

## Congress Organisation: The academic's burden

Geoffrey Williams

Every two years the EURALEX Congress comes round again, moving each time to a new venue so that we can explore Europe and its university cities. Why every two years, why keep moving? As the last organiser I shall try to answer these questions and give an overview of how the events are organised.

EURALEX congresses are an important event in the lexicographical calendar as they set off a rare meeting point for all the actors in the field, lexicographer to lexicographer, business to business, academic to academic and all to all. During four days all these essential actors in the lexicographical community from throughout the world are able to meet friends, make friends and exchange views. A lot of planning and unpaid work go into making a successful congress. The aim of this paper is to show the type of constraints under which the organiser is working, and consequently how the community can help make the task easier. Obviously I can only speak for Lorient 2004, but most of the organisational problems are the same everywhere. Before going into detail I must elucidate slightly the title.

The academic's burden? It is true that there are plenty of us in the membership, but the wealth of EURALEX is in the variety of its members, not just in terms of geographical background and the diversity of expertise, but also in terms of professional background with practising lexicographers, in-house or independent, publishing houses, software developers and just plain lovers of dictionaries, as well as academics. The task of congress organisation, though, tends to fall to the academics. This is probably for a number of reasons. Academics are in general relatively stable, physically if not mentally, staying for the time necessary to organise events. They generally have a relatively flexible work schedule into which congress organisation can be fitted as an extra, but handleable task. Congresses are also an occupational hazard for an academic, if you do not publish research you do not exist. One way of publishing is through attending conferences, and if you attend them, why not organise them? The last point is the nature of their employer, as academics also work for institutions that welcome congresses as a means of showing off their facilities and affirming their reputation as a seat of learning.

Whilst it may be natural that the task falls to an academic, it remains useful that others recognise the immense amount of work that goes into an event.

### A moveable feast

Like the progression of a medieval monarch, EURALEX wends its way through Europe, although it leaves behind an exhausted, but happy, organiser, rather than devastation and famine. I cannot believe that anyone ever regrets taking on the task, the finale is such fun, but during the two years of preparation doubts can occasionally be voiced as to the wisdom of the undertaking.

I started off with two questions; why every two years, and why keep moving?

The first will be the subject of the rest of this paper. The aim is to give a brief overview of the tasks involved and the time schedule from acceptance to the opening ceremony. The second can be answered more quickly.

We are a European association, so it seems normal that each country gets the chance to show off its own lexicographical practice. If a meeting is always held in the same place it tends to become the property of that place. This is fine for some areas of research where a university seeks to become a centre of excellence in that field, but EURALEX is not a university association. It has a more virtual existence, simply using facilities put at its disposal by member institutions, or the institutions of its members. By moving, the congress remains on neutral ground, allowing both business and academic partners to exchange freely.

This mobile-feast syndrome means that since the founding of the association in 1983 and its first meeting in Exeter, EURALEX has been steadily moving around Europe, each time hosted by a different institution, some big, some small, but all committed to making everyone welcome. Of course, some places are easier to get to than others, but everywhere is difficult for someone. Every country has its own dictionary publishers and institutes, which means that in moving each country can present its own lexical practice. This is vitally important in terms of membership and European cohesion. Lorient offered French dictionary publishing houses the opportunity to receive the rest of the lexical world on its own ground. It meant that many French academics and researchers



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**The Dictionary Society  
of North America  
XV Biennial Meeting  
Boston, MA  
June 8-11, 2005**

The fifteenth Biennial Meeting of the Dictionary Society of North America will take place at Boston University, in the New England area where American lexicography had its beginnings. In addition to the meeting, members will be able to attend events at the offices of the local dictionary publishers Houghton Mifflin and Merriam-Webster. Papers will be given on a wide range of topics in lexicography and lexicology. Presentations are twenty minutes, followed by five minutes for discussion, and there will also be a forum on dictionary usage open to the public. The conference will include tours of Merriam-Webster and the American Antiquarian Society, and of Harvard University's Houghton Library and the Boston Public Library's Rare Book Room, as well as a reception hosted by Houghton Mifflin. New England has played an important role in North American lexicography and continues to do so today. It is fitting that lexicographers from around the world will convene here and learn about the modern publishers of American dictionaries and have an opportunity to see documentation of the history of lexicography including American lexicography leading up to the present.

**David Jost**

DSNA President  
<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dsna/DSNABostonMtg.html>

who would not necessarily have attended previous congresses could come along. Many of these will join the association, and will also come to Turin, where Italian lexicographers will bring a new Italian outlook to the next event, and from there on, who knows? Europe has such a wealth of lexicographical practice to share; our wealth of languages underlines our rich cultural diversity. EURALEX is far from an English-speaking club; whatever language someone chooses to present in, there will always be an audience eager to listen.

**Organisation**

Now we can get down to business. What happens in the two years between congresses?

**Acceptance**

The first stage is that an offer to host the following event must be accepted by the general assembly, which always meets during the congress. Prior to this, offers will have been discussed by the board so that some arbitration can be done if there is a plethora of potential venues; this also helps planning ahead even if the plans rarely work out.

Once the offer has been accepted serious planning can start. This means setting up a local committee and handing out tasks. This more than takes up a first year as the website and databases are built, the call written, contacts made with local authorities, including the tourist board, contacts established with the press, et cetera. Each organiser knows that the previous organisers can be relied on for assistance, but local needs generate new problems, which may require local solutions. We took on two students to help us through this first year, which culminates, with the summer board meeting.

**Launching the machine**

By the time of the board meeting, which always takes place at the new host institution in the summer preceding the congress, all the infrastructure must be in place, as by June the first call for papers must go out. The call should be in at least two languages, we used three, with English and Breton in addition to French. The inclusion of Breton was important to us, as being able to include one of Europe's lesser-spoken languages underlines our concerns for all the languages of the EU.

As the call goes out in the *International Journal of Lexicography*, advance planning is essential as paper-publishing deadlines are obviously different from those of electronic lists. The journal reaches a different audience than the electronic

lists, and EURALEX members must be informed first. In addition to the journal, we try to cover all the major electronic lists, the aim is to widen the circle to all those interested in lexicography.

The call will go out at regular intervals up to the final deadline for the receipt of papers. There is obviously a limited degree of flexibility, but the deadlines for the review process are very short. Whereas in some congresses review is done on short abstracts, EURALEX requires full abstracts so that a rigorous selection process can be carried out and the whole proceedings be in print before the event. This puts a lot of pressure on the organiser.

At this point I must reiterate the fact that the organiser is still doing their fulltime job. It is very unlikely that they will get a reduced teaching or research load, in fact the opposite generally occurs as those dynamic enough to organise a major event must be able to take on something else, n'est ce pas?

**The review process**

The reputation of a congress is paramount to success; if the selection is seen as anything but rigorous then the congress will no longer fulfil its purpose of disseminating knowledge. It is all too easy for a congress attached to an association to be seen as a sort of club where it is sufficient to be a member to speak. Such a situation is clearly disastrous, as a small group of people would only ever listen to themselves and over time the circle would inevitably diminish and the debates become sterile. This is far from the case with EURALEX, as we have a strict process of double-blind review, which ensures rigorous selection. For those who do not know the process I shall explain.

As can be seen from the call, every EURALEX congress has a programme committee, these are the people who will make the final selection, but on the basis of reports supplied by the review panel. The review panel consists of experts in different fields of lexicography who agree to read and comment on a maximum of 5 proposals. The organiser has of course the lists from previous congresses, but will also add in more reviewers from their own circle of professional acquaintances, as a new venue will require a greater weight in some language combinations. Management of this panel is complex, as unlike many congresses that only have English as their working language, EURALEX is very multilingual. This means taking into account both speciality and language combinations; a far from

easy task as it is all too easy to have a wealth of reviewers for one speciality or combination and a dearth elsewhere. This was very much the case for EURALEX 2004 as we had a much larger number of proposals in French than at previous meetings; the situation will probably be the same for TurinLEX in 2006.

Bringing in new members on a review panel also leads to complications. EURALEX standards are rightfully high. This means that time must be taken to explain the review procedure to new reviewers. All the reviewers are heavily committed professionals who are taking on the task for free, which means that the time available is also a factor. For EURALEX we use a standard review form with fixed criteria, and also have a space for comments to help decision-making and others that are passed on to the authors who will expect feedback.

When a proposal is received it is given a number and filed ready for review. Proposals must be classified by theme and language. In some cases authors will have ticked a number of themes, in which case the organiser will have to exercise judgement as no paper can be reviewed by 6 reviewers, which would be the case if 3 categories had been ticked. For the smooth running of the review process, discipline and realism on behalf of the authors is essential, but cannot always be counted on.

Deadlines must be respected and late papers cannot normally be considered. The organiser can have well over 200 proposals to manage and cannot send them out until after the deadline has passed, as otherwise managing a review panel is impossible. Proposals that do not satisfy the presentation format cannot be reviewed. Time is another factor. However much you might have to say, the reviewer only has a limited time to read it. A proposal that is too short cannot be properly judged; one that is too long may indicate someone who will not respect speaking times either. In all cases, electronic submission must be preferred so as to reduce handling costs and speed up operations.

Once the proposals have been safely gathered in and rendered anonymous, the review procedure can begin. In normal circumstances, a reviewer will receive a maximum of 5 proposals, although given the number of proposals received some reviewers will accept more. Review is anonymous and each paper will be read by two persons independently. This is double blind review.

The review procedure is not without its problems. There are anguishing cases

where the reviewer fails to deliver; in this case another reviewer has to be found at short notice. The same may apply if a paper is deemed highly acceptable by one but is rubbished by another. We aim to be rigorous but fair, and double blind review ensures this.

Upon receipt of the review forms, numerical values are fed into the database so as to give an initial sorting by clear acceptance and clear refusal. The former do not pose a problem, but the latter do receive individual attention, as all refusals must be justified. At this stage the proposals are still anonymous.

#### *Programme committee meeting*

The review process up to this point will have been carried out by the organiser with in-house assistants, all working under great pressure. Once the reviews have been received and classified; the selection can then be carried out by the programme committee.

The programme committee consists of the organiser assisted by a team of four other persons, usually members or ex-members of the board and the previous organiser. This means a team of people who already have experience in organising EURALEX congresses. The committee meets on a Saturday, and has one day in which to go through all the proposals from clear acceptance to absolute rejection and to choose those that will go onto the programme. In other words, they must reject a minimum of 50% of the papers, many of which would be quite worthy of acceptance. This is done anonymously, only after do we reveal names and see who we have offended. Once the meeting is over it is the job of the organiser to send out letters of acceptance or refusal, and wait for the flack to arrive.

The higher the number of proposals, the higher the level of rejection. Having too many parallel sessions is to be avoided and nobody would be satisfied by having an over-rich programme. The event cannot be lengthened either as it would greatly increase costs. This means that the review process is a gruelling one for the committee, and especially the organiser who can expect angry recriminations. However, the high level of selection ensures the reputation of the congress, as participants know they can expect a very high standard of paper. This is important for any congress, especially when the participants are paying a fee and travelling long distances to attend.

There remains the problem of doctoral students. Papers from doctoral students are not given any preferential treatment,

### **The Fourth ASIALEX International Congress Singapore 1-3 June 2005**

It is our great pleasure to host the Fourth ASIALEX International Congress at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

ASIALEX 2005 is one of the year-long academic events celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of NUS and is organized by the Department of English Language and Literature, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Asia Research Institute.

With the theme of **Words in Asian Cultural Contexts**

this three-day conference of the Asian Association for Lexicography aims to examine the functions and representations of words, with Asia as its focus, and has strands with related perspectives in sociolinguistics and language pedagogy, information and communications technology, and literary, cultural and postcolonial studies.

The major objective of ASIALEX is to foster scholarly and professional activities in the field of lexicography in Asia.

ASIALEX 2005 aims to bring together scholars of language, linguistics and literature in an interdisciplinary forum.

The papers capture a focus on how words assume distinctive shapes and meanings in different cultural contexts. Particularly in Asia, where different cultures and ethnicities commonly converge and give rise to cultural and textual hybridity, the wider study

of words and language can enhance cross-cultural communication and lead to greater understanding of its peoples.

The plenary speakers at the conference are Charles Fillmore (University of California), Reinhard Hartmann (University of Exeter) and Zhang Yihua (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies).

Featured speakers include Susan Butler (Macquarie Dictionaries), Gwyneth Fox (Macmillan Publishing), Gregory James (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology), Ismail Talib (NUS), Yukio Tono (Meikai University) and Lily Wong-Fillmore (University of California). There will also be a pre-conference tutorial, *Using Corpora*, by Adam Kilgariff (Lexicography MasterClass).

We are pleased to welcome also all participants from the related associations: Euralex, Afrilex and Australlex. To our visitors, we hope you will enjoy the hospitality of the local residents as well as the sights and sounds of Singapore.

**Anne Pakir**

ASIALEX

President (2003-2005)

<http://asialex.nus.edu.sg>

some high quality papers will be accepted, others rejected on the same basis as any other proposal. However, I firmly believe in the necessity of opening the congress to a maximum of young researchers who would not be able to attend if not given the possibility of presenting a paper. Because of this we used the database to find papers that had been rejected and offered the possibility of presenting at a pre-congress work-in-progress session, following a new selection process. These short papers would be published in a separate section of the proceedings. I am pleased to say that this formula worked, and was well attended.

***Invited Speakers***

Another task of the programme committee is to invite the plenary speakers. The organiser will draw up a list based on his or her own wishes, but balancing the requirements of international speakers and speakers from the host country. The list is discussed by the programme committee and advice may be sought from the board. The next problem is one of availability, which means beginning negotiations well ahead. We were lucky in Lorient in that our first choices were both available and willing.

**The last laps before the event**

***Publishing the proceedings***

Review process over, final papers safely (including those of the invited speakers) gathered in, so now we can go to press. Not so quick.

In addition to guidelines, we provide an electronic style sheet, but not everyone knows how to use one. Failure to follow the guidelines means an enormous job of standardising the texts, which can come in a variety of formats. Some insist on sending pdf files, and have to be informed politely that we may not be equipped to transform these. Some may have adapted the style sheet to their own format, forgetting that we might in turn need to adapt the style sheet to suit our printer. Some still produce overlong texts, and have to be reminded that size adds to cost. Many will have complex diagrams and space-consuming image files which do not always transfer easily between systems. Our two students worked solidly on the files, updating the style sheets until the printer was satisfied and a print-ready pdf file could be prepared. This quite literally means sleepless nights, as the printer cannot and will not wait.

***Drawing up the programme***

Whilst all this is going on, the pre-

programme is being drawn up and circulated electronically. This too is no easy task, as managing parallel sessions must be done in such a way that people can easily change rooms whilst ensuring that thematic areas do not clash. Facilities and potential numbers also have to be taken into account. Not all rooms are equally well equipped, some papers will attract more audiences than others and therefore need a bigger room. Then come the cancellations, inevitable with over a hundred speakers. Added to this will be those who cannot arrive on a given day and need to change time slot, or who may have arrived but wish to listen to someone who is speaking when they are. Sometimes individual needs can be accommodated, but not always, as this is a very delicate balancing act.

The point here is not to shoot the piano player, your unpaid and overstressed organiser is juggling with a multitude of problems, and yours is but one of them.

One of the problems with which your happy organiser is trying to cope is the chairing of the individual sessions. Choosing a chair means finding someone who is knowledgeable on the subject area, who can listen and not intervene unless needed, and who can impose discipline when either the speaker or the audience get carried away. Being invited to chair a session is both an honour and a burden. Accepting the honour of a chair means reading the texts beforehand and preparing questions. No paper must go without at least one question, and often this first question will set off a discussion that the chair must then bring to a close when the time runs out. Timing is essential if people are to be able to change rooms without disturbing a paper that has already started. The chair is also stuck for at least one session unable to go and listen to other papers that might be of interest. Of course they get to hear the papers in their session, but they are never really relaxed as they are also note taking and keeping an eye on the clock. Chairs are precious volunteers.

**The Congress**

The last minute preparations are traumatic. Not only are you wondering what you have forgotten, but there are also practical aspects like preparing the congress bags. The proceedings will have to go in, so will the tourist publicity and other goodies. You know there will be a rush on the day so the bags must be distributed in alphabetical order. All this takes time. The congress starts on Tuesday, but you can expect visitors on Monday who would like to have their bag immediately and cannot

understand why it is not possible and why you may not have time to chat. You keep a smile and carry on rushing.

The big day arrives. What can go wrong? Plenty, and mostly the unexpected.

In Lorient, we did not plan on the storms, nor the power cut that followed, nor for that matter getting locked out on Saturday morning because the security man had overslept. I am used to forcing the doors of the university, my setting off the alarms does add to the early morning atmosphere, but it does not do good for my nerves. Throughout, the team kept its good humour and the participants put up with the minor, and some major, inconveniences.

Day to day management requires a good team; keen student helpers and wonderful staff do help greatly. In Lorient we had both. There are a myriad of problems that the staff will have to deal with, and provided they can do it with a smile all goes well. People may fail to have booked a hotel room, they may have a car accident and need an interpreter, health problems, again requiring an interpreter, clashes may occur which require oil on troubled waters. All of these can happen and must be dealt with. None of these can be really planned for, but if the team is there an answer will be found.

Neither the organiser nor the team can be said to “enjoy” the congress in the same way as the other participants. They never stand still, they rarely finish on time, they never get to listen to a paper all the way through. They must be everywhere at the same time. Thank heavens for mobile phones. And yet, the congress is the climax of two years hard work, so with the adrenaline running high their enjoyment will be there. There is nothing quite as thrilling as the buzz of conversation. In July 2004, from Tuesday to Saturday, our faculty buzzed and everyone could feel the satisfaction. Conference organisers and their team are enablers, and enabling is exciting.

Come Saturday lunchtime the pressure should begin to drop. Saturday afternoon is for excursions, and if the planning has been done the coaches and guides will be there and a new holiday atmosphere will reign. The team can then relax... until Monday morning when the tidying, paying bills, sorting out cancellations et cetera begins.

### Financial aspects

Now that we have looked at the organisational problems and their happy outcome, we need to look at the financial side of things. Congresses require time, and time may be money, but other factors

also have their costs.

### *Running a congress ain't cheap*

In the introduction I said that it might seem natural that the task of congress organisation fall to an academic. This is of course not really so. There are many large conventions, much larger and more expensive, but less friendly, than EURALEX that are organised by professional bodies and set up by professional organisers. So why go to an amateur?

The answer is, of course, cost.

Many see EURALEX as an expensive congress. Compared to some it is, compared to others it is not. If the money is coming from your pocket attending a congress is a pricey thing, especially once you add in the cost of travel and accommodation. On the other hand, food is included and you walk away with a couple of volumes of proceedings that reflect what is best in lexicography at the time. The cost aspect is also a cultural one. In France we try to keep our meetings cheap as we get little or nothing from our universities to help with conference attendance, students may get a grant, but lecturing staff do not, so that an active researcher is going to be heavily out of pocket. The northern hemisphere tends to have higher overheads so relatively high fees are not surprising, it may be that laboratories also defray some of the costs involved.

Keeping costs very low works for small events, as grants will cover the basic costs, but as soon as an event goes beyond a critical size, costs inevitably rocket. Whilst not being of the size of vast impersonal conventions, EURALEX congresses do bring together an average 300 participants, which means that some sort of infrastructure is essential. This means that relatively high fees are requested. However, I hold that EURALEX congresses do offer tremendous value for money. Some professional help may be called in, but the vast majority of the workload is undertaken by people working for free. To explain the cost factors involved I shall outline the main sources of income and outgoings.

#### • Income

#### *Fee structure*

Fee structure must take into account the ability of people to pay, which is why we have a variety of fees and deadlines. In building a fee structure a number of factors have to be taken into account: job status, geographical origin, membership and date of payment.

### **Les Journées Allemandes des Dictionnaires Klingenberg am Main**

‘Les Journées allemandes des dictionnaires’ is a new lexicography conference devoted to French dictionaries taking place in Klingenberg am Main, Germany. It is organized by the Institut für Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft of the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nürnberg and is coordinated by Michaela Heinz.

The first meeting was held on 25-27 June 2004 with the theme **Entre définition et citation – l'exemple** featuring the lexicographic example in contemporary French dictionaries as a multiform and plurifunctional lexicographic unit which can be addressed to all types of users for different purposes in monolingual and bilingual dictionary contexts.

The event gathered some sixty participants with papers from Josette Rey-Debove, Bénédicte Gaillard, Jean Pruvost, Louis Mercier, Pierre Rézeau, André Thibault, Michel Francard, Pierre Corbin, Alise Lehmann, Michèle Fourment, Martine Coutier, Christiane Tetet, Peter Blumenthal, Franz Josef Hausmann and Michaela Heinz. The proceedings will be published by Max Niemeyer Verlag.

The second conference will be held on 7-9 July 2006 with the theme **Le Dictionnaire Maître du Langue: lexicographie et didactique** and be dedicated to the memory of Josette Rey-Debove.

It will highlight the didactic aspects of French

▶ dictionaries – their presentation, analysis and critique, and cover monolingual, bilingual and semi-bilingual learner's dictionaries, for native French speakers and for learners of French as a foreign language, for children, elementary French, chrestolexicography, the didactic value of illustrations in dictionaries, dictionaries and grammar, and didactic aspects in big dictionaries.

<http://www.ias.uni-erlangen.de/klingenberg2006> (from August 2005)

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The first, job status, is relatively straightforward as we differentiate between students and non-students. It is obvious that students have a lower income than the fully employed; they are also the lifeblood of the discipline as they represent new ideas and future full members of the association. There is thus a much lower fee in this case. However, increasingly, institutions will only pay a fee if a communication is accepted. This is particularly problematic as the doctoral student gets no preferential treatment in the review process and is up against established researchers in the selection process. This is another reason why student fees must be kept low so as to allow self-financing students to attend, and also why we set up a special pre-congress work-in-progress session at EURALEX 2004 so that students would have a greater chance of getting a paper accepted.

Geographical origin is slightly more complex. Originally this was put in to assist with people coming from behind the iron curtain, or to economies that were gradually adapting to the western European economy. In this case we would offer a low fee, and in many cases participants would be assisted with a grant from the Hornby Trust. This low fee category only concerned European countries, as we are a European association, and is also one that is being phased out as the candidate countries are now full members of the EU.

Membership is the third factor. There is no point in having an association if everyone, members and non-members pay the same fees. Lower fees are a privilege of membership and may even incite some to join. There is more to EURALEX than just the congresses and the more we are, the more we can do to promote all aspects of our discipline.

The final factor is one of time, and that is one that many have trouble understanding. Congress organisation costs, EURALEX does have seed money to help get congress organisation going, but many outlays come before the event, so money must come in from somewhere. In addition, the organiser has to have an idea as to numbers involved. Lunches and receptions are included in the fee, so the restaurant must have advance notice. Food wastage increases costs, and in a hungry world is also immoral. The only way of covering initial costs and calculating numbers is to give a variable fee structure based on date of payment.

#### **Sponsors and grants**

Fees may seem high, but they do not cover overheads. Other sources of financing are required. A considerable amount of time

can go into this. National, regional and local authorities may help, either in cash or in kind. Conference bags and contents have a cost, so when someone gives them, it helps greatly. The EU may be a source of funding, but we found that the weight of bureaucracy was enormous and then we got a refusal. So much wasted time for no result is depressing, but then a sponsor comes along.

Some give for general funds, others for more precise areas. We were extremely lucky to have the assistance of at least one major sponsor. The money was important, and their presence throughout the week also added to the event. The great generosity of the Hornby Trust enables many from central and eastern Europe to attend; they also covered the costs of the Hornby lecture, a fitting tribute to a man who did so much for lexicography. As we move around Europe, the local dictionary houses will come forward to help. Le Robert provided the CD-ROM dictionary that was in the Lorient congress bag, Larousse paid for the champagne aperitif at the gala dinner. These are all things that would otherwise have to come out of general funds.

Sponsorship also comes in through the exhibition, the fees are ridiculously low for the service provided. During a whole week, some 300 people representing all aspects of the lexicographical world will see a stand. This is the time to compare what other companies are doing, to show off products, and make contacts. Exhibitors may even find new staff.

This is what the exhibitor gets, but sponsorship is a two-way thing. EURALEX congresses are run by academics who are training the next generation of lexicographers, the EURALEX association is promoting good lexicographical practice and bringing awareness of dictionaries to a wider public. Sponsorship is thus putting back a little of what the publishing industry takes back. Coming forward spontaneously, as our sponsors did, saves time for the organisers and clearly shows a commitment to the event, and to the discipline itself.

#### ● **Outgoings**

##### *Staff*

Very many hours of unpaid labour go into organising a congress, but inevitably some paid staff are necessary. Everything depends on the individual institution, some may charge for secretarial assistance, others not. If the assistance is not available, outside staff will have to be brought in.

In Lorient, we are a young dynamic

university which is keen to organise things and has a staff that is keen to participate. This is a privilege for an organiser.

Staff are needed both during and before an event. In our case we chose to employ students from the applied languages department who would help with organisational tasks as part of their mandatory work placement. This meant that I could rely on students who were not only motivated, but had good language and organisational skills.

The permanent staff took on the extra workload as part of their work, but put in much more time than they were ever paid for. In our faculty we have a research centre with secretarial staff who are there to help manage research projects and meetings. Throughout the week Valerie Sauvaire and Danielle Guyomard were always available, as they were during preparatory meetings, weekends and evenings included. To these I must add the many other members of university staff who were around to help, up front and behind the scenes. In our case a special mention must be made of co-organiser Sandra Vessier. She is not an academic, her job is international relations, but she was with us from the outset facilitating and organising. This is a privileged situation, and one which cannot be counted on everywhere, for us it meant major budget savings.

#### **Premises**

Again the university provided these for free, and even arranged for a complete refurbishing of the audio-visual material in the amphitheatres. Hiring premises can be a very expensive, but necessary option. We had originally budgeted for hiring a hall for the welcome session, it would have greatly added to costs.

#### **Catering costs**

EURALEX 2004 took place after the closure of the university restaurant for the summer. However, the staff came back and produced excellent food with a very friendly service. Catering is an important extra cost, but not one where you can cut corners as a congress marches on its stomach, important business takes place during the coffee breaks and at lunch.

#### **Publication**

Although we managed to keep most of our costs under control, publication costs are a very big outlay. Programmes and proceedings can only be printed at the very last minute, this means respecting very tight schedules and finding a printer who would respect them too.

Traditionally the EURALEX proceedings are always in the conference

bag. This means that from receipt of final copy to printing there is only a matter of weeks. Few university printing facilities can cope with the number of copies to be produced in such a short space of time and to a high standard. It is thus necessary to use an outside contractor, and as it will be a one-off contract you cannot expect favours. In our case the tough bargaining was carried out by our communications department, but the price was still high.

#### **Congress organisation: the academic's privilege**

By way of conclusion I shall revisit the title. Burden? In some ways, yes, as it generates a tremendous amount of work that cuts into a busy teaching schedule and virtually writes off any research activity. Privilege? Indeed. Research is nothing if not done within a community. EURALEX is more than just a special interest group. Getting involved leads to meetings with remarkable people, it brings challenges, and meeting challenges is what carries us forward. Organising a congress is indeed a privilege.

This paper only touches the tip of a lexicographical iceberg in terms of the time taken to organise an event. The time it took me to type up these notes is nothing compared to the time spent preparing the congress. The workload is tremendous, but the satisfaction great. I did not hear any papers, I always had something to do, but I could feel the exchange of debate, the constant buzz of debate. The staff at UBS enjoyed the week, the students enjoyed it. But we would not tackle anything so big for a while yet.

One of the great privileges of an organiser is to hand on the flame to someone else. I have handed onto Carla Marella who will be bringing us TurinLEX in 2006. She has now had a busy year, she has a busier one ahead. The result will be a very different event from EURALEX 2004, which was different from Copenhagen, from Stuttgart, from Liège, from all the other congresses. I shall have the advantage of being just an ordinary participant, but one who knows what it takes to make a congress work, and why it is that EURALEX is such a successful organisation.



The ancient university courtyard (seventeenth century) of Università degli Studi di Torino where the opening ceremony of TurinLEX 2006 will be held

### **EURALEX International Congresses**

- I** Exeter, UK 1983
- II** Zurich, Switzerland 1986
- III** Budapest, Hungary 1988
- IV** Benalmádena (Malaga), Spain 1990
- V** Tampere, Finland 1992
- VI** Amsterdam, The Netherlands 1994
- VII** Gotebörg, Sweden 1996
- VIII** Liège, Belgium 1998
- IX** Stuttgart, Germany 2000
- X** Copenhagen, Denmark 2002
- XI** Lorient, France 2004
- XII** Turin, Italy 2006

