

SOCIETY FOR THE NATIVE LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS

November 1, 1981

PROGRAM FOR THE SNLA MEETINGS IN LOS ANGELES, DECEMBER 3 - 5, 1981

The first formal meeting of SNLA is planned for Los Angeles, to be held in conjunction with the American Anthropological Association meetings this year. Those SNLA members who also belong to AAA have probably already seen the sessions listed in the September issue of Anthropology Newsletter, where they are listed as the "XXth Conference on American Indian Languages". To serve as a handy reference--and for those SNLA members who do not belong to AAA--we list below the 6 SNLA sessions and participants currently scheduled. The room where sessions will be held has not yet been announced, but all sessions associated with the AAA meeting will be in either the Los Angeles Hilton Hotel or the Hyatt Regency Hotel, both in downtown Los Angeles.

Session 1. Thursday morning, December 3, 8:00 - 10:45.

Mayan Language and Culture. Chair: John Du Bois. Participants: Judith Maxwell, Clifton Pye, John Watanabe, John Robertson, Michael Hironymous, Marvin Mayers. Discussant: James Fox.

Session 2. Thursday afternoon, December 3, 3:00 - 5:15.

Structure and Function of Salishan Grammar. Chair: TBA. Participants: M. Dale Kinkade/Anthony Mattina, Laurence & Terry Thompson, Barry Carlson, Claudine Poggie, Philip Davis/Ross Saunders, Steven Egesdal.

Session 3. Friday morning, December 4, 9:00 - 12:00.

Mayan Languages, Discourse and Structure. Chair: Judith Maxwell. Participants: Nora England, Jill Brody, John DuBois, Judith Aissen, Thomas Larsen, Barbara Edmonson, William Norman, Susan Knowles.

Session 4. Friday afternoon, December 4, 1:30 - 4:00.

Typological Characteristics. Chair: TBA. Participants: Anthony Woodbury, C. F. & F.M. Voegelin, Kenneth Miner, Stanley Mersol, Karn Lupardus, Lynn Gordon.

Session 5. Saturday morning, December 5, 8:00 - 11:30.

Comparative and Historical Problems. Chair: Harriet Klein. Participants: Patricia Shaw, Robert Rankin, Karen Dakin, M.J. Hardman, Catherine Callaghan, Marianne Mithun, Margaret Langdon, Pamela Munro, Kathryn Jossierand. Discussant: Eric Hamp.

Session 6. Saturday afternoon, December 5, 1:30 - 4:30.

Cultural Process in Language and Documentation. Chair: TBA. Participants: William Cowan, Ives Goddard, Kenneth Whistler, Nicholas Hopkins, David Shaul, Allan Taylor, Pamela Bunte, William Leap.

SNLA BUSINESS MEETING

The SNLA business meeting (not announced in the Anthropology Newsletter) has been set for Saturday, December 5, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in Bunker Hill South in the Hyatt Regency Hotel. On the agenda at the business meeting will be discussion and adoption of bylaws for SNLA (see the following pages of this newsletter for information on the charter and draft bylaws for your consideration), election of officers for SNLA, as well as any other issues which the SNLA members may wish to bring up for formal consideration.

CHARTER

The Charter of the organization, as passed by the membership on December 5, 1980 is as follows:

(The Society for the Native Languages of the Americas)

-- Charter --

1. A society for American Indian languages, the name of which shall be determined in accordance with Article 9, is hereby established, pursuant upon a meeting of Americanists held at the 19th Conference on American Indian Languages, in conjunction with the 79th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C., December 5, 1980.

2. The purpose of the Society will be the encouragement of the study of the Native languages of the Americas.

3. Membership in the Society will be open to all those expressing an interest in its goals. The membership dues of the Society will be the subscription price of the Society's newsletter, which shall be \$2.00 for 1981.

4. The Society will normally meet once a year, either alone, or with other associations whose aims and purposes intersect with those of the Society. The primary purpose of the meetings of the Society will be the presentation of research on American Indian languages.

5. The Society welcomes the involvement of Native people in the study of American Indian languages.

6. The Society will offer advice to the Editor of the International Journal of American Linguistics, and will nominate members of the editorial board of the Journal.

7. The Society will undertake other endeavors from time to time, as directed by its membership and in accordance with the by-laws of the Society.

8. The affairs of the Society will be managed by an Executive Committee, consisting of three members, whose duties and manner of election will be specified by the by-laws of the Society.

9. A draft of the by-laws of the Society will be prepared by a committee of at least three members, to be chosen at the organizational meeting of the Society, December 5, 1980. The proposed by-laws will be circulated to the membership and presented for amendment and ratification at the first formal meeting of the Society.

Although the ad hoc Executive Committee is not empowered to emend this Charter, it wishes to bring to the attention of the membership a revised and greatly streamlined version suggested by William Cowan. This is as follows:

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE NATIVE LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS

-- Draft Charter --

1. The ASNLA is hereby established.

2. The purpose of the Association will be the encouragement of the study of the Native languages of the Americas.

(Cowan's emendations to Charter, continued)

3. Membership in the Association will be open to all those expressing an interest in its goals.

4. The Association will meet from time to time, either alone, or with other associations whose aims and purposes intersect with those of the Association. The primary purpose of the meetings of the Association will be the presentation of research on native languages of the Americas.

5. The Association will encourage the involvement of Native people in its activities.

6. The Association will undertake other endeavors from time to time, as directed by its membership and in accordance with its bylaws.

7. The affairs of the Association will be managed by an Executive Committee, whose numbers, duties and manner of election will be specified by the bylaws of the Association.

The substantive changes in this proposed charter are the elimination of any claim to a special relationship with the journal IJAL, and the suggestion that the name of the organization be The Association for the Study of the Native Languages of the Americas (ASNLA). The ad hoc Executive Committee are not tricky enough lawyers to know whether or not it is actually possible to emend and amend a charter once it has taken effect, but we believe that Cowan's suggestions should be considered at the next meeting of the organization.

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BYLAWS

The proposed bylaws drafted by the ad hoc executive committee are as follows:

[DRAFT] BYLAWS OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE NATIVE LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS

Article 1. Name and Object.

1. This Society shall be known as THE SOCIETY FOR THE NATIVE LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS.
2. Its object shall be the advancement of the scientific study of the indigenous languages of North, Central, and South America.

Article 2. Membership and Dues.

1. Any person may become a member by vote of the Executive Committee and payment of dues. Only members may vote and hold office in the Society.
2. On or before January 31 of each year, each member shall pay to the Treasurer an annual fee as dues, in an amount fixed by the Executive Committee. If a member does not pay his dues within the time prescribed, he shall forfeit the rights of membership (as hereafter specified) while his default continues; but these rights shall be restored to him on the payment of all arrears. A member whose dues are in arrears on January 31 of the second year shall be automatically dropped from the rolls of the Society.

(Draft bylaws, continued)

Article 3. Officers and Committees.

1. The Officers shall be a President, a Vice President, and a Secretary-Treasurer. The Vice President shall have the additional title of President-Elect.
2. The President shall serve for one year and shall take office at the conclusion of the annual meeting. He shall preside at meetings of the Society and of the Executive Committee. He shall appoint such nonelective committees as may be required. The President shall be empowered to make an interim appointment to fill a vacancy in any office until elections can be held.
3. The Vice President shall serve for one year and shall perform the functions of the President in the latter's absence. He shall succeed to the presidency the following year.
4. The Secretary-Treasurer shall serve for one year. His Secretarial responsibilities shall include keeping the records of the transactions of the Society, editing the Society's Newsletter, and such other functions as may be assigned by the President and the Executive Committee. As Treasurer of the Society, he shall be the chief fiscal officer.
5. There shall be an Executive Committee, composed of the above Officers, the past President, and three other members of the Society, one of the three being elected each year to serve for three years and to be ineligible for immediate reelection. It shall have power to take any action that the Society itself could take, but all its acts must be reported to the Society at the next annual meeting. A quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of a majority of its members. The Executive Committee shall meet at least once annually, at the time of the annual meeting of the Society, and may also meet at other times upon the call of the President. The Secretary may on his own initiative, and shall at the request of any other member of the Committee, ask the Executive Committee to vote upon specific questions by mail, and if a majority of the Committee shall vote by mail for or against any measure thus submitted, that vote shall be decisive. The Executive Committee shall nominate the Secretary-Treasurer, and at least two persons for each position to be filled on the Nominating Committee.
6. There shall be a Nominating Committee consisting of three members, one of them being elected each year to serve for three years. The senior member shall serve as chairman.
7. The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least two persons each for the position of Vice-President and the position to be filled on the Executive Committee. A mail ballot shall be submitted to the members not less than four months in advance of the Annual Meeting. The ballot shall allow for a vote against all nominees for a given office. In order to be elected, a nominee for a given office must receive a majority vote of those replies received by the Secretary as of the announced date of the close of the election. If no nominee for a given office receives a majority of the votes cast, the office shall be filled by a special election at the next meeting of the Society.
8. The Executive Committee sitting ex officio or a subcommittee appointed by them shall constitute the Program Committee. The Program Committee shall have at least three members. The Program Committee shall have responsibility for the scholarly content of the Society's meetings and for recommending general policies on the form of the meetings to the Executive Committee for action.

(Draft bylaws, continued)

Article 4. Meetings.

1. There shall be an annual meeting of the Society, at such time and place as shall be determined by the Executive Committee. A quorum shall consist of those present at the meeting, as determined by the Secretary.
2. The Executive Committee may call special meetings of the Society.
3. Titles and descriptions of papers to be read before the Society must be submitted to the Program Committee beforehand, and their disposition of such papers shall be final.

Article 5. Activities.

1. The Society shall publish a Newsletter, which shall be distributed to all members in good standing.
2. The Society may engage in other activities in furtherance of its goals, by action of the Executive Committee or through a motion adopted at a meeting of the Society.

Article 6. Ratification.

1. These Bylaws shall be considered in force and binding upon the Society after approval by a meeting of the Society called for that purpose.
2. Upon adoption of these Bylaws the aforesaid meeting of the Society shall elect a President, Vice President, and Secretary-Treasurer, who shall serve in those offices until the regular annual meeting of the Society to be held the year following the one in which these Bylaws are adopted. It shall also elect three members to the Executive Committee, one to serve the same term as the Officers previously elected, the second to serve one additional year, and the third to serve two additional years. The Executive Committee shall then meet and appoint a Nominating Committee of three members, with terms of one, two, and three years, as described above for the Executive Committee.

Article 7. Amendments.

1. Any proposed amendment to these Bylaws must be submitted in writing to the Secretary-Treasurer, signed by at least ten members of the Society in good standing. This will be submitted to the members at the time of the regular election of officers. An amendment must have the approval of two-thirds of the members voting.

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Comments and suggestions from all interested parties regarding the draft bylaws should be sent to SNLA, c/o Victor Golla, Dept. of Anthropology, George Washington University, Washington, DC 20052, so that they can be incorporated into the agenda for the SNLA business meeting of December 5 at the AAA annual meeting in Los Angeles. As suggested in the draft bylaws, the agenda of that first business meeting will include debate and formal adoption of the bylaws, as well as election of the officers of SNLA.

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If you are planning to attend the SNLA business meeting, please bring along this copy of the draft bylaws to refer to during the meeting. If you plan to bring up other business for consideration at the meeting, it would help to notify Victor Golla in writing in the next couple of weeks, so that a systematic agenda can be prepared for the meeting. The assigned time for the meeting is short, unfortunately, so new issues must be raised promptly and discussed in good order.

SUGGESTED NAMES FOR SNLA

In addition to William Cowan's suggestion that the name of SNLA be changed to The Association for the Study of the Native Languages of the Americas (ASNLA) (see above, page 3), we received a few other suggestions. Among these are Society for Aboriginal American Languages (SAAL), which was noted as better terminology from the Canadian point of view, and which would additionally avoid the occasional misinterpretation of "Native American language" to mean those languages natively spoken in the Americas--whether in colonial times or currently, including the various languages of European and non-European immigrants to the Americas. Another name suggestion was to switch from Native American to American Indian and Eskimo, a change which would also make the intended language coverage unambiguous.

SNLA MEMBERSHIP

The official rolls of SNLA total about 160 members at this time. The membership list should be sent out to all members in a future issue of the newsletter.

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William Cowan (Carleton University) sent the following remarks for inclusion in the SNLA newsletter. Not all of the Ad Hoc Committee share all of Cowan's views about past presentations at the CAIL conferences, but his observations should be of some help (and/or controversy) for those planning papers at next month's or future SNLA conferences.

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HOW TO READ A PAPER AT A LEARNED CONFERENCE

William Cowan

Many of the papers read at the Conference on American Indian languages are very bad, and one of the reasons for this is that no one has ever told those who read bad papers that the papers are bad, and no one has ever set forth why such papers are bad. The present screed attempts to fill this gap by pointing out what seem to me to be the major faults of bad papers, and by setting down some do's and don't's for those contemplating a contribution to our next meeting.

1) Many bad papers are simply too long. Authors try to cram an hour's content into 20 minutes of talk, and end up either going over their allotted time, to the discomfiture of those that have to come after them, or going so fast that no one understands what they are trying to say, or getting through the preliminaries without having time to come to a conclusion. This is particularly true of those who have recently completed a Ph.D. thesis and feel that that document is so interesting, logical, and theoretically important that its argument must surely be presented in its entirety for the edification of other scholars. However true that may be, the Ph.D. thesis is supposed to be a book, and the format of learned conferences is designed to accommodate only short, snappy articles. One can avoid having papers that are too long simply by practising reading them out loud before the time to deliver them. Notice that this practise should be out loud, not silently and to oneself. A person can read silently about three times as fast as out loud, especially with familiar material. If the reading takes more than 20 minutes, the paper should be shortened until it can be read in the allotted time. This practise out loud is also necessary for those who, instead of reading from a prepared text, present a lecture using notes or a handout. Most academics are used to time slots of an hour or an hour and a half, and must make a definite effort to keep within a shorter period. A rule of thumb for prepared texts is that it takes about two minutes to read out

loud one double-spaced typewritten $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 page (or a single-spaced handwritten $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 page), so the text should be about 10 pages long, or somewhat longer if it contains tables or charts that take up space.

2) Many papers are far too dense and complicated for oral delivery. Authors tend to forget that the papers are supposed to be for oral delivery and that the audience is not reading the material at leisure, where one has time to ponder, go over passages time and time again, look up references and read footnotes, and in general take as much time as is necessary to absorb the material presented. An oral presentation, even when accompanied by a copy of the prepared text, is one time only, and if an audience doesn't get it the first time around, they are going to be lost. Frequently authors think they have been well understood because questions and interventions from the floor are pertinent and cogent, but more often than not these questions and interventions are from scholars who are as familiar with the material and the point of view expressed as is the author, and who could have posed the questions without even hearing the paper. Those who have failed to understand tend to remain silent for fear of appearing too dull-witted to have caught the point, especially if the emperor concerned is a senior or well-known scholar, or if he is espousing the latest theoretical fad. One way to avoid this pitfall is to read the paper out loud and once only to a colleague who is not a specialist in the material and ask if it was understood. A colleague who is also a good friend ought to be counted on to give a frank response.

3) Handouts generally contain two to three times as much material as is necessary. How often have we seen an author who gives one or two examples in the text but who has 20 or so examples in the handout? Handouts also frequently contain chart after chart, table after table, diagram after diagram that are simply ignored, either because the author does not have time to explain all their intricacies, or because they are not really pertinent but are included because, like all those arguments from new Ph.D. theses, are just too beautiful and logical not to be given to the world. A good rule to observe here is that nothing should be in the handout that is not said in the text being read or lecture being given. If the text has only two examples, the handout should have only two examples; if the text has one chart, the handout should have one chart, etc. Everything on the handout should be talked about in the course of the presentation. On the other hand, one thing that handouts should contain, but not more than one in 20 does, is a list of references. Again, how often have we heard authors say things like "as was pointed out by Lothridge 1962", or "such forms are listed in Schmaltz-Reid 1970"? Who is Lothridge? Who is, or are, Schmaltz-Reid? Unless the entire audience can be supposed to be familiar, not only with the name of the referenced authority, but also with the place of publication of the article or book, nothing is more inane than a disembodied name and date. If the text has to contain such references, the handout should have the full title and where to find it.

4) Authors have too great a tendency to display their command of the pronunciation of exotic languages by quoting long passages from them even when these passages are also transcribed and translated on the handout, or irrelevant to the matter at hand. It is quite a temptation for a non-native speaker to want to show off a hard-earned ability to pronounce glottalized consonants, or creaky vowels, or polysyllabic words consisting entirely of seemingly unpronounceable consonant clusters, especially if the paper otherwise has nothing to say, but such performances take up time that could be put to better account explaining the forms in question. Some quotation is legitimate where the phonology itself is under discussion, provided the author can give a convincing performance, but in other places it seems like nothing more than phonological machismo. It is better to be a liberated linguist than a phonetic chauvinist pig.

The foregoing are complaints and advice dealing only with externals. As for the internal factors that make a good paper for oral presentation at a learned conference, such as logic, cogency, pertinence, cohesion, realism, and verve, I have nothing to say. Those are factors that each author must develop for himself, and no amount of advice is likely to be of any value in that task.