

easy task as it is all too easy to have a wealth of reviewers for one speciality or combination and a dearth elsewhere. This was very much the case for EURALEX 2004 as we had a much larger number of proposals in French than at previous meetings; the situation will probably be the same for TurinLEX in 2006.

Bringing in new members on a review panel also leads to complications. EURALEX standards are rightfully high. This means that time must be taken to explain the review procedure to new reviewers. All the reviewers are heavily committed professionals who are taking on the task for free, which means that the time available is also a factor. For EURALEX we use a standard review form with fixed criteria, and also have a space for comments to help decision-making and others that are passed on to the authors who will expect feedback.

When a proposal is received it is given a number and filed ready for review. Proposals must be classified by theme and language. In some cases authors will have ticked a number of themes, in which case the organiser will have to exercise judgement as no paper can be reviewed by 6 reviewers, which would be the case if 3 categories had been ticked. For the smooth running of the review process, discipline and realism on behalf of the authors is essential, but cannot always be counted on.

Deadlines must be respected and late papers cannot normally be considered. The organiser can have well over 200 proposals to manage and cannot send them out until after the deadline has passed, as otherwise managing a review panel is impossible. Proposals that do not satisfy the presentation format cannot be reviewed. Time is another factor. However much you might have to say, the reviewer only has a limited time to read it. A proposal that is too short cannot be properly judged; one that is too long may indicate someone who will not respect speaking times either. In all cases, electronic submission must be preferred so as to reduce handling costs and speed up operations.

Once the proposals have been safely gathered in and rendered anonymous, the review procedure can begin. In normal circumstances, a reviewer will receive a maximum of 5 proposals, although given the number of proposals received some reviewers will accept more. Review is anonymous and each paper will be read by two persons independently. This is double blind review.

The review procedure is not without its problems. There are anguishing cases

where the reviewer fails to deliver; in this case another reviewer has to be found at short notice. The same may apply if a paper is deemed highly acceptable by one but is rubbished by another. We aim to be rigorous but fair, and double blind review ensures this.

Upon receipt of the review forms, numerical values are fed into the database so as to give an initial sorting by clear acceptance and clear refusal. The former do not pose a problem, but the latter do receive individual attention, as all refusals must be justified. At this stage the proposals are still anonymous.

Programme committee meeting

The review process up to this point will have been carried out by the organiser with in-house assistants, all working under great pressure. Once the reviews have been received and classified; the selection can then be carried out by the programme committee.

The programme committee consists of the organiser assisted by a team of four other persons, usually members or ex-members of the board and the previous organiser. This means a team of people who already have experience in organising EURALEX congresses. The committee meets on a Saturday, and has one day in which to go through all the proposals from clear acceptance to absolute rejection and to choose those that will go onto the programme. In other words, they must reject a minimum of 50% of the papers, many of which would be quite worthy of acceptance. This is done anonymously, only after do we reveal names and see who we have offended. Once the meeting is over it is the job of the organiser to send out letters of acceptance or refusal, and wait for the flack to arrive.

The higher the number of proposals, the higher the level of rejection. Having too many parallel sessions is to be avoided and nobody would be satisfied by having an over-rich programme. The event cannot be lengthened either as it would greatly increase costs. This means that the review process is a gruelling one for the committee, and especially the organiser who can expect angry recriminations. However, the high level of selection ensures the reputation of the congress, as participants know they can expect a very high standard of paper. This is important for any congress, especially when the participants are paying a fee and travelling long distances to attend.

There remains the problem of doctoral students. Papers from doctoral students are not given any preferential treatment,

The Fourth ASIALEX International Congress Singapore 1-3 June 2005

It is our great pleasure to host the Fourth ASIALEX International Congress at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

ASIALEX 2005 is one of the year-long academic events celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of NUS and is organized by the Department of English Language and Literature, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Asia Research Institute.

With the theme of **Words in Asian Cultural Contexts**

this three-day conference of the Asian Association for Lexicography aims to examine the functions and representations of words, with Asia as its focus, and has strands with related perspectives in sociolinguistics and language pedagogy, information and communications technology, and literary, cultural and postcolonial studies.

The major objective of ASIALEX is to foster scholarly and professional activities in the field of lexicography in Asia.

ASIALEX 2005 aims to bring together scholars of language, linguistics and literature in an interdisciplinary forum.

The papers capture a focus on how words assume distinctive shapes and meanings in different cultural contexts. Particularly in Asia, where different cultures and ethnicities commonly converge and give rise to cultural and textual hybridity, the wider study

of words and language can enhance cross-cultural communication and lead to greater understanding of its peoples.

The plenary speakers at the conference are Charles Fillmore (University of California), Reinhard Hartmann (University of Exeter) and Zhang Yihua (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies).

Featured speakers include Gwyneth Fox (Macmillan Publishing), Gregory James (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology), Ismail Talib (NUS), Yukio Tono (Meikai University) and Lily Wong-Fillmore (University of California). There will also be a pre-conference tutorial, *Using Corpora*, by Adam Kilgariff (Lexicography MasterClass).

We are pleased to welcome also all participants from the related associations: Euralex, Afrilex and Australex. To our visitors, we hope you will enjoy the hospitality of the local residents as well as the sights and sounds of Singapore.

Anne Pakir

ASIALEX

President (2003-2005)

<http://asialex.nus.edu.sg>

some high quality papers will be accepted, others rejected on the same basis as any other proposal. However, I firmly believe in the necessity of opening the congress to a maximum of young researchers who would not be able to attend if not given the possibility of presenting a paper. Because of this we used the database to find papers that had been rejected and offered the possibility of presenting at a pre-congress work-in-progress session, following a new selection process. These short papers would be published in a separate section of the proceedings. I am pleased to say that this formula worked, and was well attended.

Invited Speakers

Another task of the programme committee is to invite the plenary speakers. The organiser will draw up a list based on his or her own wishes, but balancing the requirements of international speakers and speakers from the host country. The list is discussed by the programme committee and advice may be sought from the board. The next problem is one of availability, which means beginning negotiations well ahead. We were lucky in Lorient in that our first choices were both available and willing.

The last laps before the event

Publishing the proceedings

Review process over, final papers safely (including those of the invited speakers) gathered in, so now we can go to press. Not so quick.

In addition to guidelines, we provide an electronic style sheet, but not everyone knows how to use one. Failure to follow the guidelines means an enormous job of standardising the texts, which can come in a variety of formats. Some insist on sending pdf files, and have to be informed politely that we may not be equipped to transform these. Some may have adapted the style sheet to their own format, forgetting that we might in turn need to adapt the style sheet to suit our printer. Some still produce overlong texts, and have to be reminded that size adds to cost. Many will have complex diagrams and space-consuming image files which do not always transfer easily between systems. Our two students worked solidly on the files, updating the style sheets until the printer was satisfied and a print-ready pdf file could be prepared. This quite literally means sleepless nights, as the printer cannot and will not wait.

Drawing up the programme

Whilst all this is going on, the pre-

programme is being drawn up and circulated electronically. This too is no easy task, as managing parallel sessions must be done in such a way that people can easily change rooms whilst ensuring that thematic areas do not clash. Facilities and potential numbers also have to be taken into account. Not all rooms are equally well equipped, some papers will attract more audiences than others and therefore need a bigger room. Then come the cancellations, inevitable with over a hundred speakers. Added to this will be those who cannot arrive on a given day and need to change time slot, or who may have arrived but wish to listen to someone who is speaking when they are. Sometimes individual needs can be accommodated, but not always, as this is a very delicate balancing act.

The point here is not to shoot the piano player, your unpaid and overstressed organiser is juggling with a multitude of problems, and yours is but one of them.

One of the problems with which your happy organiser is trying to cope is the chairing of the individual sessions. Choosing a chair means finding someone who is knowledgeable on the subject area, who can listen and not intervene unless needed, and who can impose discipline when either the speaker or the audience get carried away. Being invited to chair a session is both an honour and a burden. Accepting the honour of a chair means reading the texts beforehand and preparing questions. No paper must go without at least one question, and often this first question will set off a discussion that the chair must then bring to a close when the time runs out. Timing is essential if people are to be able to change rooms without disturbing a paper that has already started. The chair is also stuck for at least one session unable to go and listen to other papers that might be of interest. Of course they get to hear the papers in their session, but they are never really relaxed as they are also note taking and keeping an eye on the clock. Chairs are precious volunteers.

The Congress

The last minute preparations are traumatic. Not only are you wondering what you have forgotten, but there are also practical aspects like preparing the congress bags. The proceedings will have to go in, so will the tourist publicity and other goodies. You know there will be a rush on the day so the bags must be distributed in alphabetical order. All this takes time. The congress starts on Tuesday, but you can expect visitors on Monday who would like to have their bag immediately and cannot