

PROPOSAL: AN AREA AUDIO-RESOURCE DIRECTOR

There are three major language-teaching needs which could be effectively and economically met through the services of an area audio-resource director. First, there is a continuing need for teacher training in the use of language labs. Next is the need for better language lab maintenance. Thirdly, there is a need for an audio-skills and audio-reference listening system complementary to the language laboratory. This system would go beyond languages and serve many other facets of the curriculum as well.

Teacher Training

As a regular part of his responsibilities the area director would train teachers in the use of lab equipment and give instruction in lab teaching methods if he is also competent in this field. At the very least he could make arrangements for teachers to meet at the individual schools or at an area resource center for lab workshops. Workshops at the schools themselves are more effective since instruction in the use of one's own equipment, not just similar equipment, is best remembered. For the methods instruction, competent lab directors from high schools or colleges are available in every state.

Lab Maintenance

Aid for stricken language labs has been needed for years. In many instances, the very value of the labs in a teaching and learning system has been called into question because teachers saddled with labs in disrepair are unable to use them properly. Having a lab director normally solves this problem since the lab then has the frequent care it requires. Unfortunately, the cost of having a full time or even part time person strictly for lab care is prohibitive in most schools. For this reason, a *shared* area resource person, an itinerant lab director if you will, would both efficiently and economically handle the language lab needs.

Operating out of an area resource center, the traveling audio-resource director could handle 10 to 15 schools per week, depending on driving time and the extent of the audio-reference and audio-skills practice system at each school (Fig. 1). He or she would spend from two to four hours per week at each school after the initial organization of the system.

Audio Resource Director

The area director would be responsible for:

- a) minor repairs
- b) preventive maintenance
- c) noting major repair and replacement needs
- d) recording materials and making copies
- e) cataloging of materials (where desirable)
- f) central purchasing of supplies (where desirable)

For more constant lab care and to free the audio "tinker" to attend to more schools, most of the routine preventive maintenance could be done by students or other part time help in the schools. Two students could be trained in half a day to handle the routine maintenance of the lab. The students would keep charts which the director could use as guides.

Audio-Reference and Audio-Skills

The third major language teaching-and-learning benefit available from an area audio-resource director is the opportunity to estab-

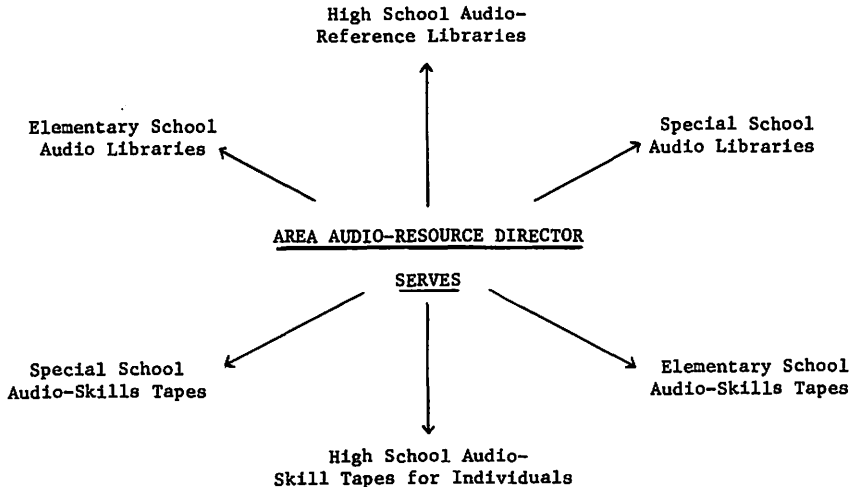


Fig. 1 - Cassette and Services Distribution

Audio Resource Director

lish a low cost comprehensive audio system for all schools in a given area. In order to be comprehensive the system must serve both audio-reference and audio-skill practice needs.¹

Audio-reference needs reach into every area of study. Literature, whether in English or a foreign language, along with music, history, and other subjects have extensive audio-reference materials. The problem, of course, lies in making these materials available efficiently.

An area director or a person under his direction can duplicate on cassettes all the audio-reference materials needed by the schools of the area. Most audio materials are appearing now on tapes as well as discs and publishers' changing attitudes toward copying will make it easier to copy tapes for educational purposes.²

Once the materials are on tape, cassette copies can be made for the audio-reference libraries at all the participating schools. The director would keep a master file of these cassettes for replacing those that are lost or damaged.

¹We have begun this system at Kent State University with the intention of serving not only the departments on campus but the regional campuses as well.

²Holt, Rinehart and Winston permits copies to be made for individuals and McGraw-Hill allows unrestricted copies of purchased tape sets.



Fig. 2. For spoken audio-skills practice, a carrel is recommended to limit noise. (Photo by Karen L. Snyder)

Audio Resource Director

The individual schools would keep their cassettes available for checking out wherever the cassette players are kept. This would normally be the library media center, language lab or listening center. However, a cassette player with a headset could be used almost anywhere (Figs. 2 and 3). Not only does the player make no noise but room noises would not bother the student wearing the headset.

True *individualization of audio-skills practice* is the most important aspect of the cassette duplication facility. This individualization makes possible the "massed aural exposure"³ necessary for language learning. However, not only language tapes but also shorthand, code, reading for the blind, or any other audio materials can be made available on a loan basis to almost any number of students. When a set of tapes is duplicated on cassettes, each student in a class can be given a cassette lesson tape to be used wherever the school has the cassette players, whether that be a language lab, library, or resource center.

³Elton Hocking, *Language Laboratory and Language Learning* (Washington: NEA, 1967).

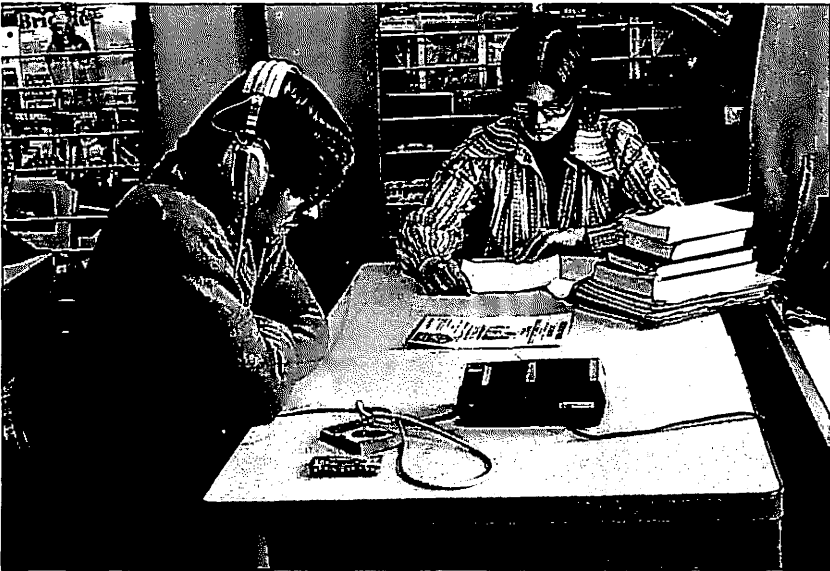


Fig. 3. Audio-reference materials may be heard anywhere, noiselessly. (Photo by Karen L. Snyder)

Audio Resource Director

A complete set of the next lesson would be on hand in the individual school for exchange when the students are ready to go on. When the entire group has finished a lesson the teacher or librarian would exchange the set of tapes for the next set which the area director would supply. The school could keep sets of at least two lessons on hand at all times. There would be no problem for the area director to keep all schools supplied with cassettes since duplicators come in a variety of capacities to suit any situation (Fig. 4).

The individual cassettes can be used by students in any school. It is not necessary to have a language lab to make full use of the language tapes in this system. However, since the student works alone, it is not possible for this system to replace a language lab where the teacher is present.

The system of giving each student a cassette tape to take with him as he would a book, lends itself perfectly to home study. Many students already have cassette players and the cassette loan system would encourage others to buy them. If the individual school has duplication facilities, or if the area director's facilities are manned full time, individual requests from students could be accommodated. Supplying his own tape, the student could have copies made and build his own audio library at home.

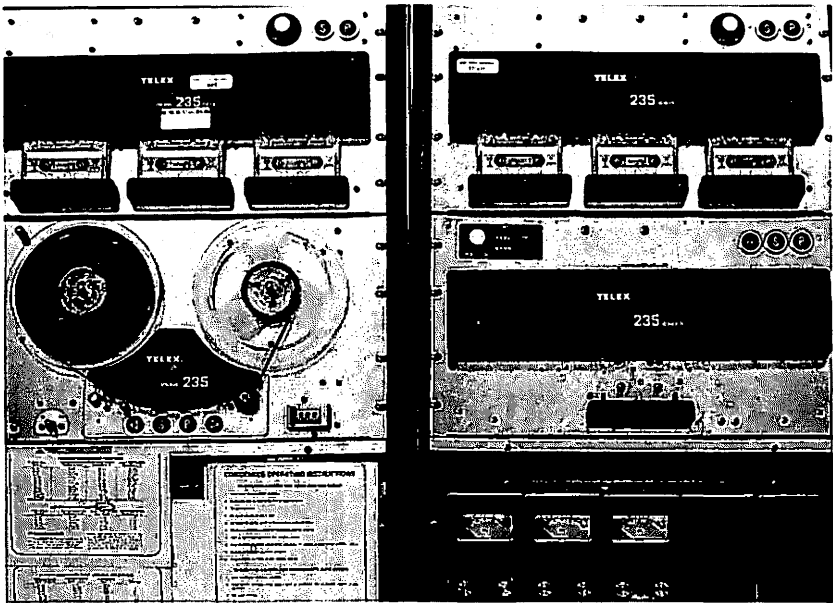


Fig. 4. The duplicator above will make 86 C-60 copies per hour (two slave units, 3 copies each) from either a reel or cassette master tape. More slave units may be added. (Photo by Karen L. Snyder)

Audio Resource Director

Cost Approximation

The area director should be a person on 12-month contract. The summer months are needed for preparing materials and repairing equipment and materials.

Any person familiar with audio-visual equipment would be able to perform this work. Depending on the number of schools and the part time help available, this work could be of a full time audio-visual position. It might also be considered part of the responsibility of a mobile media-center, since the only restriction on the number of schools to be served is the ability of the director to get to them at least once a week.

Personal costs will have to be determined according to salary levels in various areas, as will the cost of the room for housing the equipment.

\$_____ Salary for the Area Audio-Resource Director
_____ Travel costs
_____ Part time help
_____ Space for office, storage, repair, recording
and duplicating (approx. 600 sq. ft.)
\$_____ Total (personnel and space)

Equipment

The players, headsets, duplicator and other equipment items vary greatly in price from one manufacturer to another. I have listed figures below which, from my experience, would purchase adequate equipment.

\$11,200 150 listening positions and 10 spares (\$70)
3,600 Duplicator: reel-to-cassette and cassette-to-cassette; nine copies at a time; 15 ips
1,000 Recorders, turntable and misc. small equipment
4,500 Loan cassettes for skills practice. \$3,000 if school or students buy first set and use this to trade for the next and so on.
1,800 15 audio-reference libraries of 50 playing hours each and one master cassette library. There would be additional labor costs if the material for reference libraries is not already on tape.
\$22,100 Total first year equipment (second year=\$00)

Unit Cost

Since this equipment would be used for both reference and skills practice, the cost would be pennies per student-use even in the first year of the equipment purchase.

Audio Resource Director

I have one final comment in regard to the need for an area audio-resource director. As great as the need for teacher training and for audio-reference and skill cassettes may be, the need for language lab care is more pressing. If something is not done in the near future, the language labs that are left will not be worth an itinerant director's dam!