journal. While the move was undoubtedly well-meant in intention, unfortunately, it has proved not to be an appropriate membership system for AWLL. In addition to unquestionably serving as a disincentive for many to becoming an AWLL ‘member’ (even regular participants), the WLL subscription fee has not provided any financial benefit for AWLL. Thus, the local organizers of AWLL workshops have always had to shoulder the responsibilities of seeking institutional support and setting appropriate registration fees to avoid incurring any financial burdens against the uncertainties of not knowing in advance participant numbers.

Against these background factors, the AWLL board tendered a new proposal to the business meeting. Essentially, it is that the AWLL board will work more closely with local organizers in the future (starting from AWLL13), in order to set workshop registration fees that include, at some minimal percentage or margin of the expected costs, a small AWLL community membership fee, as a modest source of financial support for future AWLL workshops. Thus, membership to the AWLL’s core community is to be based primarily on attending AWLL workshops, such that workshop participants are entitled to have a brief member profile included at the AWLL website. Moreover, once an appropriate buffer resource has been established from future registration fees, the board will introduce forms of participation support (i.e., registration discounts), such as recognition for participation loyalty and young researcher funding.

It was, however, stressed that the posting of member profiles for workshop participants will be entirely on a voluntary basis (i.e., they will not be posted automatically; only after a workshop participant confirms that they wish to be regarded as a community member). As such, workshop participants are requested to give that confirmation and provide the profile information by contacting terry@tama.ac.jp.

During the discussion of the proposal, some information was provided concerning the considerable gap between participation to recent workshops and the number of individuals who have applied for ‘membership’ under the previous subscription system. The gap underscores, on the one hand, the ineffectiveness of the previous ‘subscription’ system, but, on the other hand, it also highlights the need for cost-effective solutions to the problem, which the registration fee levy represents. One helpful inquiry was about maintaining AWLL membership, given that individuals may not be able to attend each workshop, and the board’s initial response was to signal its openness to considering a flexible approach with a suitable moving window, but also stressing the need to establish some clear criteria for both AWLL and community members. Moreover, although the discounted WLL subscription offer would no

longer be a prerequisite for AWLL membership, the board promised to contact John Benjamins' subscriptions department in the hope that they will be prepared to continue offering a discounted subscription to any AWLL community member who would like to benefit from that (in such cases, please consult with Terry).

While not directly relevant to the 'membership' proposal, but understandable given the strong connections between AWLL and WLL (in terms of a considerable overlap between numbers of its editorial board and regular workshop participants), some questions were raised about the journal's accessibility and whether it could become an open access publication. Both Terry and Dorit responded to emphasize that it is an independent journal published by John Benjamins; a reputable journal publisher that is not currently adopting the open access strategy, which usually involves authors (or institutions) covering publication costs.

The discussion of the board's proposal ended with the business-meeting participants acknowledging the underlying realities of the proposal, and, thus, the board confirmed its intention to implement this 'member' system effective from AWLL12. Accordingly, all participants will be contacted in due course to invite them to provide member profiles.

Postscript: With respect to the issue of maintaining member status, even if unable to attend the next AWLL workshop, the board has decided, consistent with the initial response given during the meeting, to recognize a window of three workshops (such that a participant attending to AWLL12 for the first time will be regarded as an AWLL member (if profile provided) until AWLL15 (or beyond if attend to AWLL13-15), at which time they will be contacted about removing the member profile. As the issue has been under consideration since AWLL10, it also seems appropriate to extend this retrospectively to offer participants to AWLL10 and AWLL11 the same opportunity to be considered core community member.

Moreover, soon after AWLL12, Terry and Dorit contacted John Benjamins to advise them of the proposed revision to the membership arrangements, and we are most pleased to confirm that John Benjamins have agreed to continue offering the special offer discount subscription fee to AWLL members. In order to benefit from that offer, an AWLL member will need to initiate their WLL subscription using a special AWLL version of the journal subscription form (available from Terry).

4. Discussions about the next AWLL workshop (AWLL13)

Having established since AWLL10 a pattern of alternating geographical locations for the AWLL workshops, between AWLL's historical base of Europe and other regions, the AWLL board is currently in discussion with a candidate host researcher in the United States. Moreover, reflecting the current interval of approximately every 18-months between AWLL workshops, the board is currently looking to identify suitable dates sometime during the fall of 2020.

Once firmer details are determined, they will be circulated to the AWLL mailing list.

5. AWLL newsletters and social media

Newsletter: The AWLL board continues to regard the AWLL newsletters as an extremely important aspect of its activities and will endeavor to distribute on a regular basis of every six months (May and November). Accordingly, we continue to welcome your contributions with any items to include, such as discussion pieces, introductions to writing systems, reports of related conferences and other news – basically, anything that is likely to be of interest to individuals on the AWLL mailing list (currently over 600 individuals).

Facebook and Twitter: Although the AWLL board set up accounts on both platforms some time ago, the board also acknowledged that they have not been very active. Accordingly, we continue to welcome suggestions for more active forms of AWLL outreach.

Discussions of this agenda item revealed that some AWLL12 participants were not aware of the difference between AWLL12's website at Wordpress (created by the local organizers for the duration of organizing AWLL12) and the AWLL's website (maintained by Terry). One welcome suggestion for interesting material to include at the AWLL website is to provide links to course syllabi for 'writing system' courses. Discussions about social media platforms also touched on the point that researchers of different generations are likely to have different attitudes towards the dissemination of information via social media (in terms of frequency and lengths, which is something to consider).

Postscript: During AWLL12, Dimitrios Meletis kindly agreed to help the board coordinate its social media presence, and more information will be provided in due course.

6. Other matters [inviting participant suggestions and comments]

Prior to the business meeting, one participant had already inquired about sharing all the presentation materials (PPT and posters), and so the first item under 'Other matters' was to ask if all participants would be happy with that idea. As the suggestion met with general agreement, it was proposed that the local organizers would contact all participants to invite them to share their presentation materials, for subsequent uploading to the AWLL12 section of the AWLL website (this was also announced at the end of the workshop).

As with all AWLL business meetings, at this point, it became necessary to close the lively discussions in order to move to the venue for the workshop dinner. However, there was just time for Lynne to briefly mention the recent publication of her textbook entitled 'Discovering phonetics and phonology' and for Des Ryan to mention the 'Routledge handbook of the English writing system', which he co-edited with Vivian Cook.