

NAACL Treasurer's report

June 2011



The Chapter's bank account held \$116,072.66 at the end of May 2011. This is about \$20,000 less than at the same time last year (\$136,803.38). Income for the year was about \$23.5K, primarily from booking surpluses from past NAACL conferences: \$14K from NAACL HLT 2007 (in Rochester, which did produce a surplus, somewhat against the expectations of many!) and \$9K from NAACL HLT 2009 (in Boulder). Expenses were considerably up from usual at \$44K, though partly because of expenses that should have been booked to different years clumping: \$17.5K for JHU summer workshop support (for extra students attending the first two weeks of lectures, including fees to JHU covering 2009 and 2010), \$10K support to NACLO covering both NACLO 2010 and 2011, \$10K support for the LSA Linguistic Institute 2011, \$4K for NAACL 2010 student travel support, and \$2.5K for regional workshops (in the NW USA and Argentina).

However, the big – and disastrous – financial news is in the pending category. The NAACL HLT 2010 conference in Los Angeles made a loss of at least \$59K (this could actually still even grow a bit if some promised but as yet unpaid sponsorship fails to materialize). This is major bad news since it wipes out half of the surplus that NAACL has accumulated in its 10+ years of existence, and which it uses to fund other activities such as those listed above. As the chart shows, this is the first NAACL conference to yield a deficit. But boy did it yield a deficit! What went wrong? It seems like it was a combination of things: (i) bad, unrealistically rosy budget projections of attendance and costs, (ii) unexpectedly high catering costs and extra charges from the hotel, (iii) unexpectedly low attendance (which is kind of surprising, since the competing ACL event wasn't in a maximally easy to get to location), and (iv) poor tracking of data as it came in, which should have been able to alert us much earlier that things were not working out as expected. It shouldn't have taken till a year after the event. We need to fix at least (i) and (iv). (ii) and (iii) are harder to control, but also to be worked on. We either need cheaper venues or else NAACL conference fees just need to increase a bit.

While this bad news will probably make us more cautious in funding other activities, in the short term, there is no reason why we cannot still continue to fund the activities that we traditionally have, and so I imagine we should and will. But the action items are improved financial stewardship and revenue-generation thinking to guarantee future conference surpluses so that these activities can continue for the longer term future.

Christopher Manning, NAACL Treasurer; June 19, 2011, Palo Alto, CA.

