



The American Dialect Society seeks a new Executive Director

February 12, 2023

The American Dialect Society (ADS) invites applications from suitably qualified scholars for the position of **Executive Director**. This person is the CEO of the Society, overseeing its activities to make sure they are undertaken by qualified members at a high level of competence, and that problems and opportunities are promptly and properly addressed.

This is the highest-ranking management post in the ADS. The successful candidate will be expected to function as the leader of the society and advisor to the ADS Executive Council and its executive committee (consisting of President, Vice President, and Executive Director).

The Executive Director is responsible for the following, but should be good at recognizing talent in order to delegate authority. It is too much for the Executive Director to try to do everything.

The ADS, established in 1889, is dedicated to the study of the English language in North America, and of other languages, or dialects of other languages, influencing it or influenced by it. Membership in the society includes academics and amateurs, professors and students, professionals and dilettantes, teachers and writers, undergraduates and graduates. Anyone can join the society.

There a number of essential functions required of the Executive Director:

Personnel

The most basic function of the Executive Director, that underlies all the others, is to support the Nominating Committee and other relevant committees, to do whatever possible to get the best individuals in important positions.

1. **Annual Meeting:** Working with **the convention manager** of our host, the Linguistic Society of America, to arrange appropriate accommodations at the Annual Meeting each January. This includes reaching agreement on **meeting rooms**, including an extra large venue for the Friday evening Words of the Year vote; arranging with hotel food and beverage services for the **luncheon** Saturday. Also, supporting the program chair to announce a call for papers; to see that program is chosen on time and form letters are ready to notify applicants; and to provide the finished program to the LSA convention manager in time to be included in meeting handbook. (Fortunately the program chair, serving a two-year term, can get assistance and advice from the previous chair. That takes much of the burden off the Executive Director.)

2. **Publications:** Supporting our publisher (currently Duke University Press) and the editors of American Speech and PADS (separate publications, but both published by Duke) to make sure the issues of each are on time and of good quality. Working with Duke University Press when it is time to change editors.

3. **Non-profit status and finances:** Making sure that IRS Form 990, with attachments, is promptly filed with the IRS each year, to maintain our non-profit status so that gifts to the Society will be tax deductible. Currently, the ADS Treasurer handles the filling out of tax forms. Should that no longer be the case, it is recommended that the Director hire a tax preparer to fulfill this function.

The Executive Director keeps control over the Society's funds, collecting about \$20,000 a year from Duke University Press, holding six figures for the Linguistic Atlas work (managed by Bill Kretzschmar), paying for the Director's travel as needed, paying subsidies for the events of the annual meeting, and issuing various grants as authorized by the Executive Council.

4. **Membership:** Keeping records of dues payments and members' addresses. Thirty years ago this work involved updating addresses, collecting dues, and preparing mailing labels. Now, thankfully, all this is done by Duke University Press, which sends the Director an updated membership list each month.

5. **American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS).** Since 1962, when Fred Cassidy succeeded in achieving membership, ADS has been a full member of the American Council of Learned Societies, a consortium now of about 75 societies in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Twice a year the executive officers meet: in November, where the officers present themselves to convention and visitors' bureaus as meeting planners (which most of them truly are), and get tours of the convention city, including impressive meals and cultural monuments, while also having sessions on practicalities of managing a society as well as sessions on the state of the Humanities.

In late April or early May, ACLS has its official annual meeting, with the societies' executives but also one delegate from each society. We are also allowed to bring our president. At the spring meeting program sessions will focus more on the state of the Humanities, but the executive officers have their own meeting too.

The November meeting does not cost anything, because we are guests of the local Convention and Visitor's Bureau. ACLS pays the full way for our delegate in the spring, and half the travel costs for the Director, while we have to pay the full bill for our president, if attending. It is a bargain. Moreover, you do not have to wait till April or November to ask a question of someone you have gotten to know at meetings. The ACLS CEO's have an email discussion list that is busy year round.

This is perhaps the most enjoyable perk the chief executive gets. Especially in the first few years on the job, the advice a new CEO gets is invaluable, which you acquire just by asking during the numerous coffee breaks and social events.

Observation by former Executive Secretary Allan Metcalf: "Not everybody cares for this kind of job, to be sure, or wants to give up two weekends a year to meet fascinating colleagues in related

fields. That is fine, but I would say anyone with that attitude is best suited to do something other than manage a learned society.”

Cooperation with other groups and organizations: The Executive Director maintains good relationships with New Ways of Analyzing Variation (NWAV), the Canadian Variation and Change Workshop (CVC), The Dictionary Society, the Name Society and the Linguistic Society of America (LSA). Additional relationship could be made as necessary or desired. Currently, the most frequent interaction is with LSA.

Optional Activities

Membership drives: From time to time the Society has enlisted members and gotten some outside help to try to increase membership. Recently the only effort has been occasional help from Duke University Press, with letters to current members along with dues notices, encouraging faculty to sponsor student memberships. Much more could be done.

Fund Raising: To succeed, it ought to have a specific goal rather than simply a preference for money. For example, ADS is currently beginning to diversify donors’ abilities to direct their donations (e.g., student lunch at the annual meeting.)

Publicity: The annual vote on Words of the Year (WOTY) draws a big crowd (several hundred) at LSA and usually attracts interested reporters. All you have to do is refer any such inquirers to the New Words chair, currently Ben Zimmer, and other veterans of the big show. Or just stand back and let the publicity follow naturally.

Preferred Qualifications:

1. A sound university education and post-doctoral working experience in a reputable research and/or research training environment
2. A good knowledge of ADS, its societal mandate and programme
3. Demonstrable ability to mobilise and promote the work of scholars working in the study of North American dialects
4. Familiarity with ADS research and recognized by the ADS research community
5. A proven track record of academic administration
6. A strong personal track-record of research and engagement with the society

Emolument:

This is a volunteer position. However, it includes travel to all ADS meetings and some related meetings; office expenses; occasional clerical assistance if needed, and other expenses, so the home institution does not need to provide support (although it will be gratefully received). This is a matter to negotiate at the time of appointment.

Term of service:

It is important to have regular turnover of officers in a society, to give everyone a chance. Changing executives frequently, however, is not. Therefore the successful candidate should expect to be happy to stay in office for 5 years, with renewal likely.

Additional Information

More information about ADS can be found on the ADS website at:
<https://www.americandialect.org/>

How to Apply:

All applicants wishing to be considered for this position are required to supply the following documents:

1. A cover letter;
2. A detailed CV describing the candidate's professional experience;
3. The names of three references willing to supply letters of support upon request

The application letters and other supporting documents of candidates should be sent to **Kate Remlinger**, President of the American Dialect Society at remlink@gvsu.edu.]Reference letters in support of candidates must be sent by the referees themselves directly.

Closing Date:

All applications must be received by **May 15th, 2023**. Interviews with the Search Committee will be held by Zoom. Position begins January, 2024 after the annual meeting, but communication before then with current Executive Director is expected and encouraged. She will also be available for consultation once the new director has started.