

Introduction to the volume

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This volume contains the published version of selected papers from the 2000 Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics, known as the Round Table, or GURT, for short. The conference was chaired by James E. Alatis and Heidi Hamilton of the Department of Linguistics. The theme was “Linguistics, Language, and the Professions: Education, Journalism, Law, Medicine, and Technology,” and the program of presentations was organized around the above-mentioned strands, as well as a sixth strand, “Other,” for topics such as interpreting and speech-language pathology.

The year 2000 was the first time that GURT invited proposals, both for individual papers and colloquia, for its new conference-style format. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and the very best were selected to participate in the final program, which featured up to six concurrent sessions over three days of presentations. As in previous years, GURT began with a full-day pre-session organized by members of the Federal Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) and the Society of Federal Linguists. In 2000, thirty-four speakers at this pre-session explored the theme “Language Use in the United States Government.” GURT also provided the venue for the first day of the Third Annual Conference of the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL). Panelists presented papers on the theme “Less Commonly Taught Languages in the Working World: Needs and Responses.”

GURT 2000 was sponsored by Georgetown’s Center for International Language Programs and Research. As it has done every year since its inception, GURT brought together senior college professors, program administrators, researchers, government professional staff, elementary and secondary school teachers, authors, and students of languages and linguistics. In 2000 we also welcomed professionals and linguists in the fields of journalism, law, medicine, and technology. Many presenters traveled great distances to be at the Round Table; they arrived from Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, Israel, Egypt, South Africa, Brazil, and Venezuela. The task of taking care of all of the presenters and participants and keeping the S.S. GURT sailing smoothly was most ably managed by Ai-Hui Tan, Suzy Springer, and their team of student assistants and volunteers.

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The final program of GURT 2000 featured six plenary speeches, fifteen colloquia, and fifty-seven individual papers. The ILR and NCOLCTL sessions featured an additional twenty panels and presentations. The following articles are but a small sample of the rich offering of perspectives we heard on the theme.