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Preface

These congress proceedings contain a full account of all the papers presented during the *Third European Congress on Sign Language Research* in Hamburg in July 1989. We have maintained the same order as in the program.

The proceedings start with papers on the history of sign language and then turn to various aspects of bilingualism, the importance of mouth patterns, a neuropsychological assessment of sign language, and the acquisition of sign language by deaf children. The congress concentrated on an analysis of sign language in terms of system linguistics. This is reflected by the relatively high number of contributions on grammatical rules and functions of various national sign languages. The last point of emphasis in the congress was formed by methodical questions including the use of *new media* for the development of sign writing systems, the transcription of sign language, and the use of video and computer technology for the production of sign dictionaries.

The readers may decide for themselves whether the papers in this volume really justify the title of *Current Trends in European Sign Language Research*. As far as the implementation in terms of printing is concerned, this title definitely holds true. These proceedings were completed within slightly more than four months after the end of the congress, and we should like to express our gratitude to all those who helped to accomplish this. We are also grateful to the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, the *State of Hamburg*, and the *Gesellschaft für Gebärdensprache und Kommunikation Gehörloser e.V.* It was due to the considerable financial support of these three bodies that the *Third European Congress on Sign Language Research* was made possible.

But what would this congress have looked like without our committed sign language interpreters? That's why a most cordial *Thank You!* goes to these very lively examples of the full status of national sign languages. As far as we took pictures of them during the congress, you can admire them on the cover of this volume.

We should like to conclude with a remark on the full status of national sign languages. A statement on the *Recognition of National Sign Languages of the Deaf* was unanimously drafted at the end of the congress. We all hope that this clear opinion of a linguistically competent body of experts can help to gradually assure the political rights of the deaf as a language minority.

Hamburg, November 1989

S. Prillwitz and T. Vollhaber