

From the President -Elect

**Barbara Sawhill
Oberlin College**

Spring is slowly emerging here in Ohio, perhaps more slowly than in past years thanks to an additional 6 inches of snow that fell in late April. With the change of seasons comes the reminder that the end of the academic year approaches and with it...the annual professional performance evaluations for faculty and staff.

In these times of shrinking budgets and hiring freezes, such evaluations take on great importance. We must justify our existence and define ourselves within a community that might not understand the relevance of our work, even though the history that precedes us is long and rich. In fact, ours is a history that many outside of our field do not know at all, and therefore it is incumbent upon us to not only tell it, but also to strive to create it.

I recently discovered a very large and quite imposing tome called *The Handbook of Research on Educational Communications And Technology*¹ (at well over 1000 pages and weighing in at about 20 lbs, I question the choice of the term "handbook"). Out of the several dozen articles that this volume contains, only one article is dedicated to the teaching of languages with technology. In his essay "Technology in the Service of Foreign Language Learning: The Case of the Language Laboratory," Warren Roby tries to champion the plight of the forgotten language lab by saying that historians of educational technology have largely ignored the extraordinary evolution of the use of technology in the teaching languages. He states "this disregard is startling in view of the extensive use and massive investment in instructional equipment by foreign language educators...the research that accompanied these commitments has not been appreciated by the larger technological community. (Roby 2004, 523)"

Roby continues by adding that in the field of education, while language educators were among the first (if not THE first) to establish a connection between pedagogy and "equipment," the larger educational technology community has not fully appreciated the history of the language laboratory...nor the research that it has generated. (Roby 2004, 538)

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Roby both applauds and condemns the Language Lab: on the one hand he hails it as a remarkable convergence of pedagogy and technology, and on the other hand he expresses concern about the lack of hard evidence that proves if indeed this technology actually accomplishes anything. The article ends with a call for focused research on the effectiveness of “this massive expenditure of effort and money.” (Roby 2004, 530)

This particular comment is not unlike those that we might hear from our schools’ administrators (in particular, the bean-counters) during this season of evaluations and future planning. Technology and the people required support it are expensive. The question is: can we prove its effectiveness using something more than anecdotal evidence?

As the President-Elect of IALLT, I would like to encourage our organization to showcase and support the research that we are already doing within our own profession so that these requests for “focused research” can be answered. I also would like to call upon our membership to make connections with other fields where technology and learning intersect in order that we may collectively and collaboratively learn how to do our work more effectively.

One such place to make connections will be at FLEAT5 at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah this August. I encourage you to come and learn about the important work that our colleagues in the field – both from the US and abroad—are doing. FLEAT5 will be a place to form important partnerships, to share tools, and to gain incredible insights. Finally, this is an event where, thankfully, blissfully, you will not have to define your profession or justify your work...all you need to do is attend, learn, be inspired and ultimately celebrate the work of your colleagues and your profession.

I look forward to seeing you in Provo this summer. ♦

Note

¹David H. Jonassen, ed. 2004. *The Handbook of Research on Educational Communications And Technology*, 2nd ed., Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.