

REFLECTIONS

By John M. Clifton

My involvement with *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* began in 1983 when I became secretary of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea, a position I held until 1989. Later, I took over as editor of the journal in 1992 when Karl Franklin left PNG. I served as editor until I left PNG in 1995.

As secretary of the LSPNG, it was my job to collect membership dues for the society. That was challenging enough as it was, since the society only had a PNG kina bank account. In numerous situations, the bank fees associated with various currencies were almost equal to the actual membership fees of PNG K7.50. Of course, society membership included a copy of *LLM*. That was not a problem in 1983, as I was able to send volume 14 of *LLM* to the members. Beginning in 1984, I had the unenviable task of asking for membership fees without having a journal to send to the members.

Of course, similar situations had arisen in the past: Issues 1 and 2 of volume 12 of *Kivung* served as the journals for 1979 and 1980, respectively. And volume 13 was for 1981-82. So a temporary lapse in publication was not a cause for concern. But the lapse continued into 1984, then 1985 and finally into 1986. We had some serious discussions as an executive committee as to whether we should simply abandon the journal. The major problem was that we had no one to take up the mantle of editor. That changed when John Verhaar agreed to take on the responsibility of getting the journal back on schedule in two years. John was the editor of *Foundations of Language* (now *Studies in Language*), and had recently finished a stint as editor of *Nusa: Linguistic Studies in Indonesian and Languages in Indonesia*. As such, he brought enormous expertise to *LLM*. He managed to get volumes 15 and 16 out in 1987, and volume 17 out in 1988. Karl Franklin took over as editor of *LLM*, and published volumes 18 and 19 in 1988 – between John and Karl we published three volumes in a single year. While that kept me busy sending out back issues, it was a good busyness!

By 1983, all the manuscripts were prepared by computer rather than typewriters. Some time during John Verhaar's tenure as editor, I got involved in copy editing and layout. Although John Verhaar was on the faculty at the Divine Word Institute in Madang, the journal was still being printed at the SIL centre in Ukarumpa. I'm not sure exactly when I began, but I know that I worked on volume 17 since I recognize the phonetic fonts I designed for use in the article by Rick Speece that formed the greater part of that volume – this was in the days before Unicode! John would do the content editing in Madang, and then send the manuscripts to me for processing. I also oversaw the actual printing at Ukarumpa.

One of the problems faced by regionally-oriented journals like *LLM* is a shortage of submitted papers. It falls to the editor to actively seek out papers. And one of the largest repositories of papers dealing with the languages of PNG is at the SIL centre. So John would regularly come to Ukarumpa to look through the files for papers which could be brought up to the necessary standards with a minimum amount of work on the part of the editor. These visits were also valuable for those of us involved in writing, as John would give informal seminars on editing. Many of the rules of thumb I still use (for example, the first person singular is fine in technical writing) are rooted in those seminars. John was also open to publishing longer articles. It was not at all uncommon to include papers that were 40-50 pages in length; Rick Speece's MA thesis took up 139 pages in volume 17.

While I was handling the copy editing and layout, I read Pullum's column on the 'perfect journal' (Pullum 1984). We started to slowly incorporate his suggestions. Starting with volume 18, all articles begin on odd pages; starting with volume 19 the journal name and article titles appeared in headers and bibliographic information was included at the bottom of the first page of each article. In volume 22, the author's name was added to the running header.

Karl Franklin kept *LLM* on schedule, getting out volumes 20-22 for 1989-1991. (A piece of trivia regarding volume 22: The spine is printed bottom-to-top instead of top-to-bottom like all the other volumes.) When he got ready to leave PNG, I took over as editor. It was time to put into action the lessons I had learned from John and Karl! I served as editor for four years, from 1992 to 1996, when I left PNG.

I continued making changes based on observations made by Pullum (1984). In volume 23, the author's contact information, and the dates the paper was originally received and revised (if relevant) were added at the end of each article. Another, more visible, change was that the journal reverted to a two-issues-per-year schedule. This had been the plan from the beginning as indicated by the fact that all volumes of *LLM* had been identified as numbers 1-2. The publication of two issues per year opened the possibility of thematic issues. It was my intention to publish one thematic issue per year. Issue 2 of volume 23 (1992) was devoted to papers from the Symposium on the Papuan Tip Cluster from the Sixth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics (6ICAL). The following year, papers from the Third International Conference on Papuan Linguistics filled both issues. Those were the last of the thematic issues. Some ideas prove more difficult to keep going over the long term than others!

I resurrected a sporadic Editor's Page in volume 23(1). Balant had included an Editor's Page in two issues back in volume 2 of *Kivung*, but I believe the practice had been dropped after that. In that first column, I called for 3-4 page squibs, notes and discussion. This was one other suggestion taken from Pullum (1984). Again, a few short contributions along this line had been included in early volumes of *Kivung*, but the practice had been dropped for some reason. We included a number of these shorter contributions in volumes 23 and 25.

One of the strengths of *LLM* has always been the fact that it accepts data-rich papers. Looking back over my sporadic Editor's Page columns, I am struck by how many of those researchers working in PNG over the years have anticipated the current interest in basic language documentation. While we were not able to include sound files in a printed journal, we were able to include extensive appendices for data including word lists, annotated texts, and dialect maps. My hope is that this rich legacy will continue in *LLM*'s reincarnation as an online journal.

Reference

Pullum, Geoffrey K. 1984. "Stalking the perfect journal." *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 2: 261-267.