

from: Frans Plank and Johan van der Auwera, 3 March 1994
re: ASSOCIATION FOR LINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY

Dear colleagues,

we, the undersigned, invite you to join an association to be known as the Association for Linguistic Typology (ALT) as its founding members.

The purpose of ALT will be to advance the scientific study of typology, i.e. of cross-linguistic diversity and the patterns underlying it. To that end ALT will seek (i) to further mutual awareness, dialogue, and cooperation within the international community of typologists, thus providing a focus for research in this branch of linguistics, and (ii) to act as an interest group of typologists in relation to the world of science and science funding.

ALT's principal communal activities will be (i) the organization of annual meetings and perhaps occasional workshops and (ii) the publication of a journal.

We intend to draw up a formal constitution of ALT shortly, and solicit your suggestions on all matters relevant to the founding and running of this association.

Here are some ideas for ALT that we, the undersigned, submit for your consideration.

For legal reasons ALT ought to be properly registered as a non-profit making organization under German/Belgian/? law.

There ought to be two main categories of personal membership: regular members and student members—persons actively involved in typological research. We might in addition wish to admit individuals or groups of individuals that in one way or another support the cause of typology as associate members. Further, some kind of membership status presumably has to be granted to libraries subscribing to ALT's journal.

The duty of members—apart from that of doing or supporting high-quality typological research—will be to pay an annual fee as dues, of an amount sufficient to cover the costs of running the association (including the publication of its journal). Student members should pay about half the dues of regular members, and associate members should pay more. When

the journal is established, we reckon with a regular annual fee of about DM 100; initially it should probably be around DM 30, to enable ALT to get started. (What needs some further thinking is how dues are to be paid in currencies such as those of Eastern Europe.)

The rights of membership will include (i) a free subscription to ALT's journal (i.e. subscription to the journal is obligatory for members, and part of the dues will be used to subsidize the journal), (ii) the offering of papers for oral presentation at annual meetings, (iii) the submission of articles, reviews, comments, and other contributions to be considered for publication in ALT's journal, and (iv) the holding of offices in ALT and the voting in its elections (regular and student members only).

As to the administration of ALT, we assume it will suffice, at least initially, to have a president (to be elected annually), a secretary-cum-treasurer (serving for a longer period), an executive-cum-programme committee (of some five members, serving for two or three years), and an editor and a medium-sized editorial board of the journal (serving long enough to guarantee a certain continuity).

At the annual meetings of ALT, to be held at regular intervals (each spring, autumn, or winter) and at varying places, priority ought to be given to the unhurried presentation and discussion of typological research worth reporting on. (No parallel sessions! As a rule of thumb: one hour per paper, including discussion.) Thematic constraints would generally seem undesirable, although time could occasionally be set apart for mini-symposia on burning issues, workshops (say, on particular languages of special typological interest), and perhaps other formats of contributions.

As to the format of ALT's journal, simply to be named 'Typology' and to appear in two issues per year of some 200-250 pages each, it ought to contain these regular elements: (i) target articles with peer commentary (as pioneered by *Current Anthropology* and *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*); (ii) standard articles (of above-standard quality, naturally); (iii) documentation of implicational universals; (iv) typological sketches of particular languages or families; (v) highlights from the history of typology (bio-bibliographic notices of past masters, re-evaluations of classics); (vi) reviews, review articles, book notices. The language of publication should normally be (good) English.

The undersigned are currently exploring the possibility of publishing a journal of this kind with a major publisher, and there appears to be a genuine interest from several of these.

In order to get ALT's journal started, we, the undersigned, suggest to operate a working paper scheme from our academic bases (Konstanz and Antwerpen), by means of which a fund of materials would be collected that could be drawn on for the first issues of Typology, provisionally envisaged to appear in 1996. Members of ALT would receive these Working Papers, which might roughly be modelled on those produced by the EUROTYP programme and which might be called 'The Typology Forum'. If this way of proceeding is agreed on, contributions of the various sorts to figure in the journal eventually superseding The Typology Forum would soon be solicited from the membership of ALT.

We anticipate holding the inaugural meeting of ALT in the spring or autumn of 1995 at Konstanz (Germany) or Antwerpen (Belgium). It ought to be preceded by a first business meeting of founding members, to take place later in 1994.

If you want to be a founding member of ALT, let us know before 15 March.

Typologists of the world, associate!

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