



From the President

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Greetings to you. I hope your year is going well.

Every day brings surprises. Although I have managed the Language Learning Resource Center and been teaching German classes at my institution for more than ten years, I was reminded recently how important it is to be ready for something unexpected. Several weeks ago at a departmental faculty meeting, I gave a brief overview of a relatively modest project in our lab involving the replacement of a few aging cassette tape players with new computers. Unexpectedly, a small number of instructors suddenly began to express their dismay at the “dismantling” of the language lab and the associated embrace of technologies they consider either too complicated or ineffective. They stated their view that the use of cassette tapes is a tried and true practice that by no means should be replaced by such vague practices as “access to digital files via the World Wide Web.”

In a few short minutes I was put into the position of defending what I had considered a rather minor and inevitable change. I discovered that I did not have nearly enough time to explain all of the factors that had precipitated this move: evolving pedagogical approaches, the multi-functionality of computers compared to cassette machines, the nuisance of failing equipment, and student demands and sensibilities, just to name a few. Things you know mostly by heart! And to think that the entire discussion was generated due to the replacement of a small percentage of our audiocassette recorders with computers in a walk-in, library mode lab!

I have reflected on the events of that meeting, and I have concluded that faculty’s fears could have been avoided if I had been pro-active in explaining—in more detail than I had already done—all the factors involved in my decision. If I had this beforehand, I believe I would have had the full support of each and every one. Now I have my work cut out for me—

I need to win back the confidence of the faculty who are especially unsettled about the quick changes taking place in technologies.

Let's not forget, that as educators, it remains vitally important that we remain attentive to the business of adequately explaining the many technological twists and turns that have an impact on language learning and teaching. We may have done all the right research and made all the right decisions, but unless we can win the support and the understanding of the people who use that technology, something is lost. Our role as communicator is equally as important as our role as technology expert.

Happy communicating! ♦