



## The American Dialect Society seeks a new Executive Secretary

December 5, 2017

The American Dialect Society (ADS) invites applications from suitably qualified senior scholars for the position of **Executive Secretary**. 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.

*The current Executive Secretary Allan Metcalf explains: “I’ve been your Secretary for a good 36 years now, a little more than a third of a century; but while indeed the 36 years have been good, with everything pretty well in order, this is a good time for me to step back and pass the baton.”*

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 Secretary).

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

### **Personnel**

The most basic function of the Executive Secretary, that underlies all the others, is to care for the members; to do whatever possible to get the best individuals in important positions, and occasionally to deflect those who might not do so well. This includes Committees, Council, Editorships, Meeting Organizers, etc. The Executive Secretary is not a dictator, but is sanctioned to provide wise counsel to the Nominating Committee and President and others.

1. **Annual Meeting:** Working with **the convention manager** (currently David Robinson) 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 **reception** after WOTY and the **luncheon** Saturday. Also, working with program chair to announce a call for papers; to provide LSA with a blank schedule of ADS meetings by midsummer, and then working with ADS program chair to see that program is chosen on time and form letters are ready to notify applicants; and providing 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 Secretary.)

2. **Publications:** Working with 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. The documentation is complicated but not impossible. Still, it was a relief about a decade ago when the Executive Secretary turned this job over to an accountant, who recently charged \$750 for the service.

The Executive Secretary 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 Secretary's travel as needed, paying about \$5000 in subsidies for the events of the annual meeting, issuing various grants as authorized by the Executive Council, and reporting to the Council on finances.

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 Secretary 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. Our current delegate is Luanne von Schneidemesser. We are also allowed to bring our president, and for the past two years we have done so. 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 secretary, while we have to pay the full bill for our president. 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.

*Allan's personal observation:* "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 Secretary 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.

### **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.

When the current secretary first took office, the Executive Council was concerned that the Society would be unable to continue to exist with about 300 members. Changing the name of the Society was seriously considered. Gradually it became evident that the Society was in good financial shape, thanks to a generous publishing arrangement with Duke University Press; and more members proposed papers than there was room in the Annual Meeting schedule. The society's journal, *American Speech*, was generally well-provided with manuscripts too. So the need for membership drives gradually faded. However that doesn't mean it could not be tried again.

**Fundraising:** This has not been tried in a while because finances have been ample. However, an effort could be undertaken. To succeed, it ought to have a specific goal rather than simply a preference for money. For example, the American Dialect Society could seek a few million to build a national headquarters and dialect museum, maybe with bronzed oversized copies of DARE as statuary on the lawn.

**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 answer their calls, handing off 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 at least ten years of 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. Experience working with and publications on North American dialects
6. A proven track record of academic administration
7. 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; clerical assistance, 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 **five 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 **Sali A. Tagliamonte**, President of the American Dialect Society at [sali.tagliamonte@utoronto.ca](mailto:sali.tagliamonte@utoronto.ca). The other members of the Search Committee include past presidents **Professor Robert Bayley** and **Professor Bill Kretzschmar**. Reference letters in support of candidates must be sent by the referees themselves directly.

**Closing Date:**

All applications must be received by **December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017**. Interviews with the Search Committee will be held during the ADS annual meeting in Salt Lake City, USA, January 4-7, 2018.