Report on the 2017 LSA Summer Linguistic Institute

The 2017 LSA Summer Linguistic Institute took place from July 5th to August 1st at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. The theme of the 2017 Institute was “Language across space and time.” There were over four hundred total participants from more than 30 different countries, including 24 fellowship recipients. The Institute included 75 courses, 12 conferences and workshops, 8 public lectures, 6 professional development symposia, and numerous social events.

The named professors for the Institute were Joan Bybee (University of New Mexico, Collitz Professor), Penelope Eckert (Stanford University, Sapir Professor), Lenore Grenoble (University of Chicago, Hale Professor), and Julia Hirschberg (Columbia University, Fillmore Professor). In addition to four lectures by the named professors, there were three additional Forum Lectures given by Mark Steedman (University of Edinburgh), Michel DeGraff (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Robin Queen (University of Michigan). In addition, the American Dialect Society Professor, Kirk Hazen (University of West Virginia) gave a public lecture. The Institute also sponsored a film series highlighting work from the North Carolina Life and Language Project, including a presentation of the new film, Talking Black in America, followed by a discussion of the film with Walt Wolfram.

Classes were held for four weeks, with 110 minute sessions twice a week either on Monday-Thursday or Tuesday-Friday schedule. Workshops, conferences and other activities were held on Wednesdays and weekends. The course offerings included introductory courses in a number of subfields, including Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics, Computational Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Forensic Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, Linguistic Anthropology, Neurolinguistics, Philosophy of Language, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, and Typology. There were also “Structure of X” courses focusing on Chatino, Hawaiian, Hmong-Mien Languages, Muskogean Languages, Khoisan Languages, and North Atlantic Languages. There were also several courses introducing specific methodologies, including quantitative methods for linguists, Praat scripting, using R, eye-tracking, and the use of Geographic Information Systems.

Each of the Sundays was used to host a poster session using the digital poster facilities made available to us. These sessions were extremely well attended and became a feature of a promotional video that was created: https://vimeo.com/227762618/1e5314313a

During the Institute multiple conferences and workshops were held in the facility used for teaching and public lectures. These included the HPSG annual conference and the first meeting of the Historical Sociolinguistics conference. Several of the workshops and courses will have a second life at the 2018 LSA annual meeting in Salt Lake City as mini-courses, for example GIS for linguistic research.

In addition to academic pursuits, there were excursions to the Red River Gorge and Mammoth Cave, a bicycle tour of Lexington public art, and daily linguistic happy hours at the University of Kentucky Faculty Club.