Winter Storm 2013: Suggestions for future Winter Storms

These recommendations are based on feedback from WS 2013 organizers, and from the WS 2013 participant survey.

<u>Overall goals and summary</u>: The main goals of WS 2013 were (i) to maintain broad participation and leadership from previous years, and (ii) improve effectiveness of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) via planning and specific deliverables, (iii) broaden engagement in language diversity issues via the Language Analysis workshop, (iv) diversify the technical training elements.
Each of these goals was reached, though imperfectly in all cases. WS had its biggest participation to date, and activities were more goal-oriented than in previous years. But some long-standing challenges continue to require attention. WS is the centerpiece activity of the Language Science community, and there is broad enthusiasm for continuing it, but it needs further improvements.

1. **Special Interest Groups**
   Overall goal: Stimulate new research collaborations that continue beyond WS. 2013 goal: increase 'hit rate' of sustainable SIGs.
   a. Solicit potential ideas from potential leaders and attendees in early stage of planning. More top-down matchmaking for potential partnerships, connections to seminars, potential new grants, etc.
   b. Encourage group leaders to provide foundational readings for the topic of focus before SIG starts (some groups did this)
   c. Encourage potential leaders to co-lead with those from different departments to facilitate more interdisciplinarity (some did this)
   d. Encourage each group to write a daily report, potentially for external input (some did this)
   e. Do not make too many groups.

2. **Technical Sessions**
   Overall goal: Expose participants to new technical resources, enhance the skills of more experienced participants.
   a. Explore pros and cons of developing a plan for multiple years, to create a rotation of topics (e.g., Python, R, MATLAB)
   b. Make the target audience and priorities of the course clear. It is very hard to please everybody all the time: some will always want sessions on their favorite theme, taught at their level; at least
   c. Do not change instructors everyday. If there are multiple instructors, find ways to ensure better communication with each other.
   d. Consider if goal-oriented method (i.e., go through one script that is written for concrete purpose step by step) works better than traditional method (i.e., go through the syntax from basics).
   e. Encourage instructors to share code beforehand.
   f. Consider having a conceptual, in addition to technical, introduction

3. **Language Analysis Workshop**
   Overall goal: Provide an introduction to linguistic subfields, and provide an opportunity for participants to work in teams, fostering interdisciplinary communication skills.
   a. Consider pros and cons of further narrowing of group research topics.
   b. Provide more time and/or potential opportunity for continuing work.

    c.   Encourage more observation and interaction between groups.
    d.   Provide explicit models for different elicitation methods at the beginning.
    e.   Discuss the effective ways of advertising and presentation that encourage more participants from outside Linguistics.

4. **Lunch Talk Series**
Overall goal: Demonstrate in detail some of the current research happening in our Language Science community, and encourage participants to explore opportunities for collaboration.
    a.   Provide clear guidelines to lunch elves on quantities needed and expected numbers of participants.
    b.   Make room reservations very early, to ensure a venue that is conducive to lunchtime interaction (SKN 0200 did not achieve that – no fault of organizers, renovations of MMH 1400 made it unavailable)
    c.   Try to avoid repetition (compare the topics with last year).

5. **Professional Development**
Overall goal: Allow participants to share important skills and experiences which are more appropriately presented in a shorter format than the Technical Sessions.
    a.   Aim for diversity of topics. Do not focus too much on 'how to get a job'.
    b.   Consider having student-led discussions; the discussion led by senior IGERT students and IGERT graduate in WS 2013 was especially successful.

6. **End-of-WS presentations**
Overall goal: Reconnect smaller groups with the entire WS audience, incentivize organization and productivity of small working groups.
    a.   Explore pros and cons of talk vs. poster presentations.
    b.   Consider dividing presentations into multiple sessions.
    c.   Think about how to accomplish the balance between the following 1) Participants learn about the groundwork of the topics of their choice. 2) Each group develops a specific research project.

7. **Social Events**
Overall goal: Build community by providing an opportunity for casual interaction and informal discussion of WS events.
    a.   Try to find a place nearby campus for the party (this is the main reason people did not come to the party)
    b.   Make it clear that all faculty members are welcome (e.g., by sending a casual email)
    c.   For happy hour, choose a place where you can have a conversation (e.g., not too crowded, not too noisy).
    d.   Emphasize the importance of these events as a component of building interdisciplinary partnerships.
    e.   Discourage people to form their own pre-existing group.

8. **General**
    a.   Maybe increase the number of organizers and faculty involvement.
    b.   Consider having presentation day every year.
    c.   Consider having a "daily digest" email sent to all registrants. It was a successful experiment in WS 2013 and we recommend continuation.