

# Introduction

Volume 8 of the *Annual Review of Linguistics* consists of reviews that were mostly commissioned from 2019 through early 2020, then submitted and edited over the course of 2021. The volume came about during 2 years in which the field of linguistics underwent enormous upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic, societal tensions, and more. The title *Annual Review of Linguistics* suggests an attempt to capture the current state of the field. Right now that seems daunting, because change has come faster than even a relatively nimble and proactive outlet like this one can handle. Nevertheless, we can point to changes that are already underway and changes to look forward to at the *Annual Review of Linguistics*.

The past 2 years saw changes in how we do research, in how we learn, and in how we collaborate. With people unable to come together, and unable to travel, lab research had to either stop or adapt; fieldwork had to stop or go online. Although there were clear negative impacts from the sharp drop in in-person interaction, the dramatic increase in online meetings led to an opening up of talks, classes, workshops, and other meetings. This laid the foundation for new collaborations. At the same time that public health measures were changing the way in which much linguistic research was conducted, we also faced societal upheavals related to misinformation and increased attention to identity, inclusion, and injustice.

Most of the articles in this volume were written against the backdrop of these broader changes in higher education and society. New research will undoubtedly emerge from these changes, and we hope to be able to highlight them in an upcoming volume of the *Annual Review of Linguistics*. But we can already see some research trends in this volume that reflect the field's readiness to take on these topics. Many of this year's articles highlight the benefits of new kinds of data, often dramatically expanded data sets. These include expanded text and speech corpora, large-scale experiments with hundreds or even hundreds of thousands of participants, and machine learning methods applied to large data sets of text or even brain recordings. A number of articles reflect the broadened range of topics now addressed in the realm of linguistic meaning. Many articles cover new ways of studying language learning. Others reflect the benefits of research that covers more diverse languages or modalities. Taken together, we see a field that is equipped to tackle far more complex problems than would have been possible 10 or 20 years ago.

In the context of these changes in our field, and in how we learn and share research, we can report on a number of positive developments at the *Annual Review of Linguistics*.

Like all Annual Reviews (AR) titles, this journal is guided by AR's mission: "Annual Reviews is a nonprofit publisher dedicated to synthesizing and integrating knowledge for the progress of science and the benefit of society."

This mission includes a few key elements. First, AR is a nonprofit that is beholden neither to shareholders nor to a wealthy academic institution. As an independent organization it has to break even. But it has no hidden agenda. Second, AR focuses on a particular step in knowledge dissemination. It is less involved in the initial vetting and validation of new findings, focusing instead on the role of putting the pieces together. Third, AR has a dual mission to serve scientists and the broader public.

The *Annual Review of Linguistics* is a relative newcomer to the AR family of journals, which started 90 years ago. The AR family has been rather successful based on traditional benchmarks. Around half of its 51 journal titles are ranked number 1 or 2 in their field in terms of Journal Impact Factors (Journal Citation Report data). We do not believe that coarse citation measures give a full reflection of a journal's success. But there is little doubt that many of AR's titles are prestigious, influential, and widely read and cited.

The *Annual Review of Linguistics*, launched in 2015, is not yet at the level of some of its siblings, but we are encouraged by the increasing reach of the journal. Readership has increased steadily every year since launch, as have citations. In the most recent Journal Citation Report, the *Annual Review of Linguistics* had an Impact Factor of 3.5, and in Google Scholar's citation report it had an h5 index of 25.<sup>1</sup> We could pick and choose different metrics to make the journal look good. There are many to choose from these days. But a fair summary would be that the *Annual Review of Linguistics*, while not yet a clear leader in the field, counts among the dozen or so most influential journals in the field.

So, what are we doing to serve the field and society even better?

There are two key dimensions. We need to publish the best possible content. And we need to make it accessible to the broadest number of people.

Publishing the best possible scientific content involves finding ideal author–topic combinations and motivating those authors to contribute by maximizing the benefits to them while reducing the barriers to contributing.

The main benefit that we offer to authors is increasing the reach of their work, beyond what they could get from writing a chapter or posting to a preprint archive. The reach is, of course, increased by being part of a journal with a strong reputation for publishing authoritative reviews by leading scholars. Two additional steps make the reach dramatically broader.

First, the reviews have a much broader reach if they are freely accessible. Striking evidence for this comes from an action that AR took at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between March and June of 2020, AR made all of its content freely accessible. This tripled the number of downloads of *Annual Review of Linguistics* articles, almost immediately. The same was true of AR journals more generally: Article downloads increased from roughly 1 million to 3 million per month.

Strikingly, readership did not increase evenly around the world. Proportionately larger increases were seen in countries like India, Turkey, Pakistan, Russia, Indonesia, and Brazil—places where readers have been held back in the past by an inability to access published content.

This activity involving all of AR's journals, with the intention of supporting students and scholars confined to home working, aligned with the results of a pilot project that the organization was

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<sup>1</sup>The standard Journal Citation Report Impact Factor measures the average number of citations per article in a journal, in the 2 years following publication. It focuses on a very short time frame and can be skewed by a small number of highly cited articles. This is poorly suited to publishing practices in linguistics. The Google Scholar h5 index is an alternative citation measure that aims to capture the contribution of more articles to a journal's impact. An h5 index of 25 means that in the past 5 years the journal has published 25 articles that have been cited at least 25 times. This is likely better suited to linguistics.

running. Five AR journals switched to open access in 2020, using a mechanism called Subscribe to Open (S2O). This project similarly showed that freely accessible content is accessed dramatically more often and by people in more countries.

Armed with this experience, AR is exploring how to move all of its journals, including the *Annual Review of Linguistics*, to an open access model in the near future. Such a development would immediately make the *Annual Review of Linguistics* the leading provider of freely available, peer-reviewed content in the field. We are looking forward to the benefits that this will bring to authors and readers. It will also help us to entice more leading scholars to disseminate their best work via the *Annual Review of Linguistics*.

This move to open access will not be automatic. It depends on a couple of other things working out. Read on for more about that.

Second, the reviews have a far greater reach when they are featured in *Knowable Magazine*, AR's (free!) online science magazine aimed at the broader public. *Knowable* features articles written by professional science journalists, based on AR articles that are nominated by editors. *Knowable* also offers online events that connect AR authors to the public.

In 2021, two articles from Volume 7 of the *Annual Review of Linguistics* were turned into pieces in *Knowable*:

- Speaking in Whistles by Bob Holmes, based on Julien Meyer's article Environmental and Linguistic Typology of Whistled Languages
- Can Statistics Help Crack the Mysterious Voynich Manuscript? by Greg Miller, based on Claire Bowerman and Luke Lindemann's article The Linguistics of the Voynich Manuscript

To further expand its reach, *Knowable* allows other outlets to freely republish its content. This is how an article on the typology of whistled languages came to be featured in *Smithsonian Magazine* and *The Atlantic*, and also shared with thousands via social media.

*Knowable* also organizes live conversations with leading experts. In 2021 these included Bilingualism, the Brain and Society, featuring Judith Kroll (University of California, Irvine) and Uju Anya (Carnegie Mellon University) in conversation with *Knowable's* Rachel Ehrenberg. A video of the event is freely available online.

In these ways, the *Annual Review of Linguistics* is helping to get linguistic research to a broad audience of specialists and nonspecialists alike.

To publish the best content by the best authors, we also need to reduce barriers to publishing. This is where AR's editorial model comes in.

The biggest burden in journal publication in linguistics is the onerous peer review process. It routinely takes years for articles to make it through review and revision. The adversarial nature of the process brings little joy to those involved. Journals are incentivized to reject most submissions, because rejection is used as a proxy for quality. The process is so slow that most citation activity in linguistics is so delayed that it is barely captured by the dominant citation metrics. Despite all the recent focus on the high cost of journal subscriptions and/or article processing charges, these costs are likely dwarfed by the cost of the human time invested in this peer review process.

AR's peer-invited model is different. Editors nominate topic–author combinations for invitations to contribute. (Authors have some opportunity to negotiate the scope of their review.) All articles are reviewed and undergo revisions. But it's a relatively fast process, with a focus on constructive suggestions. Articles routinely go from initial submission to online advance publication in the space of 4–6 months. This model brings faster publication, a lower risk of rejection, and therefore a high yield on invitations from the first choice of author. (Roughly 50% of invitations yield a final published review.)

Also key to this model are the researchers who make up the editorial team for each AR journal and coordinate with the publishing professionals at AR every step of the way. For the academic editorial team, the most important thing is to enlist experts with deep and broad knowledge of their part of the field. Rather than needing to respond to the submissions that come to them, AR editorial teams need to identify the most important topics and the best authors to review them. To do that, it helps enormously to have the support of professionals that handle everything that the academic editors are not best suited for.

Professional journal management in an independent nonprofit costs money. Those costs can't be hidden in university salaries. This is why making the *Annual Review of Linguistics* open access cannot just happen by magic. AR aims to achieve open access via the S2O model, whereby existing institutional subscribers continue to pay their subscriptions and all new AR volumes are published open access under a Creative Commons license. Additionally, a decade of back content will be freely available. However, if current institutional subscribers drop their subscriptions, then a paywall will need to be retained to guarantee the income.

This creates a potential dilemma. If institutions retain their subscriptions, then the content will be accessible to all readers, wherever they are. If institutions choose to drop their subscriptions because the content is now free, then it may end up not being free after all. To prevent this, AR has built in some additional benefits for subscribing institutions, such as full access to the back catalog. Nonetheless, success requires institutions to contribute to the greater good. (This dilemma is not unlike the vaccination dilemma that the world faced during the past year. Vaccination campaigns bring broad benefits to all of society. But when there are too many free riders, they are not so useful.) For this reason, we urge you to advocate for your institution to retain its subscription to AR journals, if it already has one. AR will not use this as a ruse to gouge money from libraries—it is a nonprofit, after all.

We are very grateful to the many people who made this volume a reality despite the challenges of the past 2 years. At AR, Andy Moody played a central role at every step of the process, with Jennifer Jongsma and Richard Gallagher offering additional support where needed. We are grateful to the Editorial Committee that planned this volume: Barbara Partee, Manfred Krifka, Dan Jurafsky, Norma Mendoza-Denton, Stephen Anderson, Sandra Chung, Louise McNally, and Anne Charity Hudley, and also to Martha Palmer, who subsequently joined the team and contributed to this volume as a reviewer. And, of course, we are grateful to the authors, who succeeded in delivering outstanding reviews on time while facing countless other barriers to research.

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