

CATALOGING AND CODING LANGUAGE LAB COURSEWARE: A "LIBRARY ACCESS" CONCEPT

by Gerry Strei and Don Bourey
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec

How does a language lab supervisor control the mass of commercially and internally produced tapes which go through cycles of intensive use, periodic use, and non-use? Although guidelines for cataloging and coding non-print materials exist,¹ none of them seem suited to courseware used exclusively for language learning. This is one reason why a cataloging and coding system especially designed for language lab courseware has been developed at the Concordia University Language Laboratories in Montreal, Quebec.

At Concordia the need for an accurate and flexible system of courseware access was felt when it was discovered that there was no complete and up-to-date record of information such as the exact location, technical (software) specifications, and pedagogical quality of language tapes. For example, instructors and lab monitors complained about not being able to determine the length in minutes of a particular taped lesson. Furthermore, no code or "call number" - type system existed to efficiently identify and locate a particular tape series. As a result, a card system was developed to catalog and codify all the lab's courseware holdings.

An index card was designed to provide the following information about each tape series (See Figure 1): 1) title, date, and author of the series; 2) software or technical specifications such as the average length in minutes, audio quality, and location of each tape and/or lesson; ¹One example is **Standards for cataloging, coding and scheduling educational media**. Department of Audio-Visual Instruction, National Education Association of the U.S., Washington, D.C., 1968 (Reference No. Z695, 1 E3N3).

3) pedagogical information - i.e., suggested course level (beginner, intermediate, advanced) and pedagogical remarks of a general nature such as "very mechanical and repetitive; unrealistic use of language."

Another card was designed to list the approximate minutes per tape/lesson in a series (See Figure 2). Timing information for each reel-to-reel tape/lesson was calculated in the following manner. A formula was devised to determine "X" or the approximate number of minutes for a given tape/lesson: $X = R \times S$, whereby R = the total number of Rotations for a given

$$\frac{R \times S}{60}$$

tape/lesson, registered on the tape counter of a given reel-to-reel machine, run at fast forward; and S = the total number of Seconds per rotation

when run at the indicated speed of the tape - that is 3 ¾ or 7 ½ IPS. For example, by running a tape/lesson at 3¾ IPS on a Sony TC-377, the tape counter registers 10 rotations in 20 seconds or 2 seconds per rotation; therefore, S = 2. This same tape/lesson is then fast forwarded and the tape counter registers 620 at the end of the tape/lesson; therefore, R = 620. Using the formula to determine the total minutes per tape/lesson, we simply multiply 620 (R) times 2 (S) = 1240 seconds, divided by 60 seconds = 20.7 minutes ($20.7 = \frac{620 \times 2}{60}$) as the total length of the

$$\frac{620 \times 2}{60}$$

tape/lesson. Because there may be a slight variation from one machine to another, it is probably best to determine S for whatever machine one decides to use when timing tapes/lesson.

*By altering the column headings, the exact length in minutes for each lesson can be included here. For our purposes for this series, however, an average was found to be sufficient.

Finally, a code system was devised to catalog tapes according to subject matter. The cataloging system has three main divisions: 1) English as a Second Language (ESL), 2) Modern Languages, and 3) French.² Further breakdowns were made for some language groups; for example, for ESL tapes a letter code was established as follows:

- C - Comprehension (Listening)
- CD - Comprehension and Dictation
- CDGP - Comprehension, Dictations, Grammar, Phonology
- CG - Comprehension, Grammar
- D - Dictations
- E - Exams
- G - Grammar
- M - Miscellaneous
- P - Phonology

The letter code is followed by a number system used to enumerate each tape in the series. For example, C1.0 is the general entry found on the index card (See Figure 2). Individual tapes in the series are coded C1.01, C1.02, and so on. These codes are found on each tape box as well as on the reel itself. A second series of comprehension tapes would then be coded as C2.0 (index²general entry), C2.01 (first tape in the series), C2.02, and so on. This code-number system allows for tapes to be added to a series and is useful for computer identification entry.

For French and Modern Language entries, there is no code on the cards simply because no subdivisions within the language content have been decided upon. The tapes on the shelves, however, have the following identification letters:

²Since French is the first language in Quebec, it is a separate department and therefore not included in "Modern Languages."

- Fr. - French
- Ger. - German
- H - Hebrew
- I - Italian
- R - Russian
- S - Spanish

In summary, a catalog and coding system of this type has a number of advantages. With such a system a language lab director can keep tapes numerically controlled and centrally located (especially master tapes). This is advantageous, not only for technical staff working as lab operators) but also for instructors and monitors involved in lab lesson and program planning. By using a code reference, an instructor, monitor, or lab operator can quickly identify a tape series or an individual tape within a series without having to list title, author, and so on. The card index information can also serve a number of purposes. The relevant cards in an index can be xeroxed and bound in the form of a "courseware manual" for distribution to language departments. In this way, program directors and instructors can plan lab lessons without having to visit the lab each time they want to know what is available, in what format, and so on. A courseware manual of this type can also be shared with other institutions to promote an exchange of information and to encourage standardization of language lab cataloging procedures.

TITLE: <u>Question and Answer</u>		I.G. Alexander (Longman, 1967)	
TECHNICAL SPECS:		TIME:	
NO. OF CASSETTES	<u>5</u>	AVERAGE MINS. PER TAPE/LESSON	<u>29</u>
NO. OF LESSONS	<u>60</u>	*RBS APPROXIMATE MINS. PER TAPE/LESSON SEE TIMING CARD.	
NO. OF LESSONS ON EACH REEL - CASSETTE	<u>Varies (See timing card.)</u>	SPEED:	<u>3 1/2 IPS</u>
FORMAT:	<u>REEL CASSETTE</u>	LOCATION:	
MASTER COPY	<u>X</u>	MASTER COPY	<u>Lab library</u>
DECK COPY	<u>X</u>	DECK COPY	<u>Lab A1</u>
AUDIO QUALITY: <u>GOOD X FAIR</u> POOR		SCRIPT INFO: <u>Book by the same title.</u>	
BROADBAND INDEX:		ESL LEVEL: <u>Intermed.</u> SUGGESTED FOR USE IN GRADES: <u>ESL 100</u>	
REMARKS: <u>British pronunciation. Consists of dialogues followed by questions and answers. Structurally controlled and based on the dialog. Good combination of meaningful + pattern practice drills.</u>			
CC 1.0			

Figure 1

APPROXIMATE MINUTES PER TAPE/LESSON								
TAPE	LES.	MIN.	TAPE	LES.	MIN.	TAPE	LES.	MIN.
<u>1</u>	<u>1-13</u>	<u>28</u>						
<u>2</u>	<u>14-24</u>	<u>29</u>						
<u>3</u>	<u>25-36</u>	<u>30</u>						
<u>4</u>	<u>37-47</u>	<u>30</u>						
<u>5</u>	<u>50-60</u>	<u>29</u>						
*Average less on length: 3 m.								
CC 1.0 <u>Question and Answer</u> I.G. Alexander (Longman, 1967)								

Figure 2