

## **DIAL ACCESS RETRIEVAL VS THE TAPE LENDING LIBRARY — AS WE SEE IT**

*by Douglas Schwenker and D. Chambers  
Language Laboratory, University of Guelph*

### *Introduction*

The results of a research project undertaken in the Language Laboratory at the University of Guelph may be of interest to prospective buyers of dial access equipment, particularly those on limited budgets.

We serve approximately 1500 language students at the University of Guelph. Our dial system consists of sixteen dial access positions, with thirty automatic and ten manually operated, program sources. Two and a half years ago when this system was originally installed, it was wired into our two main laboratories, a thirty position record laboratory and a thirty position audio-active laboratory. These laboratories could only be used for individual study during the time they were not scheduled for regular classes. It took approximately one semester to find out that it is impossible to make a classroom into a library part-time, or vice versa, and maintain an efficient operation. The following semester the sixteen dial positions were removed from the teaching laboratories and set up on a temporary, experimental basis, in a separate library lab which remained open from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

### *Dial Access or Tape Recorder*

The first semester's operation of this library laboratory proved it to be a very desirable addition to our laboratory complex. Students were often waiting in line for an available position, and the instructors began to design special course material that could be done at the student's convenience. This fantastic interest in the library laboratory soon brought up the question of expansion. It was decided that, before additional dial access equipment was purchased, our past records should be analyzed and that a cost and time study should be undertaken to determine the efficiency and desirability of our present system. At the same time several makes of recorders were purchased and a token tape lending library was set up in order to evaluate the merits of the tape lending library as compared to those of the dial access system.

**Dial Access**

For the sake of simplicity we will itemize the results.

DIAL ACCESS	<b>COST: Dial Access</b>	1 program source	\$200.00	x	U
	(per student per program)	1 dial module	300.00		
		1 student recorder	500.00		
		wiring and equipment	100.00		
		cabinetry			
			\$1100.00		

Additional students can dial into the same program at an added cost of \$900. per student. *if eliminated x \$200.*

Additional program sources may be added at a cost of \$200. per program source. (Based on the figure of \$800. for a four track four channel automatic program source.) ③  
\$600 MORE  
FOR FOUR  
PROGRAM  
SOURCES

~~(Furniture not included) = DOORH.S.?~~

TAPE RECORDED	<b>COST: Tape Lending Library</b>	1 student recorder	\$500.00	→ HOW MANY?
	(per student per program)	1 program tape	1.50	
		total approximately		\$501.50

Additional programs are available at \$1.50 each

(Furniture not included)

**STUDENT CONVENIENCE: Dial Access**

The student has no control over the program once it has been dialed. The program must be transferred to the student recorder before the student can control the lesson to review his or her individual problems. Taped dictations are almost impossible unless the student can control the speed of presentation. If a student wishes to review only one exercise in a half-hour lesson, that student may find it necessary to wait as much as 25 minutes before obtaining the specific exercise. If "A" student dials a program and "B" student dials into the same program five minutes later, "B" student must listen to the balance of the program before returning to the beginning to hear the instructions (for the program).

**STUDENT CONVENIENCE: Tape Lending Library**

The student has complete control over the program at all times. No time is wasted transferring the program to the student recorder. He or she may select any exercise in the lesson, obtain it almost immediately, and review that exercise any number of times before proceeding to another.

**LABORATORY OPERATOR CONVENIENCE: Dial Access**

The limited program-source dial access system appears to be more of a nuisance than it is worth. There seems to be no such thing as the thirty most popular programs. We have approximately 300 lessons in our first two semester courses alone. In addition to these we have all our advanced course material, literature, folk music and recorded lectures from our department and others. On close examination we

## Dial Access

found that during a one week period we handled approximately 600 different programs. No matter what programs were in our automatic banks, they never seemed to be the programs requested. It was necessary to do the majority of our programming on our manually operated program sources, which is far more time consuming than simply handing out a tape.

### LABORATORY OPERATOR CONVENIENCE: Tape Lending Library

A checkout system was set up using student cards as collateral for tapes. Initially the students had to be shown the operation of the recorder; of course this was also necessary in the case of the dial system. The majority of our material required only one student copy. This required no more work than making up a copy for the dial system. However, for our more popular beginning courses three sets of student copies were made available. Very seldom did the demand exceed the supply, but when it did, the students generally requested another lesson until the one they required became available. HOW MANY  
A SET?

Breakdowns and damage to student operated equipment during the test period was negligible. Moreover, only six student tapes were damaged, and two of these to such a minor extent that a piece of splicing tape was all that was necessary.

### CONCLUSION

1. Our original impressions of the dial access retrieval system were probably the same as those held by many people; "It is the ultimate in an information retrieval system." Now we are not so sure.
2. The novelty of "dial a lesson" is very nice and although dial access could eventually provide for campus wide information retrieval, does the convenience justify the cost? Definitely not on a limited budget.
3. Dial access could possibly become practical on budgets above \$250,000.
4. Study carrels and equipment designed for the tape lending library system can be converted to operate with a dial access system at any time if the proper equipment is installed initially.
5. Since the inauguration of our tape lending library, the use made of our dial access system has continually decreased as our supply of student library copies has grown. *and then 3 sets?*
6. In many cases, students will wait in line or come back later if our limited number of library study carrels are filled rather than use the dial system.
7. Students claim, and we are forced to agree, that they can accomplish far more in much less time when they are in complete control of the master program.
8. Our expansion program will definitely follow the tape lending library line with our dial access equipment operating in an auxiliary capacity for special programming and overload. LOCKED NOT A  
PROBLEM