

Honorary President's Address

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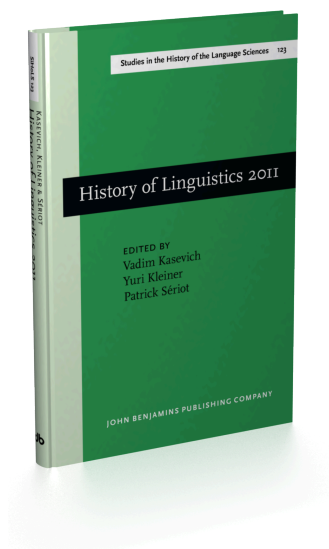
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Honorary President's Address*

E. F. K. Koerner

Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Berlin

Dobro požalovat', welcome, *soyez les bienvenus*, ¡bien venidos!, herzlich willkommen! This is the first International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences (ICHoLS) in which we have altogether five – if I counted correctly – ‘metalanguages’, i.e., languages in which papers will be given, quite appropriately including Russian. After all, historians of linguistics are also linguists.

I have been given the honour and privilege to address you at this 12th International Conference for the History of the Language Sciences, possibly for more than two reasons. In 1973, five years before the first ICHoLS, I had launched the first journal devoted specifically to the History of Linguistics, *Historiographia Linguistica*, which at the time of speaking is completing its 38th year of publication. Secondly, as is well known, I organized the first such meeting in Ottawa in August 1978, exactly thirty-three years to the day. Thirdly, I might also mention that since 2004 I have also been a *bona fide* member of the University of St Petersburg.

Since what may be regarded as the ‘external history’ of these ICHoLS meetings has been posted on the ICHoLS XII website, I would like to offer a few details concerning the ‘internal history’ or at least recount a few things that I still remember.

If I follow the indications in the Conference Handbook, at least four congress participants in this year's congress were already present at the Ottawa, Canada, meeting – to name them in reverse alphabetical order: Joan Leopold (hailing from Berlin at the time), Craig Christy (then a doctoral student at Princeton), Anders Ahlqvist (at the time a lecturer in Old and Middle Irish at University College Galway, Ireland), and Sylvain Auroux (working to establish *l'histoire des sciences du langage* in France from his post at Lille III).

In hindsight, I realize that my plans for the future of both ICHoLS and *HL* were too ambitious. I had hoped that the fewer than 100 participants could agree on the establishment of an international society that would be responsible for

* As Professor Koerner was unable to attend, the speech was ably delivered by T. Craig Christy of the University of North Alabama.

the organization of future such conferences and that, maybe, my journal could be incorporated as the official organ of this international society. This did not happen, and I am reminded of Goethe's observation that not all cherry blossoms will bear fruit.

One idea that did succeed is that ICHoLS meetings take place just once every three years only, and not in too quick succession. My concern was that people must be given sufficient research time to prepare a paper for the next meeting. The idea that there should be a regular pattern of two such conferences taking place in Europe followed by one in North America, given that there were many more European scholars working in the history of linguistics, was unfortunately not carried through. It would have been good if every third ICHoLS had been held in North America in order to help develop the field there, where it is so sorely lacking. The intended alternation was not realized. There were reasons for this, and I will only mention that ICHoLS II was supposed to take place in Trier, with Hans-Josef Niederehe as organizer, but that he did not receive this opportunity until six years later for ICHoLS IV. (He had run another major conference in Trier in 1975 very successfully and was since 1976 an associate editor of *HL*.)

ICHoLS III was handed by the Lille Conference organizers, headed by André Joly, to Hans Aarsleff in Princeton. The meeting was well attended and went along smoothly, largely, I think, because conference participants tend to be a well-behaved lot who follow the program without much ado. The 680-page proceedings were edited by Louis Kelly, a colleague in Ottawa at the time, Hans-Josef Niederehe and myself as 'ghost co-editor'. A special highlight of the meeting was the visit to Philadelphia organized by Rosane Rocher of the University of Pennsylvania, followed by a dinner at a restaurant with entertainment provided by two belly-dancers.

The next two ICHoLS meetings were particularly well organized, in 1987 by Niederehe in Trier, with an outing in the Eifel mountains and a visit to Eltz Castle in the afternoon, not to forget the dinner at a Moselle winery; in 1990 by Anders Ahlqvist in Galway, who may forgive me for remembering especially the conference dinner where I had the great luck to eat not only six but twelve of the very best oysters of my life, because my table neighbour did not go for this kind of food.

The 1993 and 1996 meetings were held at Georgetown in Washington, D.C., and at Oxford. Kurt Jankowsky and David Cram, respectively, made sure that everything went very well. Even the weather was on our side. Georgetown conference participants may recall especially the late Kenneth Lee Pike's (1912–2000) flute performance illustrating how, having consulted with Edward Sapir in 1938 on the question of tone, he managed to handle tone languages in phonological analysis. At the Oxford meeting I was particularly gratified by the resounding applause that the late Vivian Salmon (1921–2010) received at the general meeting,

when I was able to present her with the second volume of selected papers of hers that I had edited, *Language and Society in Early Modern England* (Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 1996).

I have no memorable things to report on the 1999 ICHoLS meeting held at Fontenay-aux-Roses at the periphery of Paris, except for the reception that the Amsterdam publisher, in the person of Mr John L. Benjamins himself, had prepared, at which I was presented with a two-volume *Festschrift* on the occasion of my 60th birthday.

I did not attend the subsequent Conferences held in Brazil in 2002 and Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, in 2005, and so I have no more to say than that I am happy that a volume of selected papers from these two meetings were each published in my "Studies in the History of the Language Sciences" series, both in 2007. The Potsdam Conference was so well attended that most, if not nearly all Western historians of linguistics were present, and memories of it will still loom large in the minds of many. It is therefore only appropriate that Gerda Haßler, the organizer of ICHoLS XI and the editor of a volume of selected papers from this conference, has been chosen as the first presenter of a Plenary paper on this first day of ICHoLS XII.

It was also at the Potsdam Conference that a vote was taken in favour of holding the next meeting in St Petersburg. And so we are here to enjoy both this international meeting and the august city of Peter the First and Catherine the Second of Russia.

And looking at the splendid Conference Handbook each one of you received at registration, I can wish you all days of formidable intellectual stimulation and invigorating debate.