

The IALLT Statement of Professional Responsibilities

Introduction

As a professional association of faculty, administrators, technologists and graduate students who work in various capacities with language-learning technologies, IALLT, the International Association for Language Learning Technology, presents this statement as a service to all language technology specialists. Often, the roles of these specialists - such as faculty member, administrator, and technology professional - are combined. The most common work environment is a foreign/second language media center based at a college or university. Some members work outside a language center but nevertheless interact with it. Some members are employed at K-12 institutions, others in the private commercial sector. Many members are the main, or even the only language-technology person in their institution, which can present problems for professional development and for ensuring appropriate recognition of their role in the institution. In a profession that deals with a large number of different constituencies, technologies and resources, there is potential for misunderstanding as a result of unforeseen, career-changing demands, or insufficiently precise position descriptions.

The purpose of this document is to outline key roles and responsibilities of Language Technology professionals. It has been compiled through a survey of the IALLT membership, and approved by the Board and Council. Members and their supervising administrators, and others in similar roles, are encouraged to use this document as a basis for defining (in writing, preferably in advance) their respective responsibilities and expectations, for the purposes of contract, salary, or other career-related negotiations. Please acknowledge IALLT as the source of the information.

Clearly, no one person is likely to fulfill all of the roles listed below. Variations will be the rule rather than the exception. Institutions also vary considerably in their internal structures and reporting lines, and larger institutions will often divide these roles among several members of staff and faculty. Nevertheless, it is our hope that this document will help to define the professional status and career expectations of language technology professionals.

Typical Areas of Responsibility for Language Technology Professionals

Abbreviations used: LL(T) - Language Learning (Technology) FL - Foreign Language CALL - Computer-Assisted Language Learning SLA - Second Language Acquisition (Theory)

1. Research

Research may not come to mind first when considering the duties of the typical language technology professional. However, it is pivotal: as professionals, all members must conduct a considerable amount of research for strictly practical purposes. Good decisions and good leadership cannot be made without first knowing the current status of the technology affecting language learning and teaching, which is ever-changing. This research requires consistent commitment of time, reflection, and participation in activities where information is shared: online listservs, professional journals, popular media, conferences and workshops.

Some members of the profession are engaged in collaborative or sole-investigator research that leads to academic publication and advancement. Tenure-track faculty who accept a role as technology professionals are particularly advised to agree on the specific expectations for career progress in advance, in writing, with their academic-administrative superiors.

a. Technology - for Professional Advising

Keeping abreast of LLT innovations, such as:

- LL resources (digital and analog)
- Online or distributed learning
- Remote (or wireless) access
- Hardware innovations

b. Pedagogy - for Professional Advising

Keeping abreast of research in areas such as:

- CALL methodology
- SLA methodology
- Pedagogy (e.g., Problem-based Learning, classroom management, curriculum development)

c. Technology and Pedagogy - for Career Progress

Some language technology professionals, especially those with faculty duties, are encouraged or expected to pursue academic teaching duties, research and dissemination, such as:

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- Teaching classes in language, technology or other content areas
- Presenting (at conferences, leading workshops)
- Attending conferences and professional-development activities
- Publishing (peer-reviewed, professional sources, print or electronic)

Often part of tenure-track expectations, these obligations can be seriously compromised by other duties, unless expectations are clearly defined.

2. Administration

Potentially the most time-consuming, most 'visible' and also the most 'invisible' portion of the language technology professional's work, administration requires superior social skills, time-management discipline, and above all, flexibility (for the unavoidable last-minute demands for assistance that are typical of this work). The most visible work includes ongoing activities and relations with faculty and staff. The invisible might involve staff training programs to ensure consistent standards of service, or management training for the administrator her/himself. For those with other responsibilities, administration is the biggest, least predictable variable, requiring the most careful advance definition and re-definition in order to avoid conflicting expectations on all sides. As instinctive 'service-providers,' language technology professionals should beware the open-ended "other duties as assigned." Duties should be defined as closely as possible, in advance. Tenure-track candidates should be especially vigilant in obtaining clearly-defined, written career-progress expectations in advance.

Areas of responsibility might include:

a. Office Management

- Staffing
- Budget
- Correspondence
- Inventory
- Data collection (tracking users and materials)
- Scheduling
- Events planning
- Customer service

b. Lab Facilities Management

- Audio/video laboratory supervision
- Computer lab supervision
- Computer network administration
- User support (orientations, demos, help desk, etc.)
- Library maintenance (acquisitions, cataloguing, etc.)
- Periodic upgrades and renovations
- Standardization

c. Production Facilities Management

- Audio/video recording, duplicating, processing, editing, etc.
- Equipment maintenance
- Skills training
- Permissions

d. Academic Support

- Ongoing faculty CALL training, classroom materials development and editing, courseware administration
- FL student testing and placement
- Student advising (learning materials and strategies, class project assistance)
- Academic department administration (supervision of language instruction, study abroad programs)
- Extended teacher training (Education faculty, K-12 outreach)
- Intellectual property (copyright) consulting

e. Project Management

As principal developer or consultant, the language technology professional is frequently directly involved in project development and maintenance. Duties may include:

- Grant application and administration
- Instructional design
- Developing, evaluating, disseminating digital and analog materials
- Programming
- Training/supervising project assistants
- Website maintenance for faculty or department

3. Liaison and Outreach

These are vital functions and a natural consequence of being involved in a profession which serves constituents from diverse disciplines. Often, they can be linked to the word 'leadership' - an important, if difficult-to-define quality of many technology professionals. Good relations with the campus and other communities have important implications for the department's continuing, and evolving roles, and may have valuable benefits for the profile of the institution, attracting students and research funding, for example.

Liaison takes many forms. The following list is minimal:

- Membership on campus computing and teaching committees
- Library liaison (e.g., on e-text archiving, multimedia)
- Consulting/planning for other institutions
- Publicizing technology-rich events in the community
- Editing journal newsletter, or publishing articles
- Community outreach (e.g., with language-related services for ESL students and other community members)
- Centers for Excellence
- Information/instructional technology offices
- Collaborating with media centers
- Cultural outreach organizations

Conclusion

This is not static, but rather an evolving statement of responsibilities. As an Association of and for language technology professionals, IALLT recognizes the wide variety of institutional structures and individual career paths. We welcome your input as we seek to define and support the wide range of activities of members of our profession. We believe firmly that the unique combination of our roles - in research, language pedagogy, technology, administration, service and outreach - makes a core contribution to the language teaching mission of our respective institutions.

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