

Seven Years of Language & Law

— Editors' Progress Report on the Journal of the International Language & Law Association

*Hanjo Hamann and Friedemann Vogel**

Abstract

The International Journal of Language & Law (JLL) is entering its third triennium. After three years under the editorship of its founding editors from Germany and the US, and another three years under the editorship of the present authors, JLL has developed into an ambitious academic journal that serves as a forum for questions on the interdependence of language and law in all of its facets. With its authors coming from six continents, and demanding peer review procedures rejecting more than half of its submissions, JLL aspires to highest academic standards. As one of the first three humanities journals in the Free Journal Network, JLL also strives to be a best-practice pioneer in platinum open access publishing. The present progress report briefly summarizes the development of JLL since its inception in 2012, and welcomes the new managing editor for the present three-year term (2019–2021).

Keywords

Language and law, legal linguistics, forensic linguistics, history, JLL, journal

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1. The International Journal of Language & Law

Just recently the International Language and Law Association (ILLA) completed the eleventh year of its existence, and the seventh year of its scholarly journal, the International Journal of Language & Law (JLL). JLL is a double-blindly peer-reviewed e-journal which offers a forum for research on the interdependence of language and law in all of its facets, from theoretical approaches to practical problems. The journal is platinum open access, meaning it is governed by members of the scholarly community, offered free of charge to authors and readers, and publishes content under a CC-BY license.

The present editorial reports on the first seven years of its existence, following it through three developmental stages in chronological order (2.–4.), and points out next developments as JLL continues under the stewardship of a new managing editor (5.).

2. The First Triennium (2012–2014): “the world moving together ever closer”

Like the ILLA, its journal was formally established by legal linguists Peter M. Tiersma, Lawrence M. Solan and Dieter Stein. In their opening editorial, the founding editors outlined JLL’s conceptual premise as follows:

“The laws of society do not exist before they are debated and negotiated. The ‘meaning’ – and the change of meaning – of concepts in law, as well as the ‘interpretation’ of terms is to a large extent some kind of linguistic analysis, with attendant and persistent problems including issues of vagueness, ambiguity, precision and ‘plainness’.” (Solan, Stein & Tiersma, 2012: 1)

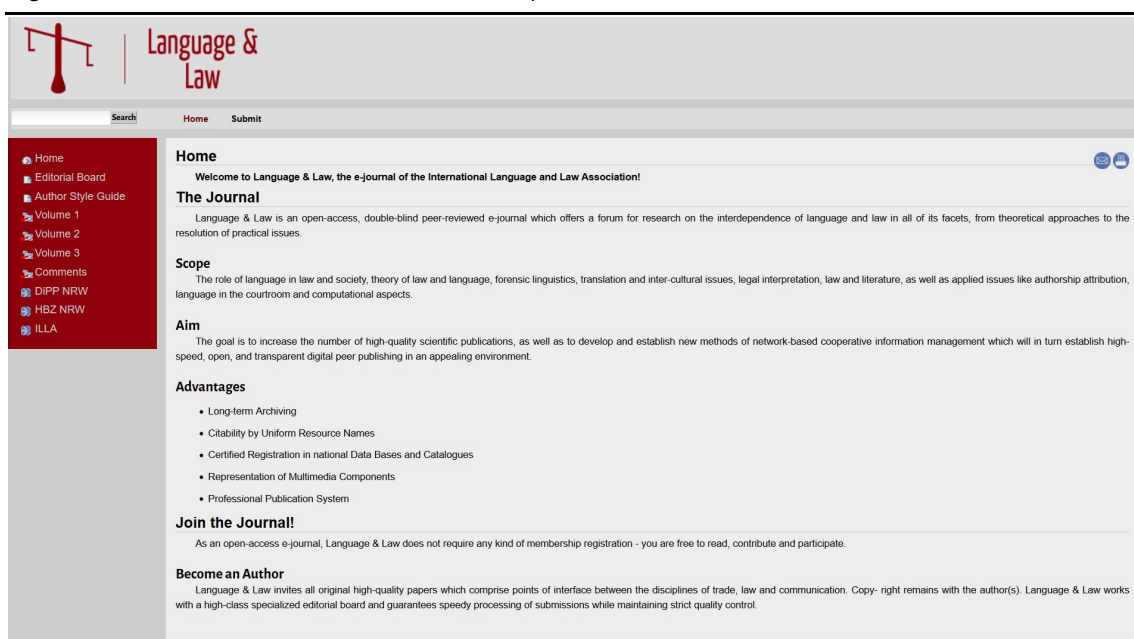
While thus emphasizing a pragmatic approach to the study of language and law, the editors did not limit the journal to any specific school of scholarly thought. Instead their vision for JLL was explicitly broad and inclusive:

“With the world moving together ever closer in trade, law and communication, it is appropriate that the study of language in law comprise all points of interface between these disciplines.” (Solan, Stein & Tiersma, 2012: 1)

This implicit mission statement may seem timelier today than ever, with autocracies on the rise all over the world, and an ailing European unity already battered by Brexit negotiations. Trying to serve as an academic antidote to such political divisionism, JLL has inherited from its founding editors a genuinely optimistic hope for a “world moving together ever closer”. As an early demonstration of this integrative vision, the founding editors from Germany and the US promptly enlisted the help of a guest-editor from yet another country: Jaap Baaij, then at the University of Amsterdam, assembled a genuinely global roster of authors for the very first JLL volume on multilingualism, law and language policy in their respective working areas.

Since this inception in 2012, JLL was published at the domain LanguageAndLaw.de, reflecting the nationality of its first managing editor, professor Dieter Stein of Düsseldorf University. Owing to this, the journal's original publishing system was hosted by the German [Digital Peer Publishing](#) (DiPP) initiative, under a (somewhat paradoxically) proprietary open access license (DPPL; see Metzger & Jaeger, 2008) with article identifiers being assigned from the namespace of [Uniform Resource Names](#) (URN).

Figure 1: Screenshot of the JLL website on the DiPP platform (2012–2015).



Note: Screenshot taken on 16 Jan 2016, just before JLL was transferred to OJS (see below, section 4.).

The journal's first three years under the editorship of its founding trio resulted in three published issues: “[Global Perspectives on the Language of Law](#)” (2012), “[Discourse in Law and its Language](#)” (2013), and “[Pragmatics and Discourse in Interpreting Law](#)” (2014). Apart from the editorial mentioned earlier, these issues contained 12 research papers with a total of 180 pages, penned by authors from Europe, India, Israel, Morocco, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States.¹

3. Silent Hiatus (2015): “the gap that Peter left in the academy”

On April 13, 2014, disaster struck ILLA and JLL: Their co-founder Peter Meijes Tiersma (b. June 23, 1952) passed away from pancreatic cancer, at the age of only 61 years. Born

¹ Authors in alphabetical order: E. Annamalai, Cornelis J. W. Baaij, Bill Bowring, Benjamin Brown, Bradly J. Condon, Lourens Marthinus Du Plessis, Elena Ioriatti, Fatima-Zahra Lamrani, Michael Moser, Anna Plisecka, Ronald Schmidt, and Paulina Tallroth.

in the Netherlands, Tiersma had become a renowned and well-respected linguist in the US. He last held a professorial position at the Loyola Law School, which he had occupied since 1990. His faculty's obituary called him

“one of the nation's leading scholars of law and language. With a Ph.D. in linguistics and a J.D. from U.C. Berkeley, he authored numerous prominent books and articles exploring the relationship between words, linguistic media, meaning, and the workings of the law.”²

The premature passing of Tiersma directly affected JLL: It left a gap in the editorial board and temporarily disrupted JLL's heart-beat, as is visible until this day where JLL's editors note in place of the missing 2015 volume of the journal:

“There was no JLL vol. 4. The journal went into hiatus for one year upon the passing of one of its founding editors, the late Peter M. Tiersma (1952–2014). The lack of vol. 4 visibly reminds us of the gap that Peter left in the academy, and his critical role in JLL, which we gratefully commemorate by leaving vol. 4 unassigned.” (JLL vol. 4: “[Tribute to Peter M. Tiersma \(† 2014\)](#)”)

4. Reviving ILLA and JLL (2016–2018):

“computer-assisted methods, as text has become data”

The following year (2016) finally saw a restart for JLL, just as another year later (2017) its mothership ILLA rose from the ashes with an international conference in Freiburg comprising some fifty talks, keynotes and workshops.³

Both relaunches were initiated and coordinated by professor Friedemann Vogel, then at Freiburg, now Siegen University in Germany. He took over as JLL's editor-in-chief and enlisted a lawyer with experience in both interdisciplinary linguistics as well as academic publishing, Hanjo Hamann, as the journal's new managing editor. Jointly, these incoming editors transferred the journal from DiPP to an [Open Journal publishing system](#) (OJS) with [CC-BY licensing](#), refashioned its logo and typography, and began assigning persistent article identifiers from the [Digital Object Identifier](#) (DOI) namespace as well as archiving back issues in the HeinOnline Law Journal Library.⁴

At the same time, JLL's editorial policies were spelled out in much greater detail, including its [Platinum Open Access policy](#) and [peer review policy](#), and a new [policy on scientific integrity](#) following the international COPE recommendations.

² See [PeterTiersma.LLS.edu](#), and further: “He was a beloved teacher, winning the Best Professor of the Year Award several times. He was a member of many illustrious organizations, including the Oxford University Press editorial board for the law and language series, and advisory panels for both Black's Law Dictionary and the American Heritage Dictionary. He also served on the California Judicial Council Advisory Committee on Criminal Jury Instructions, where he helped rewrite California's jury instructions to make them more understandable and effective for jurors. He clerked for Justice Stanley Mosk of the California Supreme Court.”

³ See [illa.online/index.php/relaunch-conference-2017](#).

⁴ See [home.heinonline.org/titles/Law-Journal-Library/International-Journal-of-Language--Law](#).

Figure 2: Screenshot of the JLL website on the OJS platform (since 2016).

**International Journal of
LANGUAGE & LAW (JLL)**

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International Journal of Language & Law (JLL)

Language & Law is a platinum open access scholarly e-journal which offers a forum for research on the interdependence of language and law in all of its facets, from theoretical approaches to practical problems. Submissions are double-blindly peer-reviewed, and published entirely free of charge to authors and readers under a CC-BY license. It is edited by [Prof. Dr. Friedemann Vogel](#) and [Dr. Dr. Hanjo Hamann](#).

In November 2018, JLL was selected as one of only three humanities journals (along with [Glossa](#) and [Laboratory Phonology](#)) to join the [Free Journal Network \(FTN\)](#), a scholarly initiative to promote Open Access publishing with strict best practice requirements.

FREE JOURNAL NETWORK

Vol 7: EU Legal Culture and Translation

Note: This issue was launched with an eponymous special, guest-edited by [Vilelmini Sosoni](#) & [Łucja Biel](#). Additional articles on related topics were subsequently added.

Full Issue

View or download the full issue [SPECIAL ISSUE](#)

Note: Screenshot taken on 31 Dec 2018, just before editorship passed once again (see below, section 5.).

In terms of additional content, the journal's second triennium again resulted in three published issues: “[International Law and Pragmatics](#)” (2016), “[The Fabric of Language and Law](#)” (2017), as well as “[EU Legal Culture and Translation](#)” (2018).

The second of these issues sprang from an international conference in Heidelberg (see Vogel et al., 2016; Lukas, 2017), which diagnosed and explored

“a fundamental change in the context of language and law over the last twenty years: The digitalization of all areas of life changed the production of legal fabric as well as our practices of language patterning. Their fiber structure becomes more easily cognizable and even explorable: Intertextuality, references, etc. are now ‘clickable’ through hypertext and hypermedia. [...] This digital trend also offers new potential for legal linguistics: It may turn to computer-assisted methods, as text has become data.” (Hamann & Vogel, 2017: 103–104).

In the subsequent year, JLL returned to soliciting guest-editors, as it had done five years prior (see above, section 2.): The bulk of this issue was guest-edited by Vilelmini Sosoni of Ionian University and Łucja Biel of Warsaw University. They had been in-

spired by the ILLA relaunch conference mentioned earlier,⁵ and opened their special issue with an introductory editorial that summarized the issue's

“five papers contributed both by lawyers and linguists who address the complexity and hybridity of EU legal culture and translation from a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives. This topic is viewed from a number of angles, triangulating quantitative and qualitative methods (comparative law, legal theory and logic, corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis).” (Sosoni & Biel, 2018: 4)

Taken together, the three JLL issues 2016–2018 contained 15 research papers with a total of 315 pages, penned by 23 different authors⁶ from six continents.⁷ In other statistics for this period, the average turn-around duration from submission to editorial decision was 52.3 days, none longer than 94 days. 53 % of submissions were rejected, 20 % of which desk-rejections (not sent out for external peer-review). Of those sent out for review, 75 % were reviewed by one lawyer and one linguist.

Owing to this track record and its high quality standards, JLL was selected in November 2018 as one of only three humanities journals (along with *Glossa* and *Laboratory Phonology*) to join the *Free Journal Network* (FJN), a scholarly initiative to promote Open Access publishing with strict best practice requirements.

5. Taking Legal Linguistics Forward (2019–2021)

As JLL enters its third triennium, the journal is recognized across various disciplines and cited in fields as diverse as *rhetorics studies* (Łachacz & Mańko, 2013: 80; Mańko, 2016: 142), *language policy* (De Meulder, 2017: 193, 195, 203), *literary* and *cultural studies* (Jati Murtaya & Triyono, 2018: 52; Chanda, 2018: 33), *legal philosophy* (Macagno et al., 2018: 69, 72; Walton et al., 2018: 519), and *legal studies* (Tankersley 2018: fn. 164, 186) – even in Czech gun law (Williams 2018: 148).

To build on and continue developing this reputation, the baton of editorship was passed on once again in 2019: Dr. Aleksandar Trklja has just been appointed as JLL's managing editor. Trklja is a trained linguist and obtained his Ph.D. from Birmingham University for research in corpus linguistics (Trklja, 2013). From late 2013 until mid-2016, he worked as a research fellow on the ERC project “*The Law and Language at the*

⁵ See footnote 3 above, as well as Sosoni & Biel's own statement: “This special issue [...] is based on the panel organised by the authors at the Language and Law in a World of Media, Globalisation and Social Conflicts conference (7–9 September 2017, University of Freiburg, Germany), which relaunched the International Law and Language Association (ILLA).” (2018: 2).

⁶ Authors in alphabetical order: Andreas Abegg, Martina Bajčić, Łucja Biel (2×), Ruth Breeze, John Burke, Aleksandra Čavoški, Christoph A. Hafner, Hanjo Hamann (2×), Anna Jopek-Bosiacka, Sofiya Kartalova, Elpida Loupaki, Katherine Lynch, María José Marín, Stephen Mouritsen, Benedikt Pirker (2×), Anne Scully-Hill, Rajesh Sharma, Jennifer Smolka (2×), Lawrence M. Solan (2×), Vilemini Sosoni, Dieter Stein, Friedemann Vogel (2×).

⁷ Submissions originated from Albania, Australia, Austria, China/Hongkong, Colombia, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the USA.

European Court of Justice” before obtaining a teaching position at the University of Vienna, where he is presently based. Trklja has published on topics as variegated as lexicographic onomasiology (Trklja, 2017) and linguistic superdiversity (McAuliffe & Trklja, 2018), and has become a well-known and respected scholar in legal linguistics.

With the first non-German at the helm of JLL, the journal domain was simultaneously migrated from LanguageAndLaw.de to LanguageAndLaw.eu. This emphasizes the broader perspective that Trklja will hopefully bring to the journal, and reiterate JLL’s international mission. The next months will also see JLL reapply for a listing in the international Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), which was previously precluded by its one-year hiatus (see above, section 3.).

Technicalities aside, the new managing editor has already brought exciting new ideas to the table, which the present authors (who will stay on board as joint editors-in-chief) will be excited to see at work. An open call for submissions for 2019 is currently being drafted and will soon be released to the academic community in order to inspire and encourage new submissions of the standard that JLL has enjoyed thus far.

In the meantime, we can only thank JLL’s founders, its guest-editors, peer reviewers, and of course its many authors (see footnotes 1 and 6) for their respective contributions, and to wish all of us another exciting three years of Language & Law!

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