

THE EDITOR'S DEPARTMENT

Fulfilling a promise

In my first Editor's Department (in *Language* 78.1.1–2, 2002), I noted (with some pride) that The Ohio State University (OSU) had been involved in various ways in the early days of the Linguistic Society of America and of *Language* itself. At the time, I promised to explore resources here at OSU, such as the University Archives, to determine what information might be gleaned about OSU's role in that formative period for our society. The piece that follows—departing somewhat from my usual format for this column in being coauthored (with one of *Language*'s editorial assistants)—presents some preliminary results of this exploration, examining the early leaders and members of the LSA from the perspective of the interconnections and likely interactions among them, their 'networking' as it were, not only the figures here at OSU but to some extent those elsewhere as well. It thus provides what might (perhaps generously) be termed a 'micro-social-history' of the people and places involved in this period.

Brian D. Joseph
Columbus, Ohio
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**The Ohio State University and Columbus and the foundations of the
Linguistic Society of America***

BRIAN D. JOSEPH
The Ohio State University

HOPE C. DAWSON
The Ohio State University

We take as our starting point an observation from Leonard Bloomfield's retrospective on two decades of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA): 'Only those who, before the year 1925, worked in almost complete isolation can appreciate the change that came about with the existence of the Linguistic society' (Bloomfield 1946:2). Bloomfield was, of course, in a good position to offer such an assessment, as he was involved in the formulation and circulation of the call for the formation of the society. It was not just Bloomfield, in fact, but a number of scholars at a variety of institutions who were involved, including other scholars at his own, The Ohio State University. We attempt in what follows to give a sense of how that isolation was overcome in the years leading up to the founding of the LSA, with our focus being on contributions made by individuals in Columbus, Ohio and at The Ohio State University (OSU).

Focusing on OSU and thus Columbus is appropriate (though surely one could examine the emergence of the LSA from the perspective of other cities and other institutions, as our discussion below suggests) because two key people in the founding of the LSA—Leonard Bloomfield and George Melville Bolling—hailed from the Columbus area and were affiliated with OSU. Bloomfield was one of the signers of the call for the formation of a linguistic society (cf. *Language* 1.6–7, 1925),¹ a member of the LSA organizing committee, and the author of 'Why a linguistic society?', the first item published in *Language*. His reply to the titular question is: 'The immediate answer is simple: of course, we seek the possibility of meeting and knowing each other' (Bloom-

* An earlier version of this piece was presented at the annual meeting of the North American Association for the History of the Language Sciences (NAAHoLS) on January 8, 2004, in Boston, MA. We would like to thank the audience there, but especially Mark Amsler, for useful comments on this work.

¹ See Falk 2002 for a corrective to Joseph 2002 regarding Bloomfield's role.