



# *The IALLT Journal*

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## **LLTI HIGHLIGHTS**



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Thirteen years ago, I entered the world of computer-assisted language learning as the Manager of a language lab at a Canadian public comprehensive university. Initially, I felt out of my depth, having little experience in the field, but I navigated our lab through some tough transitions with the help of the fantastic professional contacts I gained through the LLTI listserv and IALLT organization. While the topics on the LLTI listserv have changed over the years, the brain trust that this list represents is still as invaluable now as it was then, and now there is the added camaraderie of the IALLT Facebook group. So when the editors of the IALLT Journal approached me about regularly contributing a column on the LLTI listserv and IALLT Facebook group discussions, I was honored.

From October 2012 through April 2013, Conversations on the listserv and on Facebook covered lab management, placement testing, distance learning

challenges, software and hardware solutions, announcements and just some fun, friendly *esprit de corps*.

## **LANGUAGE LEARNING CENTER MANAGEMENT**

Copyright concerns are semi-regular conversations on LLTI. In October, Sonja Fritzsche (Illinois Wesleyan University) raised a question about the legality of having a separate, dedicated DVD-Rom drive for a non-region-1 DVD. Derek Roff (University of New Mexico) explained that under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) “it is illegal to circumvent technology-based content controls”; however, this wording is open to interpretation, and one interpretation could be that “any use of software or hardware to play non-region-1 DVDs could be viewed as circumvention” (LLTI post #9872.4), but he further offers 5 options for LLC's ranging in legal risk and convenience. Some specific tools were also offered by LLTI'ers that could be used to deal with region-code issues: DVDFab Passkey, VLC Player and Non-regional DVD players.

Both LLTI and the IALLT Facebook group had posts with questions about LLC staffing. On LLTI (#9937), Keah Cunningham (University of Kansas) inquired about the importance of a master's degree in Educational Technology for obtaining a non-entry level tech position in a LLC. Several similar responses answered that significant experience in the field and an appropriate skillset can be adequate substitution for education; however, it also depends upon the priorities for the lab and the position, and also on the culture of the institution (e.g., credibility with faculty).

Transversely, Mikle Ledgerwood (Samford University) inquired via Facebook whether a Director position would be more desirable as a 9-month (maybe 12-month) non-tenure (but essentially permanent) Faculty position or as a 12-month staff position. This inquiry also garnered multiple responses, which included ideas such as: the opportunity to teach is attractive and important for testing new ideas; faculty rank is important but lessened if doesn't include tenure; staff appointments are attractive to many with family obligations because of the flexibility around time off; 12-month appointments are more logical as time in Summer is needed to finish off the the year, perform maintenance and prepare for the next Fall; and again the culture of the institution needs to be considered as well as the difference in benefits offered.

## **PLACEMENT TESTING**

In the last few months, there have been several inquiries about placement tests and placement testing solutions on the LLTI listserv. Gisele Khoury (St. Lawrence University) asked what placement tests LLTI member institutions use for foreign language students (#9979) and Georges Detiveaux (Lone Star College, Cyfair) asked what others were planning in the wake of the news that WebCAPE would have new pricing and be serviced by a third-party vendor (#9902). Several placement tools were suggested and discussed: the "new" WebCAPE was discussed; Erica Andree (Pacific University) responded that her institution is currently planning to pilot Avant Assessment's Placement test for student placement and the STAMP test for L2 proficiency at the end of instruction; and several posts talked about the SLUPE exam from Saint Louis University. No clear answer for best placement test product was offered at this time, but it seems that there may be a number of new pilot studies in the works to test these other tools.

In addition to these more open inquiries, there were also inquiries about commercial placement tests for LCTLs. Judi Franz (UC Irvine) inquired about available Arabic placement exams (#9943) to which Annelie Rugg (UCLA) responded, that her institution has a test in development, but that it is not yet available. Similarly Hadassah Nemovicher (Jewish Theological Seminary) sought a Hebrew placement test that was interactive, self-grading, and Internet-based, but did not receive any responses on-list.

## **DISTANCE / HYBRID LEARNING & LMS CHALLENGES**

Placement testing was also a subject for LMS Challenges. Jack Burston (University of Cyprus) posted (#9916) that they were looking for a way to create a computer adaptive placement test for ESL that would run on Moodle. He inquired if Moodle could run an executable program. Carly J. Born (Carleton College) answered that if not a module built for Moodle, it would only be deliverable as a downloadable application that would need to be downloaded and run locally. She also noted that a lesson module could allow for branch-based testing based on student answers but that it isn't the same as a fully adaptable test. Dan Nickolai (Saint Louis University) responded that SLUPE features limited LMS integration including support for Moodle: students could be authenticated through Moodle and would be re-directed to the SLUPE server to take their

adaptive placement test; however, student scores would not be sent back to Moodle but would remain on the SLUPE server.

There was talk of Moodle and placement testing in relation to the capture of handwriting too. John A. Lynch (UCLA) inquired if it was possible to use a tablet to capture handwriting of Asian scripts and have handwriting capture file be submitted in the appropriate place in a student's placement exam in Moodle (#9914). One inventive option was presented involving an image capture app, a repository such as Dropbox, and students performing some manual "connecting" of the file to the Moodle question; however, upon further testing and reflection on the processes and the permissions and quiz functionalities required in Moodle to perform the processes, it was determined that the functionality did not exist in Moodle quizzes to allow for the proposed solution. Keah Cunningham (University of Kansas) suggested looking into a Bamboo Pen Tablet by Wacom, which makes it possible to write directly into Word, Adobe Acrobat and even web browsers, using Tablet PC input panel (Windows 7). He noted that its success would depend on whether the WYSIWYG editor in Moodle would support it. Unfortunately, there was no indication on-list if this was a workable solution.

John Lynch (Center for Digital Humanities) queried also on how he could share a physical whiteboard from his physical classroom with students who are remote and joining via Skype or other video-conferencing solution (#10006). Several potential solutions were suggested: 1) a document camera positioned to project the image of a physical whiteboard, 2) projecting the conferencing tool's digital whiteboard on the physical whiteboard (with the option of a large tablet for writing capture), 3) interactive whiteboard (e.g., MimioCapture) and desktop sharing through a videoconferencing tool. Keah Cunningham (University of Kansas) noted that using Skype's screen sharing function with more than one connection requires a Skype Premium subscription and that both group calling and screen sharing work better on Skype for Windows than Skype for Mac.

## **SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE SOLUTIONS**

Barbara Baraff (City College of San Francisco) asked whether GoogleTalk or Skype were an appropriate low-cost solution to replace an aging Sony partnering system. Kate Hammond (LangLabResources) and Derek Roff (University of New Mexico) expressed reservations about using either Skype or Google Plus Hangouts in a classroom setting because of network / broadband usage issues.

Google Plus Hangouts were considered to be more reliable than Skype with less freezing and sound problems, but issues could still be overwhelming. Barbara Baraff later inquired after reviews for ReLANpro language lab software (#9951) but unfortunately no replies were received on-list.

Dennis Meek (Trinity College, Duke University) sought assistance with solving a Microsoft Word Asian script issue (#9913). A faculty member was transitioning from using Mellel to Microsoft Word because of issues with multiple copy/paste operations. He would like to use "Indian" numbers as footnote numbers, but while he could use them in the body of the Word document, he could not use them for footnotes. Clayton Mitchell (Drake University) replied that Arabic and Hebrew in Office for Mac is not fully supported and is a known problem for Microsoft. He suggested that instead of changing word processing software, the faculty member invest in a clipboard history program such as iClip or CopyLess. Keah Cunningham (University of Kansas), however, was able to offer a step-by-step guide as to how to use Indian numerals with Windows 7 and Office 2010 (#9913.3).

### **SOME UNANSWERED INQUIRIES**

Unfortunately, some inquiries on the list do not receive shared responses although responses may have been received off-list. Those unanswered inquiries not yet mentioned are listed below in an effort to help generate a response.

- 1) Jack Burston (University of Cyprus) sought information from anyone with experience with the Radix Tablet controlled management system for class pcs and tablets or any other similar system (#9964).
- 2) Edwige Simon (University of Colorado, Boulder) sought an up-to-date list of CALL programs (minor, certificate, MA or PhD) in the U.S.A. and abroad (#9974).
- 3) Stacey Powell (Auburn University) sought a faculty development needs assessment survey that would cover a broad scope of technology-based training wants and needs (#9991).
- 4) Jessamine Cooke-Plagwitz (Northern Illinois University) sought a model / template for a center utilization study for student usage, student traffic, etc. (#10003).

## **ANTICIPATION FOR FUTURE AND REMINISCING ABOUT THE PAST**

In the spirit of reminiscing, there were two separate inquiries after memorabilia of CALL history. Mark Oremland (Mundolingua) sought a 1970s style language lab carrel for a languages and linguistics museum in Paris (#9947), and Daniel Tom (University of Hawaii) sought videos that showed early language labs in use as well as contributions of photographs of old CALL artifacts (with descriptions) for an exhibit on the history and evolution of the Language Lab (#9971). Perhaps inspiration for the latter, Mikle Ledgerwood had posted to Facebook in November, a YouTube video of former IALLT member, Bruce Parkhurst, showing students how to load a reel to reel. If you are curious, the URL is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkbhcW4tpYo>.

Of course, on the IALLT Facebook group page, recent conversations have turned to anticipation of the upcoming IALLT 2013 conference in Fort Lauderdale. The conference promises its usual wealth of invaluable sessions, and memorable social activities that foster professional and informal connections between the international membership of IALLT. When you should see me there, be sure to stop me and say hello!

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Deanne Cobb-Zygodlo** is the Director of the Language Resource Center at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. She researches and recommends new technologies for language teaching to language faculty members, manages the day-to-day operations of the LRC, supervises staff and also has responsibilities that include language program advocacy (as Co-ordinator of the KU World Languages Day), and participating in the development of K-12 teacher professional development programs. Personal interests include language assessment, 21st century learning, distance learning, gaming the classroom, and augmented reality. She has worked in the field of CALL and language center management since 2000, and holds a Master of Arts in German from the University of Calgary (Canada).

## **ABOUT THE COLUMN**

LLTI Highlights is a column that examines current issues within the Language Learning & Technology International (LLTI) Listserv community.