

Overview

The AMC

The Angus McIntosh Centre for Historical Linguistics ('AMC') is part of the subject area of Linguistics and English Language (LEL) at Edinburgh University, within the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Science (PPLS).

Mission

The mission of the AMC is to further scholarship in the field of historical linguistics.

Importance

Work in historical linguistics is important because it documents the history of a language and maps the scope of possible changes. Unlike investigations into synchronic linguistic variation, which need not concern themselves with how such variation develops but can be content to chart it and model it, investigations into diachronic variation are more constrained. Modelling the variation exhibited by the various stages of the language is not enough: diachronic studies also have to find plausible scenarios for how one stage develops into the next (the mechanisms of change), and, if possible, why there was such a change (whether it was the result of language-internal developments like pressure from within the language system, or language-external ones, like language or dialect contact, or both). In this respect, historical linguistics, with its need for plausible scenarios, may serve as a kind of touchstone for linguistic theories. The fact that diachronic change tends to cluster in certain areas of the possible space suggests that it is constrained by human cognition, so that historical linguistics adds to our knowledge of what it means to be human. From this perspective, the more human languages we can study, the more we can find out about human cognition. This means that it is important to maintain linguistic diversity on this planet, but the rate at which languages are becoming extinct is in fact increasing. Like any work done in linguistics, historical linguistics helps to bolster endangered languages or dialects, in that speakers who see that their language or variety is worthy of academic attention are more likely to take pride in their own language, and are more likely to transmit it to the next generation of speakers; if their variety is not the dominant one in the society they live in, this pride is crucial for its survival.

Background

The AMC is the successor of the Institute for Historical Dialectology ('IHD'), founded in 1952 by Angus McIntosh (then the University's Forbes Professor of English Language and General Linguistics) as the Middle English Dialect Project. This project resulted, in 1986, in the publication of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediæval English* (4 vols., Aberdeen University Press), a work which under McIntosh's leadership revolutionised both the methodology and the empirical basis of Middle English scholarship. The projects undertaken by the IHD researchers in subsequent years were designed to produce large-scale, searchable, scholarly resources, which are freely available on-line. These resources inform studies of language variation and change, particularly involving historical dialectology but also historical phonology,

	<p>morphology, syntax and lexis; they also serve as quarries for PhD projects and for both postgraduate and undergraduate teaching, and have gained worldwide recognition. To date the on-line resources comprise: <i>A Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English</i> (LAEME), <i>A Linguistic Atlas of Older Scots</i> (LAOS), and a heavily revised electronic version of the original <i>Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English</i> (eLALME), and <i>A Corpus of Narrative Etymologies and accompanying Corpus of Changes</i> (CoNE).¹</p> <p>Change to AMC</p> <p>Professor Heinz Giegerich, then director of the IHD, proposed the transformation into the AMC in 2013. One reason was that the University was standardizing its nomenclature, and the term ‘Centre’ was a more accurate description for the activities of this research group than ‘Institute’. The change coincided with the retirement of two staff members who had been the principal researchers on the various projects, and the appointment of new staff; it was felt that the remit should be broadened from the historical dialectology of English to historical linguistics of any language.</p> <p>The present</p> <p>The AMC has become a hub of world-leading teaching and research, brings together scholars and scholarship in historical linguistics from across the world; research fellows funded by grants outside the UK make the AMC, and Edinburgh, their base. The AMC has instituted a prize for undergraduate achievement as well as a fully-funded PhD-studentship (including international fees). The AMC has a well-functioning website (http://www.amc.lel.ed.ac.uk/), as well as a media-presence; it has 100+ affiliates from all over the globe (http://www.amc.lel.ed.ac.uk/?page_id=17). AMC researchers continue to pull in prestigious grants. Other core activities are the AMC Lecture and the AMC Symposium, held in alternate years.</p>
<p>Strategies and Action Plan</p>	
	<p>Research</p> <p>When the IHD transformed into the AMC, its remit broadened to take in any historical linguistics research (see <i>Background</i>, above). Staff within LEL are encouraged to self-identify as AMC-researchers, and around one-third of LEL academic staff (two-thirds of all those whose research qualifies as either historical or variationist) have done so. The quality of their research output can be gauged by the fact that research in LEL came out as best in the UK in the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) results of 2014, and has ranked over the last five years between third and fifth in the world in the QS World University Rankings for Linguistics. There is still some way to go before the AMC becomes a natural home for such research, as the aura of its predecessor, the IHD, as a quite narrowly circumscribed research area staffed exclusively by researchers on fixed contracts funded by grants will take some time to dispel.</p>

¹ LAEME, LAOS, eLALME and CoNE may be accessed, respectively, at: <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laeme1/laeme1.html>, <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laos1/laos1.html>, <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/elalme/elalme.html> and <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/CoNE/CoNE.html>.

Projects

The IHD The first project to be undertaken under the aegis of the AMC was the AHRC-funded *From Inglis to Scots: Mapping Sounds to Spellings* (awarded November 2013; funding period January 2014-April 2018; grant number AH/L004542/1; total award made £1,020,702). This project is associated with 40+ activities and 30+ publications on PURE. Another important project is *A Parsed Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (PLAEME, January 2017-March 2018) which built a new parsed corpus resource for investigating the patterns of rapid syntactic change in Early Middle English, a period which is underrepresented in other parsed corpus resources. A third project which received funding is *TIMESS: Towards an Inventory of Middle English Spelling Systems*.

Postdoc Fellows

The resources and reputation of the AMC have made it an attractive place for researchers on a postdoc fellowship to spend their grants in Edinburgh; current AMC researchers include:

Dr Rafaella Baechler, "Exaptation in the nominal inflection of early Middle English", Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) grant

Dr Alpo Honkapohja, "A Corpus Approach to Manuscript Abbreviations", Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) grant

Dr Benjamin Molineaux, "Digital methods in New-World language change: Words & sounds in older Mapudungun", Leverhulme Early Career grant.

Recent researchers include:

Dr Joanna Kopaczyk, Research Assistant on the AMC's FITS Project 2014-2017, now Lecturer in English Language and Linguistics in the School of Critical Studies, The University of Glasgow.

Dr Mayumi Sawada, Visiting Researcher from Aichi Gakuin University (Japan), April 2017-May 2018;

Professor Ulrike Demske, Visiting Researcher from the University of Potsdam (Germany), October 2017-February 2018;

Professor Donka Minkova, UCLA, visiting summer 2018.

Knowledge Exchange, Outreach and Impact

The AMC regularly contributes to the knowledge exchange events like the University's Innovative Learning Week/ Festival of Creative Learning; takes part in joint KE events with the National Library of Scotland (<https://wee-windaes.nls.uk/docs/buke-howlat.pdf>) and has produced a ten-minute Infographic Video on the Origins of the Scots Language, with voice-overs in English and in Scots (featuring the voices of Hamish MacDonald, the Scots Scribever in Residence at the National Library of Scotland, and the AMC's own Dr Rhona Alcorn, Co-PI of the FITS project, Chief Executive and Editor-in-Chief of the Scottish Language Dictionaries, and Depute Director of the AMC (<http://www.amc.lel.ed.ac.uk/?p=2030>)).

Training and Teaching

One of the most important ways in which historical linguistics as a discipline can be assured of "Nachwuchs" is by a solid presence of historical courses in undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. LEL staff within the AMC teach a portfolio which is probably the most extensive suite of historical linguistics courses in the world, and

	<p>includes a course on the history of Scots. The AMC offers the Angus McIntosh Prize for the best undergraduate linguistics dissertation in the department. At postgraduate level, the AMC offers a three-year fully-funded PhD-studentship (the McIntosh-Patterson scholarship). The first beneficiary of that studentship, Jade Sandstedt, was awarded the ninth R.H. Robins price by the Philological Society for his paper <i>Transparency and blocking in Early Old Norwegian height harmony</i>. The second beneficiary will start work on her PhD in January 2019.</p> <p>Research plan</p> <p>The AMC is committed to foster research in historical linguistics. The traditional way to fund the IHD was through grants, with a total of some £2 million in research funds acquired in the 1990s and 2000s. Although the climate for grant succes is at present challenging for a discipline like historical linguistics, LEL staff within the AMC will continue to write proposals.</p> <p>One urgent matter that cannot wait on a funder’s approval is the fact that the electronic resources created by the IHD are in need of a makeover. These resources were ahead of their time in the 1990s and 2000s in being available online, but today’s public is used to other standards of user-interface; and the online map-making options of the atlases no longer meet the image resolution that has become standard in today’s publishing houses. For this reason, the AMC will be investing some £38,000 of its own funds in a major upgrade of LAEME, LAOS, eLALME and CoNE to improve their user-friendliness, their functionality and consequently extend their academic impact. A list of 18 tasks was identified on the basis of an online survey of users. This work is to due to start November 2018.</p> <p>The strategy of attracting visiting postdocs, which has proved fruitful in the past years, will be stepped up, with AMC staff supporting prospective candidates – both in the UK and elsewhere – in selecting research topics and writing the research proposal.</p> <p>The AMC is also supporting an initiative to update the Linguistic Survey of Scotland. The Linguistic Survey of Scotland was set up in 1949 as a joint collaboration between Kenneth Jackson, Angus McIntosh and David Abercrombie. There were several phases of data gathering over the years, by means of postal questionnaires as well as tape-recorded face-to-face interviews; the results were published as the Scots Linguistic Survey Vols I-III (J.Y. Mather and H.H. Speitel (eds), Croom Helm, 1975-86). The original questionnaires, fieldwork books and tapes are still held by the University. A new survey would target the Scots of Scotland and Ulster, with a richer coverage than that of the original survey, with data gathering by a mixture of fieldwork and online methods. This is a cooperation between the AMC, the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, and the government-funded charity Scottish Language Dictionaries.</p>
<p>Governance, Leadership and Management Structure</p>	
	<p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governance of the AMC is in the hands of the Steering Committee, which ensures proper governance of the AMC and its assets; considers Members' proposals arising from the annual Business Meeting; appoints AMC Members and Affiliates. The Steering Committee consists of • the AMC Director

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AMC Depute² Director • The AMC Secretary • The AMC Treasurer, • as well as ordinary members from inside and outside the University.
Resources	
	<p>Funding model</p> <p>The funding model is hybrid: the AMC has an endowment which pays a yearly dividend of ca. £10,000. Decades of careful husbanding of these resources, as well as reinvesting yearly dividends, have vastly added to the original endowment, so that the AMC is not restricted in its spending to just the yearly dividend, but can when required dip into the capital. The AMC funds do not run to research staff, who have to be recruited by grant money.</p> <p>Staffing</p> <p>The AMC is further supported by the School of PPLS, which facilitates the McIntosh-Patterson studentship. For its staffing, the AMC relies on permanent LEL staff, on grant-funded postdoctoral fellows and on PhD-students.</p> <p>Estates</p> <p>At present, visitors and postdoctoral fellows are accommodated within PPLS in adjacent offices, but there is increasing competition for space.</p> <p>Studentships</p> <p>The AMC founded its own studentship, the McIntosh-Patterson Scholarship, in 2015, paid partly from its yearly dividend and from another endowment fund (the Patterson endowment). AMC staff members support other PhD-candidates in their efforts to win AHRC-studentships.</p> <p>Sustainability objectives</p> <p>The main funder (AHRC) has changed its priorities in recent years and is no longer focused on the building of resources, which was always a particular strength of the IHD, and the basis for its excellent international reputation. The AMC will have to dip into its own capital to update the digital resources created by the IHD. AHRC-projects no longer include funds for PhD-studentships (Daisy Smith, appointed in 2014 on a studentship as part of the FITS project, may well have been the very last PhD-student to be funded in that way). The increasing importance of the impact statement makes the climate for grant success at present challenging for a discipline like historical linguistics, but the excellent reputation of the Centre can be expected to offset this risk. As a Centre, the AMC has no competitors, only partners.</p>

² *Depute* is the Scots equivalent of English *Deputy*.