FROM THE PRESIDENT OF IALLT

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A New Milestone for the IALLT Journal

First of all I am extremely pleased, as the President of the International Association for Language Learning Technology, to be part of the relaunching of The IALLT Journal after nearly a two-year hiatus. Life has changed quite a bit for professional journals during this period and The IALLT Journal is no exception. The Journal has moved from a print volume that was an IALLT member benefit that was sold to libraries (and which included print advertisements) to this edition, which is available online freely through our new web site and is now part of the open source movement.

Secondly, I am no less pleased that the Journal editorship is now in the hands of Prof. Lance Askildson of Notre Dame University (Indiana) while also wanting to thank our previous editors, Heather McCullough of UNC Charlotte and Doug Canfield of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

At times since taking over the reins as editor Lance seems to me to have played the role of "Lancelot", donning his armor and struggling with sorting out authors and articles, setting up a new plan for efficient editorial workflow, bringing in new assistant editors, working with the editorial advisory board (and the IALLT Board), as well as dealing with issues in moving the journal from one electronic location to a new one. The appearance of this issue of the Journal is a testament to his hard work and leadership.

For those of you who were regular readers of the previous Journal you'll note some changes, some of which will remind you of the first volumes of the Journal, dating back to the early 1990s. While the Journal is no longer an IALLT member benefit, it remains important for the Journal to benefit IALLT members. And while the Journal will retain its emphasis on the publication of research articles in the field of technology and language learning, it will start to add additional material that will help IALLT members in ways that research articles may not. Thus, we're reintroducing "columns" to the Journal. We hope to have regular columns dealing with issues such as copyright, center management, center design, and one that would summarize some of the issues and discussion that takes place on "LLTI", the listserv associated with IALLT. Other ideas for other columns that would serve the needs of the IALLT membership are very welcome, too. Readers will also note some articles that are not research-based from time to time, too and may involve longer treatments of some the issues brought up in the columns.

This is an exciting time for IALLT with our conference coming up soon in June at the University of California at Irvine, our relaunched web site (which was profiled in a note in ACTFL's The Language Educator this month), our new affiliate relationship with AsiaCALL, our new regional group of IndiaCALL, and certainly not last, nor least, the relaunching of The IALLT Journal. However, it is not such a wonderful period for Language Centers, the "business" of many of IALLT's members, due to the continuing difficulties in the world's economy. A recent exchange on the listserv of (American) Association for Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL) illustrates this. Let me quote from the listserv and my President's blog on the IALLT web site:

> *It doesn't happen every day or even every month. However, I do hear about Language Centers that are being threatened with being closed much too often. The collapse of the world economy has brought more of these notices to me over the last year. I always try to find out the details of the situation. As IALLT President, I have written many letters of support for IALLT colleagues. IALLT has worked on a new statement to the profession about the need for Language Centers. IALLT is the major group in the world for Language Centers after all.*

Since I'm now a department chair (head of World Languages and Cultures at my University for three years and WLAC is the largest department on campus), I now belong to the (U.S.) Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL) and

am also IALLT affiliate representative to this group. They have quite an active listserv for department chairs of foreign languages departments. ADFL is associated with MLA and not ACTFL (sorry about these acronyms for non-U.S. readers). So, the major resource for FL dept. chairs is associated with the Modern Language Association (well known for its interest in literature and literary study) and not the American Association of Foreign Language Teachers (which certainly focuses on language teaching as well as culture and literature teaching). I don't want to put too much emphasis on this, but it does seem that FL dept chairs in the U.S. are often quite associated with literature and literary study, too. So, I wasn't surprised to get this ADFL listserv recently from another FL dept. chair:

> *For a while now my department have been expressing concerns related to the language lab (sic) as being obsolete for the students' learning in the age of omnipresent technology. We would like to transform the space in the language (sic) lab into a place where we can possibly integrate the following: tutoring/writing center cultural activities faculty/students formal/informal interaction language honor societies meeting places etc. If you went through a similar process already, would you share with me your ideas?*

The Past-Past-President of IALLT sent me this note within minutes of its being posted. I took a while writing my response to this note and finally posted it that afternoon. Here is my response in full:

> *In reference to the question about Language Centers, I would like to suggest a different path than eliminating a language technology center. In fact, I would suggest that enhancing it would make more sense than eliminating it. The best Language Centers are very much multimodal. They include areas for group work, tutoring, and cultural activities. Some include kitchens for making food from target cultures, even. However, they also include all types of technology that can be used for individualized instruction as well as group work. One of the things I've seen over the years is that having a central location whose job it is to support second language acquisition using technology and staffed by professionals is one of the most effective aids for students. If students know that there is a place where they will be welcomed and receive the very best of help for their language study, they will make a bee-line for this place.*
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> *I'd be glad to give more details about how such a Center can be designed and staffed. However, let me also give the Chairs a resource they may not know about. The International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT) is a wonderful group of language technologists who are very generous in their willingness to help with Language Centers of all types. This group has its own journal, a variety of publications which range from a Language Center Design volume (new edition coming out very soon), a Task-Based Activities volume, a Management Manual, etc. Its web site is http://www.iallt.org. And one more link: here is a link to the Center of one of the IALLT board at Notre Dame University. http://cslc.nd.edu/. I think that this Center is a very good example of what is possible.*

The following day, I was very pleased to see another chair had also written a response. This chair wrote to say that his University's Language CENTER (my caps) fulfilled all of the functions the posting's chair was looking for as well as helped with technology support and training. Since he's not an IALLT member, I don't think, (although he might be a regional group member), I won't quote his note.

Finally, IALLT's Past-President, Nina Garrett also posted a note to the same listserv. Here is her response:

> *One of the most important functions, which seems not to have been emphasized so far in this discussion, is professional development for language-teaching faculty and graduate students -- and not only the development of tech skills. In many (if not most) of our institutions language teachers are not tenure-track and receive little if any support such as workshops, conference travel money, financial support and staff support for summer projects developing pedagogical materials or planning new curricula, etc. Graduate students in foreign literature departments are often told that writing a brilliant dissertation should be their primary goal and that their teaching is of secondary importance—but in job interviews they find that without serious professional development as language teachers they will be at a disadvantage.*
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> *Technological sophistication is a big part of this, and the language center's facilities need to support work along these lines, but there's much more to it than that. And undergraduate students need much more help in understanding what language learning really entails, and why and how it is essential to an internationally grounded education—not just a requirement to be checked off with minimal effort—than just being shown how to do web-based activities. Check out the Center for Language Study at Yale University (http://www.cls.yale.edu) to get an idea of the range of activities that a well-supported language center can support.*
>
> *Nina Garrett*
> *Retired Director of the Center for Language Study, Yale University*

I think all of these notes should give those of you who work in the field of language learning with technology a lot to think about. I certainly believe in a strong center that gives real student and faculty help.

On that, positive, note, I wish you happy reading of the Journal and invite your participation in its future.

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