MEETINGS SECRETARY REPORT
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BAAL 2007 Edinburgh (6–8 September)
The conference theme of BAAL 2007 was ‘Applied Linguistics Renewed: Technology, Ideology and Practice’. More than 300 delegates attended the conference. The conference marked 40 years of BAAL and also 50 years of applied linguistics in Edinburgh. Plenary speakers were Karin Aijmer (University of Gothenburg), Richard Johnstone (University of Stirling), and Norman Fairclough (University of Lancaster). Each concentrated on a different conference theme, respectively technology, practice, and ideology.

Very many thanks and congratulations to Alan Davies, Heather Hewitt, and other staff and students at Edinburgh University for a highly successful conference. Delegate feedback forms and emails abound in comments such as ‘a memorable and inspiring conference – excellent organization – lovely venue – wonderful volunteers’. The Pit Corder Colloquium and its video link with Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan in Australia generated the highest praise, e.g. ‘the Pit Corder morning was exceptional: well organised, intelligent content, professionally delivered and managed’. 65% of delegates who filled in feedback forms rated the quality of the sessions, the conference venue and gala dinner ‘very good’, e.g. ‘outstanding and intelligent presentations’, ‘well-equipped venue’, and ‘the conference dinner venue was an inspired choice’. Criticism from feedback forms centred around a perceived scarcity of break time and delays caused by the Bristol-based conference company In Any Event.

As usual, BAAL offered scholarships. There were 21 applications for the ten UK Student Scholarships, and 50 applications for the International Scholarship and the Chris Brumfit award; the former went to Julie Byrd Clark (University of Toronto) and the latter to Huamei Han (University of Toronto).

60% of delegates who filled in forms rated the presentation facilities ‘very good’. Most powerpoint presentations were uploaded into computers in the presentation rooms before the conference. Technicians circulated round the rooms offering help throughout.

Over half the delegates rated the programme, and the balance of SIG tracks and colloquia with individual papers ‘very good’. The ratio of track/colloquium papers to individual papers was 1:3.2, slightly below last year’s of 1:4. The number of papers submitted increased compared to previous years; however, with a 40% acceptance rate, the number of accepted papers (100) had dropped sharply, which was due partly to the increase in papers submitted, and partly to the need to make papers fit the available time slots. The number of posters had fallen. SIG tracks and colloquia remained constant.

There were three proposed colloquia: ‘Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction’, ‘The Emergence of Corpus Sign Language Linguistics’ and ‘UK Linguistic Ethnography Forum SIG’. There were four SIG Tracks: ‘Assessment’, ‘Corpus Linguistics’, ‘Language Learning and Teaching’, and ‘Multimodality’.

The Edinburgh Applied Linguistics 50th anniversary reunion drinks reception took place in the Old College’s impressive Playfair Library on Thursday evening. Circa 200 delegates attended the reception, and group photos were taken of former graduates following speeches by Alan Davies and Ronald Asher.

40 years of BAAL and 50 years of AL in Edinburgh were jointly marked through the Pit Corder Colloquium Friday morning. Participants were encouraged to reflect on both past and future developments in applied linguistics. The colloquium consisted of two parts: a video-conference link with M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, with questions fielded by Alan Davies, John Joseph and Albert Weideman in the first half, and short papers by Diane Larsen-Freeman, Sinfree Makoni, Miriam Meyerhoff, Keith Mitchell and Ros Mitchell in the second. This was followed by a tribute to John Sinclair.

The BAAL Gala dinner, followed by a ceilidh, was held at the Our Dynamic Earth visitor attraction Friday evening. The conference closed the following day with the last of the three plenaries and closing remarks by several representatives of BAAL and Edinburgh University.

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