Editorial

Frank Nuessel

University of Louisville, USA

Award and Appreciation

This issue contains the announcement of the third recipient of the 2011 award for best article in *NAMES: A Journal of Onomastics*. This year's winner is Carol G. Lombard (The University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa) for her article "The Sociocultural Significance of *Niitsitapi* Personal Names: An Ethnographic Analysis" published in *NAMES: A Journal of Onomastics*, 59(1) (2011): 42–51. She will receive a plaque to commemorate this honor.

The members of the Award Committee for Best Article in *NAMES* also merit praise for their hard work: (1) Dwan Shipley, Western Washington University, (2) Michael F. McGoff, Binghamton University, SUNY, and (3) John Algeo, Professor Emeritus, University of Georgia. Without their help, the *NAMES* award would not be possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the editorial board of *NAMES* for their tireless efforts in responding to my frequent requests for help in evaluating submissions to the Journal for their service in 2011. They are: (1) John Algeo (Emeritus, University of Georgia), (2) Edward Callary (Northern Illinois University), (3) Chris De Vinne (Notre Dame of Maryland University), (5) Thomas J. Gasque (Emeritus, University of South Dakota), (6) Robert Julyan (Independent Scholar), (7) Margaret Lee (Hampton University), (8) Michael F. McGoff (Binghamton University, SUNY), (9) Lisa McNary (North Carolina State University). Additional thanks go to Chris De Vinne, who also serves as Book Review Editor. I would also like to thank Iman Laversuch (University of Cologne, Germany) for reading several submissions to our Journal.

What is onomastics?

On the home page of the website of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (http://www.icosweb.net/index.php/whatis-onomastics.html), Richard Coates, Secretary of ICOS has a statement about what onomastics is, which I reproduce here with permission:

> This is just a short introduction to onomastics in English for non-specialists. Some scholars (onomasticians) might want to express these ideas differently, or maybe disagree with some altogether. But I think most of the scholars who do it will agree with most of them. The main point here is to get you interested and to want to know more about what we do!

Onomastics is *the study of proper names*, from the Greek word *onoma*, "name". Proper names are a very important part of our lives. We all have personal proper names, and we live in streets and towns with their own proper names. Our pets may have proper names, as may any spiritual beings we believe in. We may change our names at important points in our lives. We may spend ages deciding what proper name, or how many, to give our babies. Names can be hugely culturally and politically important. It makes a difference whether you live in Montreal or Montréal. What is the truth behind these wonderful things?

The most important thing about a proper name is that when a speaker or writer uses it, s/he picks out a single entity but, in doing so, does not make direct use of the senses of any words which appear to make it up. Many names are obscure in any case — they don't consist of words that we can interpret as they stand (like *Warsaw* or *Neptune*). So proper names are, or have become, meaningless, or at least they don't "mean" in the way that ordinary words mean. If a name appears to consist of ordinary words, there may be a problem in equating what it apparently means with what it can refer to.

What onomasticians do

On the same website, Richard Coates also describes what onomasticians do, which I reproduce here:

Onomasticians analyze proper names in various ways. They may study:

1. the history of individual names or of the names found in particular social groups or areas, to discover their original meanings and establish their social or geographical distributional patterns
2. the linguistic devices that are used to create names and keep them in circulation, in association with the language or languages of the community that uses them
3. current patterns and processes of naming, to establish the distribution and popularity of particular names or name-types
4. the connotations of names, e.g. how, or whether, personal names relate to personality or are subject to changes in fashion
5. how different names may apply to the same entity, even in the same culture, e.g. in pet-naming or nicknaming
6. how ordinary words and phrases may become proper names, and vice versa, and/or how they may be used metaphorically or become associated with entities which are not the original thing named . . .
7. the practical problems created by the fact that names are used across linguistic boundaries and that different names may apply to the same entity; for place-names, for example, onomasticians may suggest international and standard usages, and resolve disputes about them
8. the naming of persons, places, etc. in second-order worlds such as myth, literature and film, and in supernatural worlds
9. what proper names in general are and what they do (how they are used), in order to refine our understanding of their nature