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## Head of Department's Preface

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## Head of Department's Preface

by Lisa Selkirk

This UMOP volume is part of the celebration of the UMass Linguistics Department's 25th Anniversary and Reunion. The volume will serve as a lasting souvenir for those who were able to attend the events in Amherst in September 1998, as a meaningful window on the celebration for those who couldn't be there, and as a collection of fine scholarly work from the extended UMass community.

The anniversary-cum-reunion events brought together a large number of us — there were more than 120 people at the celebratory dinner in Memorial Hall. Among the people present was Steve Lapointe. I was fortunate to have a good long conversation with him, and found him better than I had ever seen him — he was happy with his intellectual life, with his departmental life (he was head of the UC Davis Linguistics Department), with his family. It was a shock to all of us that he was struck down by liver cancer so soon after, and died in January 1999. In his memory and in his honor this volume is dedicated to him.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Department (albeit a bit late — see details in Barbara's historical preface that follows), we wanted to have a reunion where the people who came would have a lot of opportunity to talk with each other and where those who chose to would also have the chance to present their scholarly work. The reunion began with an informal lunch on Saturday. It was followed by a leisurely poster session in the Student Union Ballroom which lasted for much of the afternoon. The atmosphere was warm, relaxed and congenial, as people moved slowly from one poster to the next. Everyone seemed to relish this opportunity to talk about current work in linguistics and memories from the past at UMass.

The sitdown dinner Saturday evening in Memorial Hall was a first for the Linguistics Department, where department parties have always been potluck and totally informal. But how else were we to welcome, feed and celebrate the presence there of more than 120 people — former students and families, current students, former faculty, current faculty, associated faculty from other departments at UMass, visitors to the department. It seemed to be the sort of event that everyone was looking for.

On Sunday morning a bagel brunch on the picnic grounds of Groff Park in South Amherst was followed by a steamy soccer game. The players were mostly current students, who

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do this sort of thing regularly, though the finale was probably unique. Many players ended up cooling off in the adjacent Fort River, an event which is recorded for posterity (along with the earlier events of the weekend) by the camera of Yasuaki Abe, who has posted the pictures for all to see on his Web site.

This report, then, puts a little bit into context the papers that follow in this volume. The meals, the socializing and the presentation of work at the poster session were all of a piece. It was a memorable reunion, and I extend my thanks on the behalf of everyone to all of those who were able to attend, and who contributed to this volume.

The editors of this volume have asked me — as the current head of the department — to say something about the state of the department now and about where we are headed in the future. These are not things that are quickly said, and I was a bit daunted by having to write about these issues for the preface until I recalled that all of this was already said, and relatively concisely, in a document produced last fall, a couple of months after the reunion. In consultation with the rest of the faculty I put together a document whose purpose was to describe the department and where it was going to nonlinguists (in particular, administrators) within UMass and beyond. I think this document will be of interest to the readers of this volume, and so I have decided to include it as an appendix of sorts to this preface.

I have to warn you that this document is already out of date. When it was written we did not yet know who the new junior faculty appointments in semantics and phonology would be. I am happy to report now that, starting in Fall 1999, Lisa Matthewson (Ph.D., University of British Columbia), will be our new semanticist and Joe Pater (Ph.D., McGill University) our new phonologist. Besides their excellence in the formal theoretical realm, they bring really new additional strengths — Lisa is interested in crosslinguistic semantics, especially of little-described languages, and in particular of Salish; Joe is interested both in the acquisition of phonology and in second language acquisition.

There is another important respect in which the appended document is out of date. The document makes a strong appeal for increase in the funding for graduate students in the UMass Ph.D program. I am happy to report that we have made some real progress on this front in the last year. Starting this Fall we are able to offer an 11-month stipend of \$13,500 to incoming students, and we anticipate as well being able to increase somewhat the number of students in our incoming class. So the graduate program is indeed doing well. We urge you to continue sending us excellent students, and we look forward to reunions in the future with as distinguished an array of new former students as we have today.

Amherst, July 1999