# LETTERS TO *LANGUAGE*

*Language* accepts letters from readers that briefly and succinctly respond to or comment upon either material published previously in the journal or issues deemed of importance to the field. The editor reserves the right to edit letters as needed. Brief replies from relevant parties are included as warranted.

**What's in a name? Plenty!**
June 14, 2008
To the Editor:

*Language* has apparently lost its editorial memory regarding J Milton Cowan's name.

In the obituary by Mark L. Louden for William G. Moulton in the March 2008 issue (*Language* 84.1.161–69), Cowan's name appears in full form twice, on p. 164 and in the references on p. 168. In both cases it is given as 'J. Milton Cowan'. As Charles A. Hockett noted in the second paragraph of his 1995 obituary for Cowan (*Language* 71.2.341–48), there is no period after the J in Cowan's name. There are still more than a few of us who remember Cowan citing his own name as 'J, no period, Milton Cowan'.

Certainly this has been a bane for past editors, copyeditors, and writers, and perhaps it is an idiosyncrasy that will have to succumb to the passage of time, but I would be sorry to see that happen. Cowan was LSA president in 1966, our secretary-treasurer from 1941 to 1950, and surely deserving of an effort to flag the proper form of his name for future editorial staff members.

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*Editor's reply*: I am pleased to learn this interesting detail about one of our illustrious past presidents, and gladly stand corrected. Names do matter, and had we realized this fact, we would have done it right in the first place. We are printing a formal correction at the end of this section, which has the advantage that it will forever be linked to the original in the electronic version of *Language*.

**National Museum of Language open for business**
July 2, 2008
To the Editor:

We must all be grateful to David Crystal for his call to arms in support of the International Year of Languages (IYL) in 2008 in his recent Letter to *Language* of March 14 (*Language* 84.2.215–16). Comprehensive as his review is of the realities and possibilities of such a celebration, I must point out an important omission: the existence of the National Museum of Language (NML) in College Park, Maryland. Don Osborn had alerted us to the IYL and sought our support as we were completing the final arrangements for opening to the public, but our efforts then were necessarily concentrated on our own immediate goal. Since its incorporation in December 1997 the NML has pursued its mission of creating an operating museum dedicated to the entire field of language, serving and open to the general public. The Museum did open to the public to much acclaim on May 3, 2008, featuring an exhibit with the theme 'Writing language: Passing it on'. This successful event was supported by the City of College Park, the University of Maryland's Center for Heritage Resource Studies, the Museum of the Alphabet of Waxhaw, North Carolina, and the National Capital Language Resource Center of Washington, DC. The Museum is now open to the public ten days a month. Its schedule and activities may be found on our website, www.languagemuseum.org.

We should not neglect to mention other collaborators whose friendship and help have given us hope for the future. For the past several years we have been fortunate to have the encouragement of SIL International, which has been most generous with its advice, support, and cooperation in our programs.

We are also grateful for the past support of the NML by the Linguistic Society of America, which was early and real. In May 1999, just a year after the NML elected its first Board of Directors, several members of our Board were privileged to meet with the LSA Executive Committee to present to them the origins and mission of the NML. Subsequently the LSA became an institutional member of the Museum, a connection it continued until two or three years ago, when it declined to renew its membership. We naturally regretted the loss.

During the years of its membership we particularly appreciated the support of its (then-) Executive Director, Maggie Reynolds. In our early days the LSA offered the support of its experts should we be asked for linguistic expertise. Later, through an article in our Newsletter, Maggie spoke of the reasons why the LSA wished the Museum well. Over the years she continued to assist the NML in any way she



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could. Recently, upon the opening of the Museum to the public, she sent us a personal message of congratulations. I was pleased that her early confidence in our mission had been justified.

We value the relationship we had with the LSA and hope we can continue our cooperation as we work toward our common goals.

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*Editor's reply*: Clearly, I also was unaware of the opening of NML, so I am glad to be able to help make this information more widely known (and actually, other readers brought the Museum to my attention shortly after the appearance of the June issue). Such institutions can only help to fulfill the public educational mission so many of us see as a crucial part of our role as linguists and academics.

**A Year-of-Languages initiative in Macedonia**

August 2, 2008
To the Editor:

I read with interest and approval the letters on the UN Year of Languages in the June 2008 issue of *Language* (84.2.215–16). I am writing in connection with one of the desiderata adduced by David Crystal, namely making reliable data available. The Research Center for Areal Linguistics of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts of the Republic of Macedonia, in connection with the UN Year of Languages, has initiated The Digital Archive of the Macedonian Language, which is a growing collection of digitized, searchable texts in Modern Macedonian from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The digitized texts are completely free for anyone who would like to use, search through, and/or download the materials. As a result of this initiative, a wide variety of rare texts in the public domain will be accessible to linguists and other researchers. Although Macedonian was not recognized as a standard language until 1944, we are fortunate to have texts—many of them collected in regions outside the current borders of the Republic, e.g. Greece and Albania—in Macedonian dialects that are now highly endangered. This new project makes these and many other texts available to researchers in an accessible electronic form, and it thereby promises to enhance the larger project of preserving humanity's linguistic heritage. The web address is http://damj.manu.edu.mk, and the Project Coordinator is Professor Marjan Markoviḱ (e-mail: marjan@manu.edu.mk).

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*Editor's reply*: This is certainly an exciting development and I welcome this news. I was recently in Seoul, Korea at the 18th International Congress of Linguists with some 1,500 fellow linguists from all over the world. The theme of the Congress was 'Unity and Diversity of Languages', and the UNESCO declaration was mentioned many times in various plenary events and clearly struck a responsive chord with the participants. This Macedonian action is the sort of positive initiative that many hoped would come out of this momentous year, and it is in keeping with the recognition of linguistic diversity. It serves as a reminder too that endangered dialects of well-known languages are just as much in need of documentation and preservation as endangered languages.

## CORRECTION

In the published version of Mark L. Louden's obituary on William G. Moulton (*Language* 84.1.161–69), the two instances of the name 'J Milton Cowan' (p. 164 and p. 168) erroneously have a period after the 'J' (see for details Julia Falk's 'Letter to *Language*' (September 2008, *Language* 84.3.469)).

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