



Words in the World Summer 2021 Newsletter

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1. MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you all are keeping well and have experienced enjoyable summer months. Here in Canada, the University fall term will start in just a few weeks and we are hoping for a return that is both safe and brings with it increased opportunity for academic interaction and the development of new perspectives and research opportunities.

Within the Words in the World Partnership community, there are a number of exciting developments that we are looking forward to in the fall. We will resume our series of Open Office Hours in September and we will be holding the second online Words in the World International Conference. As is noted in this Newsletter, the deadline for abstract submission is September 10. I warmly invite you to encourage trainees within your institutions to submit an abstract so that they can share their developing work at the online conference.

In the fall, expect to hear more about other new, exciting initiatives that will build bridges across domains of research and create new opportunities for collaboration. Personally, I have found the breadth and depth of knowledge within our network to be extraordinarily valuable and I hope you will find the same.

I wish you a wonderful fall 2021 and look forward to seeing you soon.

With very best wishes,

Gary Libben

2. UPCOMING EVENTS & INITIATIVES

Words in the World International Conference 2021 – Announcement & Call for Abstracts

We are excited to announce the second edition of the Words in the World International Conference (WOW2021), which will be held online from November 26-27, 2021. In the spirit of the first WOW Conference held in 2020, this virtual gathering offers a venue for the communication of ideas, intellectual exchange, and networking for trainees. The conference brings together psycholinguistic, neurolinguistic, and computational research on the representation and processing of words in the mind/brain. We encourage students and postdoctoral fellows from all over the world to present their in-progress or completed work at this conference and engage in conversations with their colleagues on academic and non-academic topics.

International Conference on the Mental Lexicon – October 2022

We are pleased to announce that the next International Conference on the Mental Lexicon has been rescheduled for October 11 – 14 in 2022. The conference will be held at the Queen's Landing Hotel in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada. The opening reception will be held on the evening of October 11, with the main conference beginning at 9:00am EST on Wednesday, October 12 and ending in the afternoon of Friday, October 14.

3. WoW NEWS & RESEARCH UPDATES

IBM Europe Human Centric Innovations Centre (Paris-France) & WoW Researchers Collaborate on Speech Assistive Technologies

Words in the World researchers at McGill and the University of Montreal (Co-Applicants Eva Kehayia and Gonia Jarema, Collaborator Guylaine Le Dorze, Postdoctoral Researcher Nancy Azevedo) and [IBM Europe Human Centric Innovations Center](#) in Paris, France are working together on a [Mitacs Accelerate](#) funded project to develop and test a prototype of an innovative intelligent communication application. This application will target word finding difficulties in real time and in the real world by “listening” to the user while they are speaking (using speech recognition) and artificial intelligence (AI) to predict and suggest words that fit the person’s situation and conversational context. The research team is collaborating with [AphasiaBank](#) using their corpus of aphasic and non-aphasic speech while also collecting a corpus in the Montreal area. In parallel, the IBM HCI team is developing the machine learning algorithms that will power the prototype and will use speech data to train these algorithms in an iterative manner. Once a working prototype of the application is created, the next step will be to: (1) test and further personalize it, and (2) evaluate it in Montreal with a group of people with aphasia, caregivers/family members, and speech-language pathologists.

Deliverables from this intersectoral co-creation project will benefit the lives of individuals

living with word finding difficulties, including those living with aphasia following stroke or those experiencing cognitive decline due to Alzheimer's disease.

WoW Co-Applicant Dr. Victor Kuperman Presents to Canadian House of Commons Committee

On June 3, 2021, Words in the Word Co-Applicant, Victor Kuperman was invited to present to the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and The Status of Persons with Disabilities. Dr. Kuperman presented his research on the psychological and emotional well-being of seniors and the public discourse regarding seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic. He explained that this can be studied using language data from media and social media, stories written by seniors, and messaging by federal and provincial authorities. Dr. Kuperman also addressed the issue of ageism, which has perhaps been increased by the greater vulnerability that seniors show to COVID-19. Among his recommendations to the Committee were support for further development of inter-generational social engagement programs, education in digital literacy for seniors, and educational and public awareness programs about aging and its components. He also stated that, instead of emphasizing age as a critical group variable, public messaging should target socioeconomic or health-related characteristics of individuals.

A full transcript of Dr. Kuperman's presentation and the following discussion can be found here: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/HUMA/meeting-38/evidence#Int-11363928>

WritLarge Update

In our summer 2020 newsletter, we announced the McMaster Reading Lab's launch of the WritLarge app (<https://akkyro.shinyapps.io/writlarge/>), designed to facilitate social mobility and relieve social isolation of older individuals through story-telling, writing, and sharing. Now, WritLarge is in the news again, this time as part of a collaboration between high school students and local senior citizens in Spokane, Washington. Read more about this community initiative at this link: <https://www.inlander.com/spokane/new-program-pairs-spokane-teens-and-senior-citizens-to-bridge-the-virtual-generation-gap-through-storytelling/Content?oid=21854488>

STEP 2021 Update and Recorded Talks

The 2021 Spring Training in Experimental Psycholinguistics was held virtually for the first time this year and was a great success. Thank you to all of the participants who attended, to the course instructors for delivering such high quality materials, and thank you to the organizers and volunteers for making it happen. You can request access to some of the invited talks and information sessions from STEP at this link: <https://ccp.artsrn.ualberta.ca/portfolio/step/>

4. IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: UPDATED WoW VIDEO LIBRARY

Season 2 of Words in the World Open Office Hours

Thank you to everyone who has joined us for Season 2 of Open Office Hours: Building Bridges. We have enjoyed hosting experts from outside of the academic research stream and are very pleased with the participation so far. All of our Open Office Hours are available on our website at <http://wordsintheworld.ca/home/open-office-hours/> and on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLT2RXzRYHQHp-fHh7Go39B6D5ogs324oy>. Open Office Hours are on pause for the Summer months, but keep an eye out for email updates from us.

If you're not on the mailing list and would like to be, please let us know at this link: <http://wordsintheworld.ca/home/open-office-hours/sign-up-for-open-office-hours/>. If there are topics or hosts that you would like to see on the 2021 Open Office Hours schedule, drop a note in our suggestion box at <http://wordsintheworld.ca/home/open-office-hours/suggestion-box/>.

Words in the World Conversations

This series of video interviews begins with Psycholinguists across the Words in the World network. The first three interviews are with Prof. Wolfgang Dressler (Professor Emeritus, University of Vienna), Dr. Loraine Obler (Distinguished Professor, City University of New York), and Dr. Mark Aronoff (Distinguished Professor, Stony Brook University). These video interviews can be found on the Words in the World website at <http://wordsintheworld.ca/research/videos/>.