

WINTER 2008

## EURALEX NEWSLETTER

**Editor:** Paul Bogaards**E-mail:** [p.bogaards@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:p.bogaards@hum.leidenuniv.nl) (This address recently changed.)**The EURALEX Newsletter**

This quarterly Newsletter is intended to include not only official announcements but also news about EURALEX members, their publications, projects, and (it is hoped) their opinions, and news about other lexicographical organizations. Please try to support this by sending newsletter contributions to Paul Bogaards at the email address above. The deadlines for spring (March), summer (June), autumn (September), and winter (December) issues are respectively 15 January, 15 April, 15 July, and 15 October annually.

**The EURALEX Web Site**

The URL of the EURALEX web site is [www.euralex.org](http://www.euralex.org)

**Laurence Urdang (1927–2008)**

Larry Urdang, who has died at the age of 81, was one of lexicography's grands seigneurs. A man of powerful intellect and immense energy, he made important contributions to the early development of computational techniques in lexicography. But he was more than merely a technical innovator; he was also a stylist and a humanist. He had a deep love of language and he believed passionately that dictionary creation should not be merely a matter of mechanical organization, but also of elegance and taste. He stressed the importance in definition writing of style and *Sprachgefühl* (one of his favourite words) as well as factual accuracy. He believed that dictionaries should not only be serious explanatory tools for users but also fun. In addition to his role in compiling serious mainstream dictionaries he compiled several works that were just that: fun to research and fun to read.

He was born in New York in 1927, the son of a high-school head teacher. His sister was the poet Constance Urdang. From his earliest youth he exhibited both independence and resourcefulness: one day, at the age of four, he got lost in Macy's Department Store. Instead of panicking or bursting into tears like a less resolute four-year-old, he walked out of the store, climbed into a waiting

cab, and was driven home, where he was admitted by the domestic staff and settled down to await the arrival of his distraught mother.

After serving briefly in the U.S. Navy at the end of World War II (and acquiring a lifelong love of the sea), he obtained a degree in English literature and linguistics at Columbia University. For a while he taught linguistics at New York University, but he had scant patience with the ways of the academic world and yearned for a job in which he could simultaneously exploit both his polymathic tendencies and his business ambitions. In the late 1950s he joined the staff of Funk and Wagnalls as an associate dictionary editor. Sadly, due to mismanagement and lack of investment, that once great lexicographic publishing house was in terminal decline and was in no state to respond positively to the youthful Larry's grand plans for its revival. When I first met him Larry expressed disappointment – or was it fury? – that the Funk and Wagnall imprint had been dismembered and was no longer in a fit state to take advantage of the free publicity generated by the recurrent catch phrase 'Look *that* up in your Funk and Wagnall's' on the Rowan and Martin Laugh-In, a popular television programme of the time.

Larry's greatest lexicographical achievement was surely his leadership (with Jess Stein) and innovation in creating the massive, authoritative *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (RHD, 1966). In this work, he placed a particular emphasis on the systematic treatment and clear definition of terminology for general readers, not only the terminology of science and technology but also sports, pastimes, and every other field of human activity. He devised a system within which specialist contributors could write and edit definitions in a logical order, unconstrained by alphabetical order. As the specialist terms and definitions in each sub domain were completed and delivered, they were keyboarded and inserted by computer into slots left for them by general-language definers (or, if no slot was available, appended at the end of the relevant entry). Copy editors then dealt with any rough edges, misplacements, and duplications. The same logic was applied to other fields of specialist knowledge, in particular pronunciation transcriptions and etymologies. The result of this rational division of lexicographic labour was an extremely high level of technical accuracy, coverage, and consistency. To the modern reader, these procedures may seem no more than commonsensical, but in their time they were radical innovations. Another benefit was speed: for such a large and complex project, RHD was completed in a remarkably short space of time. A third benefit might have been computer-driven typesetting, which even in the mid sixties could have been achieved in a matter of days. To Larry's fury, restrictive practices prevailed: the Random House production department failed to find a typesetter able to undertake computer-driven typesetting from customer-generated tape. (Larry believed that they did not try very hard). Astonishingly, therefore, the whole dictionary was dumped onto paper and re-keyboarded at the printing house, adding a year to the schedule.

In 1968 Larry left Random House to set up his own business, Laurence Urdang Inc., under the aegis of which he was to create a great variety of reference works and dictionaries in the years that followed. He also founded a light-hearted popular magazine, *Verbatim*, aimed at word buffs: people who shared his own sense of humour and delight in words (especially puns and oddities). Among other things, he began discussions about a new international initiative in monolingual lexicography with the Scottish publisher Jan Collins, whose vision and idealism matched his own. Throughout the 20th century Collins had enjoyed great commercial success with the low-priced Gem series and had published other dictionaries too, including, in the 1930s, an unambitious but practical English dictionary edited by Professor Ernest Weekley, which had been moderately successful. Now, Jan had a grand vision of a new range of first-rate dictionaries, bigger and better than anything that was then available. He had already concluded an agreement with Professor Colin Smith at the University of Cambridge to compile a large Spanish-English Dictionary, reporting the actual contemporary lexicon of Spanish as a worldwide language, in contrast to the conservative, Eurocentric prescriptions of the Academia Real in Madrid. A companion French-English dictionary, to be edited by Sue Atkins in collaboration with Alain Duval of the French dictionary publisher Robert, was in the pipeline and introduced further important innovations in bilingual lexicography. Now Jan and Larry began to plan a new monolingual dictionary of the English language, which would appear in both British and American editions. In December 1969 I joined their discussions and it was agreed that, under Larry's guidance, I would write a detailed plan for the project. This was done and in due course the project received the go-ahead from the Collins board. After many vicissitudes, the British edition was published in 1979 as *Collins English Dictionary* (CED). Due to the rapid turnover of senior staff that even then was characteristic of American publishing, the American partner, in one of its incarnations, lost its nerve and withdrew. The situation was further complicated by the fact that in 1977 Jan Collins bought World Publishing Inc., the publisher of David Guralnik's excellent *Webster's New World Dictionary*, a competitor of our project. Larry, who could be stoical when he chose, never breathed a word of disappointment or criticism, though it must have been a bitter blow that this important work never appeared.

Larry's innovations in the sixties and seventies – the design of RHD and CED, the creation of electronic word lists, editing in sets, not alphabetically, division of labour by specialist knowledge, and economies of scale – would be sufficient to guarantee his place in the history of lexicography. But his lexicographic vision did not stop there. He foresaw the need for corpus evidence in lexicography and predicted the need for statistical measurements of collocations. Several of the young lexicographers who worked under Larry's tutelage in the 1970s went on to impressive later careers. They included Paul

Procter, editor of the first editions of both *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1978) and the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1991), Della Summers, who rose to be director of Longman's dictionary publishing, and the author of the present article, who went on to be managing editor of Cobuild in the 1980s and chief editor of current English dictionaries at Oxford University Press in the 1990s.

In 1972, Larry published *The New York Times Everyday Reader's Dictionary of Misunderstood, Misused, and Mispronounced Words*. This was a fun book for word buffs. As Larry explained in his introduction:

This is not a succedaneum for satisfying the nympholepsy of nullifidians. Rather it is hoped that the haecceity of this enchiridion of arcane and recondite sesquipedalian items will appeal to the onomania of an eximious Gemeinschaft whose legerity and sophrosyne, whose Sprachgefühl and orexis will find more than fugacious fulfillment among its felicific pages.

His next important work was the *Oxford Thesaurus*. This had an innovative indexing system and excellent coverage of the lexicon, together with example sentences, mostly invented by Larry. For six years, it was a bestseller and brought Larry a substantial income. In 1997, however, a person called Thomas Webster, who had recently been appointed as the new head of trade dictionary publishing at OUP, decided that the royalty being paid to Larry was too high and proposed a renegotiation of terms. Larry demurred, whereupon Webster decided to withdraw the book from the market entirely and replace it with one compiled in house, on which no royalty would be payable. He instructed me, as his underling, to lead a team creating a corpus-based A-Z Thesaurus as a companion to the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*. Thus, the *New Oxford Thesaurus of English* was born (published in 2000). Larry never forgave me.

Great lexicographers often harbour a cherished project that does not see the light of day in their lifetime, and so it was with Larry. At the time of his death, he was working on a historical dictionary of nautical terms, an ambitious citation-based scholarly dictionary that had been in his thoughts certainly as long as I had known him, and probably ever since his days in the navy in 1945–1946. Excerpts were published in 2006 in *Dictionaries, the Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America*. It is to be hoped that this great work will be completed and published.

Larry could be bombastic and obstinate. He was a good talker, but not a good listener. He had an infuriating habit of always being right, as I know to my cost, for in the early days of our relationship I lost several bets with him over obscure points of language and fact. He had an exceptionally deep bass voice and a tendency to drone, which he freely acknowledged. One hot summer's day in a London hotel in 1970, he was explaining his theory,

predicting corpus technology, of how the normalized exposure index of a key word divided by the normalized exposure index of the surrounding content words might constitute an index of meaning differences. I began to doze off. ‘Patrick,’ he said benignly, ‘Are you going to sleep? I know I drone. My wife often goes to sleep when I speak to her.’

He loved puns and plays on words, including accidental puns. He would quote examples of inadvertently comic definitions submitted to him by junior lexicographers. One such that amused him greatly was a definition of *yo heave ho*: ‘a cry uttered by sailors when heaving together’. The ambiguity of *heaving* in this nautical context tickled him pink.

He was both kind and generous. It is said that on one occasion at Random House he had the unpleasant task of firing a casual worker whose work was not up to scratch. He did this so gently, one Friday afternoon, that the individual concerned failed to realize that she had been fired and turned up for work the following Monday. His generosity is perhaps most evident in the form of the Laurence Urdang Awards, which were awarded annually both by DSNA in America and by Euralex in Europe to support an otherwise unpaid project relevant to lexicography. These awards have benefited over two dozen lexicographers in a wide variety of worthy projects. He was a prince among lexicographers, a visionary and a stylist who will be sadly missed.

Patrick Hanks  
Masaryk University, Brno, CZ

### **Giovanni Nencioni (1911–2008)**

On 3rd of May this year, Giovanni Nencioni passed away. He was Honorary President of the Accademia della Crusca (which he directed from 1972 to 2000), Dean of Studies of the History of the Italian Language, Professor at the Universities of Bari (1950–1951) and Florence (1952–1974), and at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa (from 1974), a national fellow of the Accademia dei Lincei, an extraordinary teacher of several generations of scholars, and one of the most important protagonists for the renewal of Italian linguistic research after the Second World War.

Born in Florence in 1911, Nencioni graduated in 1932 in Law, worked for a long time as a cabinet officer, and then moved into glottological and lexicographic studies. From his first important essay of 1946 entitled *Idealismo e realismo nella scienza del linguaggio* ‘Idealism and Realism in the Science of Language’, and on the basis of the results of the most advanced contemporary European linguistics, Nencioni acknowledged with great self-assurance and intellectual independence the central role of languages in the life of every individual and every nation and championed the full autonomy of ‘Linguistics’

from a theoretical and methodological point of view, in open disagreement with Croce's aesthetic ideas.

The two poles of language as an institution and language as individuality, in a perennial dialectic relationship with one another, represent the cornerstone of his research. Nencioni moves with great awareness and elegance from one to the other, decisively refusing the equating of language to code and the reduction of its many functions merely to the banal communicative one. This is the starting point for his brilliant analyses of the texts and linguistic philosophy of some of the most important authors of the Italian literary tradition (above all Dante and Manzoni, and amongst others Boccaccio, Guicciardini, Vasari, Michelangelo, Leopardi, Giusti, Capponi, Carducci, Verga, D'Annunzio, and Pirandello), as well as his completely innovative studies on 'institutional' language: the *questione della lingua* 'language problem', lexicon and grammar also in a diachronic perspective, and spoken language (*Tra grammatica e retorica* 'Between Grammar and Rhetoric' 1983; *Di scritto e parlato: discorsi linguistici* 'On Written and Spoken Language: Linguistic Discourses' 1983; *Saggi di lingua antica e moderna* 'Essays on Ancient and Modern Language' 1989; *La lingua dei Malavoglia e altri scritti di prosa, poesia e memoria* 'The Language of the Malavoglia and Other Writings on Prose, Poetry and Memory' 1988; *Idealismo e realismo nella scienza del linguaggio* 'Idealism and Realism in the Science of Language' 1989; *La lingua del Manzoni* 'The Language of Manzoni' 1993; *Saggi e memorie* 'Essays and Memoirs' 2000).

The Accademia della Crusca, which is today a modern research institute active on many fronts, owes to Giovanni Nencioni its fundamental drive towards renewal (it was he who established the Centro di Studi di Grammatica Italiana 'Centre of Studies on Italian Grammar' as well as the Centro di Studi di Lessicografia Italiana 'Centre of Studies on Italian Lexicography' and their specialist journals: SGI, SLeI), as well as its previously unseen opening towards schools and 'language enthusiasts' (mainly achieved through the publication of the biannual periodical *La Crusca per voi*, from 1990), and the strengthening of its international connections.

It is important to remember that in the fifties Nencioni contributed to the revival of the *Vocabolario* project and then, in the seventies, to the reorganization of its activities on the basis of computer science. He cultivated this interest for lexicography the last years of his life, also through the collaboration with the Centro di ricerche informatiche per i beni culturali 'Center for Computer-Based Humanities Research' of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa and the vast digitalization of historical and artistic sources carried out there. His essay on the formation of the Italian vocabulary of architecture (*Sulla formazione di un lessico nazionale dell'architettura* 'On the Formation of a National Vocabulary of Architecture', 1995) in particular

represents a fundamental contribution, also methodologically speaking, for anybody dealing with the issue of technical or scientific lexicons.

Nicoletta Maraschio

President of the Accademia della Crusca

### **eLexicography in the 21st century: New challenges, new applications**

This conference is organized by the *Centre for English Corpus Linguistics*, University of Louvain (UCL) from 22–24 October 2009 by Prof. Sylviane Granger and Dr Magali Paquot.

Papers on the following topics are particularly welcome:

- New technological environments: web-based dictionaries, mobile devices, etc.
- Exploitation of language resources: monolingual and multilingual corpora, learner corpora, lexical databases (e.g. WordNet).
- Integration of NLP tools (e.g. grammatical annotation, speech synthesis, etc.)
- Dictionary writing systems and other software available to the lexicographer
- Changes to the dictionary macro- and microstructure afforded by the electronic medium (multiple access routes, efficient integration of phraseology, etc.)
- Automated customisation of dictionaries in function of users' needs (proficiency level, receptive vs. productive mode, domain of writing, e.g. language for specific purposes)
- Integration of electronic dictionaries into language learning and teaching (CALL, translator training, etc.)

The conference aims to be a showcase for the latest developments in the field and will feature both software demos and a book and software exhibition. Website: [www.uclouvain.be/cecl-elexicography](http://www.uclouvain.be/cecl-elexicography). Contact: [elexicography@uclouvain.be](mailto:elexicography@uclouvain.be). For sponsoring options, please contact [sylviane.granger@uclouvain.be](mailto:sylviane.granger@uclouvain.be).

### **PangaeaLex: Invitation to submit material**

PangaeaLex, a portal to anything and everything lexicographic, is inviting readers to submit material. The categories that are currently covered are: (1) Conferences & Workshops, (2) Associations, (3) Journals & Newsletters, (4) Mailing Lists, (5) Bibliographies, and (6) Bibliometrics. Address: <http://pangaealex.org/> E-mail: [info@pangaealex.org](mailto:info@pangaealex.org)

### **III Congreso Internacional de Lexicografía Hispánica, Málaga, 22 al 26 de septiembre de 2008**

Se trata del congreso bienal que la Asociación Española de Estudios Lexicográficos (AEELX) organiza conjuntamente con departamentos universitarios



o grupos de investigación desde que se constituyera como tal asociación en Barcelona en 2002. Previamente se han celebrado los congresos de La Coruña (2004) y Alicante (2006).

El III Congreso ha dependido directamente del grupo de investigación 'Interléxico', grupo de investigación en lexicografía, creado y dirigido por Ignacio Ahumada en 2002, y cuyos miembros pertenecen al Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Madrid) y a las universidades de Jaén, Málaga y Sevilla. La dirección científica ha estado a cargo de Ignacio Ahumada (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas) y Marta Concepción Ayala Castro (Universidad de Málaga).

Ha contado con la participación de 250 congresistas. Se han presentado un total de 175 comunicaciones, cinco conferencias plenarias y dos mesas redondas. Como singularidad frente a otras convocatorias, el congreso ha rendido homenaje al lexicógrafo Manuel Seco.

Las diferentes comunicaciones se han distribuido atendiendo a las siguientes secciones: Lexicografía teórica, Historia de la lexicografía, Lexicografía de especialidad, Lexicografía regional, Lexicografía pedagógica, Lexicografía computacional, Lexicografía bilingüe/plurilingüe así como la presentación de proyectos de investigación.

Debe destacarse el interés de los asistentes por las secciones de Lexicografía computacional y Lexicografía bilingüe. Si la primera porque nos proporciona las herramientas necesarias e imprescindibles en la redacción de diccionarios, la Lexicografía bilingüe porque sigue siendo la asignatura pendiente de la lexicografía del español.

Las conferencias plenarias estuvieron a cargo de destacados especialistas: Manuel Alvar Ezquerro (Universidad Complutense), Germà Colón (Universidad de Basilea), Alberto Gómez Font (Fundación del Español Urgente), Carla Marengo (Universidad de Turín) y Robert Verdonk (Universidad de Lovaina).

En el marco incomparable del Jardín Botánico de Málaga tuvo lugar el homenaje de reconocimiento a la trayectoria científica, pero especialmente lexicográfica de Manuel Seco Reymundo. En un acto, presidido por la rectora de la Universidad de Málaga, Ignacio Ahumada, Olimpia Andrés, Auxiliadora Castillo y Juan Crespo revisaron la obra diccionarística del maestro indiscutible de la lexicografía del español, con obras en su haber como el *Diccionario de dudas y dificultades del español*, en permanente revisión y reedición desde 1961, el *Diccionario del español actual* (1999) o el reciente *Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual* (2004), amén de haber sido redactor y último director del *Diccionario histórico de la lengua española* (1960–96), de la Real Academia Española.

Por último, una mención especial a la destacada aportación, por vez primera, de la comunidad científica hispanoamericana. El congreso ha contado con participantes repartidos desde Méjico hasta la Argentina y Chile, pasando por



Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia o Paraguay. Tampoco debemos olvidar la presencia de destacados hispanistas en universidades norteamericanas, Japón y Taiwán, Europa Central y de los países de nuestro entorno Portugal, Francia, Alemania e Italia.

La Universidad Rovira y Virgili, de Tarragona, junto a otras universidades catalanas, será la encargada de organizar el congreso correspondiente a 2010.

Ignacio Ahumada

<http://congresolexicografia.cindoc.csic.es/entrada.htm>

## **Forthcoming events**

### **2009**

March

18, Cergy-Pontoise, France, La Journée des dictionnaires. Thème: Dictionnaires et sciences. Information: [pruvost.jean@wanadoo.fr](mailto:pruvost.jean@wanadoo.fr)

May

27–30, Bloomington IN, US, DSNA Biennial Meeting 17, [http://www.dictionariesociety.com/Indiana\\_DSNA.pdf](http://www.dictionariesociety.com/Indiana_DSNA.pdf). Conference organizer: Michael Adams, [madams1448@aol.com](mailto:madams1448@aol.com)

June

3–5, Tampere FI, Nordiske konferanse om leksikografi 10 (NFL 10), [www.nordisk-sprakrad.no/nfl.htm](http://www.nordisk-sprakrad.no/nfl.htm)

July

6–8, Xhosa Department, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, Cape Town, South Africa: 14th International AFRILEX Conference. Keynote speakers: Prof. Henning Bergenholtz (Denmark), Prof. J.M. Lubinda (Botswana) and Prof. A.C. Nkabinde (South Africa). For information, please visit the website <http://afrilex.africanlanguages.com/> or contact the organizer [gillesmaurice.deschryver@UGent.be](mailto:gillesmaurice.deschryver@UGent.be).

July

21–23, Liverpool GB, 5th Conference on Corpus Linguistics. Information at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/english/CL2009/>

September

10–12, Ivanovo State University, Russia: VIII International School on Lexicography. Information: Prof., Dr. Olga Karpova, Ivanovo State University, English Department, Yermak St. 39, Ivanovo 153025, Russia. Tel./fax: +7 (0932) 37 54 02, [omk@ivanovo.ac.ru](mailto:omk@ivanovo.ac.ru)

October

22–24, eLexicography in the 21st century: New challenges, new applications, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, Organizers: Prof. Sylviane Granger and Dr Magali Paquot. Information at [elxicography@uclouvain.be](mailto:elxicography@uclouvain.be).

**2010**

July

6–10, Fryske Akademy, Leeuwarden (The Netherlands), 14th EURALEX International Congress. Information at <http://www.euralex2010.eu/>.