

# Polyglot

News and Information from the Language Learning Center

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**Visit us on the web: <http://depts.washington.edu/llc/>**

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News and Information from the Language Learning Center

Spring, 2005

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## Computational Linguistics

### New Master's Degree Program at the UW

Computational linguistics is a rapidly developing and exciting discipline that is concerned with computational modeling and processing of human language. This autumn quarter, the UW Linguistics department begins a new Professional Master's degree program in Computational Linguistics. Applications are being accepted on an ongoing basis until June 1, or until the spaces are filled. For detailed information on the program, along with admissions requirements and application information, go to: <http://www.compling.washington.edu/compling/>.

### What is Computational Linguistics?

Computational linguistics is at the crossroads of linguistics and computer science. Applications of computational linguistics include the development of voice recognition software, web search engines, spelling and grammar checkers, machine translation systems, and information extraction and retrieval. Theoretical computational linguists develop formal models of the human language faculty and implement them as computer programs, which are then used iteratively to further develop the models.

## Cervantes Comes to the UW

This year marks the 400th anniversary of the publication of the first part of Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, regarded by many to be one of the best novels ever written. It is fitting, then, that this should be the year that the Instituto Cervantes comes to the University of Washington.

By the end of May 2005, an agreement will be in effect between the UW and the Instituto, a public institution whose purpose is the diffusion of Spanish and Latin American culture



and language around the world. The Instituto has over 40 locations worldwide and is similar to the Goethe Institute of Germany.

This is an exciting development, since it continues the process of forming a lasting and productive relationship between the UW Spanish Department and the Spanish government. This partnership will be beneficial to both the university and the community at large. Dr. Anthony Geist, Paloma Borreguero, and others in the Spanish Department have been working incessantly to successfully integrate the activi-

## Cervantes Comes to the UW

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ties of the department and those of the Instituto Cervantes.

The UW location will begin as an Aula Cervantes, which is the smaller of two size classifications of the Instituto.

### 2005 IV CENTENARIO DEL QUIJOTE



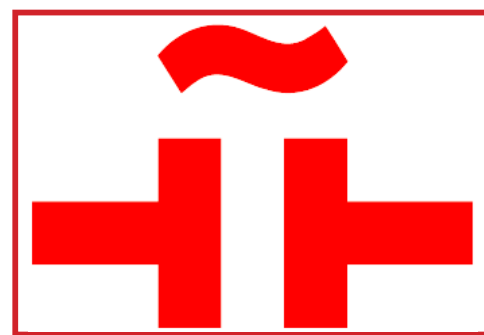
Pending the success of the Aula Cervantes, the location will be enlarged to a Centro Cervantes. Currently, there are only three Centro Cervantes locations in the United States (New York, Albuquerque and Chicago). A Centro in Seattle would be the first one on the West Coast, and only the fourth in the country. The Aula Cervantes will begin in Padelford Hall, and will be staffed by a representative of the Spanish government.

The purpose of this center will be twofold. It will be a resource center for the University of Washington, but it will also be a resource center for the greater Seattle area. The function of the

Cervantes institute is different than the Center for Spanish Studies, which the Spanish Department already hosts. The Center for Spanish Studies focuses much of its energy on K-12 education, whereas the Cervantes institute focuses more on adult education and cultural events. The arrival of the Cervantes institute to the UW will mean that the university will be on the circuit for the large number of visiting lecturers, exhibits, film series, writers and artists that the institute brings to the United States each year. The institute's curriculum and online learning is also being worked into the Spanish Department's activities, and will eventually be used in UW Distance Learning as well.

The agreement with the UW is a unique model that will be closely watched by the Spanish government. It represents the first time that the Instituto has entered into an agreement with another institution to share resources. In an interview, Dr. Geist emphasized the importance of the agreement, and stated that the presence of the Instituto Cervantes "makes a significant contribution to the Spanish Department, the University of Washington, and the greater Seattle area, and we're very fortunate to have them." This first year will be a particularly active one, with a number of activities and celebrations related to the fourth centennial of the publication of Don Quijote, as well as the inaugural activities associated with this groundbreaking agreement.

You can find out more about the Instituto Cervantes on the Web: <http://www.cervantes.org/> —Patrick Blaine, LLC Staff Associate, Romance Languages



**Instituto Cervantes**

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## SCANDINAVIAN

**SA: Lesley Carmichael**  
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Lesley plays an active role in various LLC activities in addition to her role as the Staff Associate for Scandinavian and Linguistics. During Spring quarter, she taught a group of language TAs how to make a web page to use for the classes they teach. She is also a significant contributor to the LLC's Strategic Planning team. The LLC engaged in a thorough strategic planning effort in 2000, and is revising its plan after meeting its five-year goals. Lesley also creates the LLC's quarterly newsletter, *Polyglot*.

## SLAVIC

**SA: Laura Friend**  
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Laura, along with new LLC member Veronika Egorova, has been developing custom vocabulary exercises for first-year Russian and Czech. The software, developed in the LLC, provides interactive flash-card and multiple choice exercises for learning vocabulary (see the Autumn 2005 *Polyglot* [<http://depts.washington.edu/polyglot/>] for related article). Laura and Nika are also creating a Moodle course for third-year Russian called "St. Petersburg and Moscow Walks." The course will include audio/video, still images, and a variety of comprehension, cultural, vocabulary and grammar exercises.

## LINGUISTICS

**SA: Lesley Carmichael**  
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Lesley orchestrated a live webcast information session about the new Professional Master's degree program in Computational Linguistics (it begins in Autumn, 2005, and you can read about it in this edition of *Polyglot*). The webcast was streamed live using the Language Learning Center's video conferencing system and Quicktime streaming server. Webcast viewers were participants—they emailed their questions about the program to the LLC during the webcast and had their questions answered right on the spot by the program's director, Dr. Emily Bender of the UW Linguistics department. The webcast is

available for streamed viewing through the LLC website. Just go to <http://depts.washington.edu/llc/> and scroll down to the "What's new?" section. Lesley has also been experimenting with DVD development software and audio compression.

## Digital Media Storage: Bigger than DVD

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not forged, the market may see a modern version of the VHS vs. Betamax battle of the 1980s—a market situation that discouraged consumers and inhibited technological advancement.

Blu-Ray and HD-DVD both depend on blue lasers, whose shorter wavelength can read and store more data than the red lasers in today's DVD devices. Both are designed to be compatible with current DVD technology in that users can continue to use their DVD collections when they upgrade hardware. Both discs are the same diameter and thickness as today's DVDs (1.2 millimeters). But several differences exist between the two technologies.

The key issue between Blu-Ray and HD-DVD is the physical format of the discs. Toshiba's HD-DVD structure places the data layer 0.6 mm from the disc surface, similar to the current DVD format, while Sony's Blu-Ray structure places the data layer 0.1 mm from the disc surface.

The 45 GB HD-DVD has three 15 GB layers of data memory, each sandwiched between two 0.6 mm foundation layers. The 50 GB Blu-Ray disc has two 25 GB, 1.1 mm foundation layers that hold data 0.1 mm below the surface, under thin protective layers. The thicker foundation layer of Sony's Blu-Ray allows for better laser focus and thus more information on a single disc, but Toshiba's HD-DVD disc structure emphasizes low cost and compatibility by using the same physical structure as current DVDs.

Critics of Blu-Ray point out that backwards-compatibility with current DVD technology is automatic with HD-DVD but not Blu-Ray, but critics of HD-DVD claim that maximal storage capacity per data layer is more important.