

There and Back Again

David Ford's Wycliffe Newsletter



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What Is David Doing?

With my past two newsletter issues devoted to covering our 50 Year Anniversary events, it's been a while since you heard much about what I personally am doing. This issue will catch you up on some of my personal work roles and projects as Special Projects Implementer this past half year.

Academic Editing

Due to my previous supervisor Andy reducing his remote assignment with SIL Ethiopia to a very part-time role, it was felt that I needed a supervisor who would be slightly more in the loop, and my supervision has returned to our Linguistics Consultant Andreas (shown in my May issue.) This is a somewhat odd choice, since most of my roles don't have much to do with linguistics, but at this time there's no real "replacement Andy" (who as Associate Director was really the "administrative implementer" of management initiatives, and I fit very well as his "assistant implementer"), and personality-wise I get along just as well with Andreas (who had been my initial supervisor for many years.)

While it's likely going to be harder for Andreas to connect me with appropriate projects in SIL Ethiopia than it was for Andy, one idea he did have was for me to get more into academic editing of linguistic papers written by my SIL colleagues. My first major project has been a 300-page grammar draft of the Berta language that has been waiting for proofreading for quite some time. Linguistic grammars are complex due to the myriad of interlinear sentences and in-text examples which have to be consistently represented with appropriate spacing, font and font effects. Most of my work has been the formatting of these interlinear examples using Styles, as well as automating the bibliography (which had been entered manually in the draft) through a program called Zotero.

Branch Editor

This spring our Director requested that I take on the role of Branch Editor to proofread some of our larger publications and communications drafts from the administration before they get sent out. I've been doing some of this in an unofficial capacity the past few years; this move just formalizes and expands that role. My attention to detail, along with being one of the few native English speakers in our office, makes me well suited for this task. Catching and correcting basic spelling and grammar typos greatly increases the professionalism of publications where that sort of impression will likely have a major impact—documents such as major grant proposals or our annual report to partners.

No Layout Editing

These editing tasks have replaced a former role that I am not currently able to do (but really miss), which is the layout editing for our vernacular teacher's guides and textbooks. This is because there is a current moratorium on new school materials production, due to an anticipated review and overhaul of the government requirements for school curriculums in the near future. My hope is that this overhaul will be completed soon, and that our mother-tongue education projects can continue to pioneer textbooks and teacher's guides for all of Ethiopia's languages. Editing these has long been a favorite task of mine!

For Personal Correspondence:

david_ford@wycliffe.org

SIL Ethiopia
P.O. Box 313/1033
Ayer Tena
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

1443 Tannery Circle
Midlothian, VA 23113

For Financial Partnership:

Wycliffe Bible
Translators
PO Box 628200
Orlando, FL 32862-8200

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**Rev79 Setup and Consulting**

For the past year, SIL International has really been pushing for unified, global reporting of goals, progress and achievements of the various SIL projects for the world's language communities. They have rolled out a web-based system called

Rev79 (for Revelation 7:9) for

this purpose. This system naturally needs to be contextualized and introduced to departmental leaders worldwide so that they actually contribute useful reporting data to the global system.

While I wouldn't consider myself the main architect in Ethiopia, I have done much of

the contextualized setup work establishing the goals and projects for each department to report on, as well as a small amount of consulting work with the departmental leaders to tweak the questions to maximize ease of use while maintaining a meaningful reporting contribution.

I generally don't like new technology. For years I've resisted upgrading my old flip phone to a smartphone, and I have long been the only person in the SIL office without one. However, due to the battery of my old phone deteriorating to the point where it was starting to need charging twice a day, in June I reluctantly switched to an old international smartphone of mom's that I had brought back in January, and have technically transitioned to the smartphone world. Given my personality, I expect it will be a very long time before I really embrace the potential uses of a computerized phone—I just find a laptop so much more convenient for any 'computer' tasks!—but it will come slowly.

Praise and Prayer Requests**PRAISES**

~That I have some new "special projects" needs I can be involved in for work this year.

~My work permit was renewed for another year; no major hassle this year.

~That I can spend good vacation time with all my family later this month.

PRAYERS

~For a good vacation in Kenya with all my immediate family on July 8-20. This will be my sister-in-law Anita's first international trip and first time flying, and Andrew is eager to share some of his African childhood with her.

~Continued prayers for the conflict in Sudan, which is still ongoing and has claimed thousands of lives.

On July 1,
SIL Ethiopia
celebrated the
wedding of
our colleague
Yelegoy



(mentioned in my May 2023 issue) to Sofia, a Finnish linguist with The Word for the World. Their reception, held at the SIL office and with virtually all SIL Ethiopia staff in attendance, was very multicultural. The main languages used were English and Suri, with traditional music from Yelegoy's Suri friends and family (see left picture).



Saying goodbye to departing friends at my church's farewell potluck event in June. This year at least six members of our congregation are permanently returning to their home countries. Such partings are a regular part of missionary life, especially at this time of year when the school year finishes.