



# New Installations

## STUDENT OPTIONS IN LAB FOR CREDIT

While many foreign language departments have been faced with falling enrollments and reduced requirements, a few have been able to weather this storm without too many casualties. One manner of managing this has been to increase student options in the language laboratory (as well as in the language courses). The University of Southwestern Louisiana has achieved a measure of the former by making the previously required language laboratory course (two hours per week for one credit) an elective course, and by allowing students who register for credit to work in the laboratory at their own convenience so long as they accumulate 20 hours of lab work during the semester.

Although the laboratory was installed in the fall of 1972, subsequent modifications have reduced our experience with the current format to two years, the period on which we base the following report.

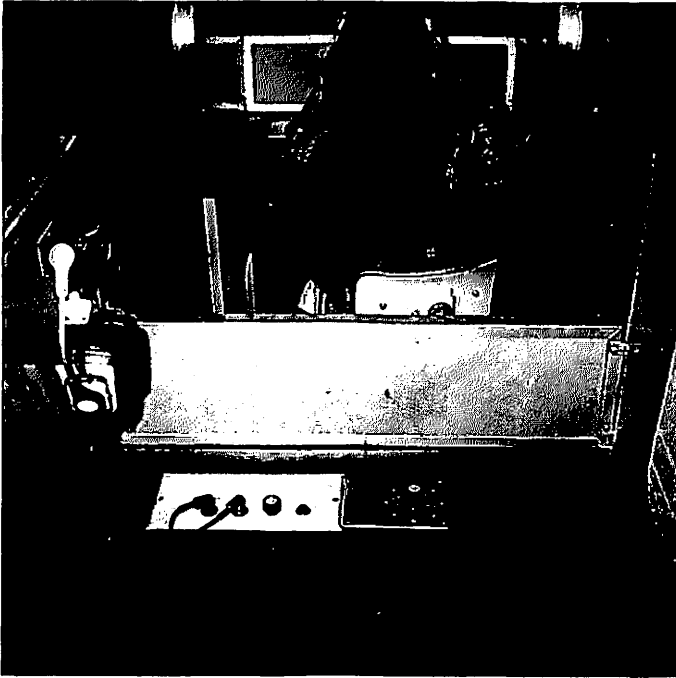
Some three years ago, when the number of hours required in various curricula was reduced throughout the university, some departments in the College of Liberal Arts dropped their foreign language requirements from four semesters to three semesters (and a few to two semesters). At the same time, to accommodate the university-wide curriculum changes, the foreign language department decided to make optional the 1-hour required lab course that had accompanied the first three language courses. The decision seems to have been a wise one. Although only approximately one-half of the students in the first three language courses now enroll for lab credit, other students spend considerable amounts of time in the lab in preparation for their courses. By splitting the relatively large lab (131 students positions) into credit and non-credit portions, it is possible to provide adequate supervision for the former without inconveniencing the latter.

The second element of flexibility is the replacement of the scheduled two periods a week by the 20-hours per semester requirement. This is accomplished by having students punch in and out on a standard industrial time-clock, a new time card being issued to each student each week. Our particular clock salvaged from the maintenance department permits students to come to lab as many as three times per day, which has proved to be quite adequate. Other clock models permit almost unlimited coming and going in a single day. At the end of each week, the cards are collected and totaled by student aides as

## **New Installation**

part of their laboratory duties. The student places his card in a rack near the booth where he is sitting, and quick visual inspection by a laboratory supervisor or student worker can determine if any students are attempting to "keep the clock running" while they are absent from lab (a type of behavior every required-attendance operation must unfortunately face occasionally.)

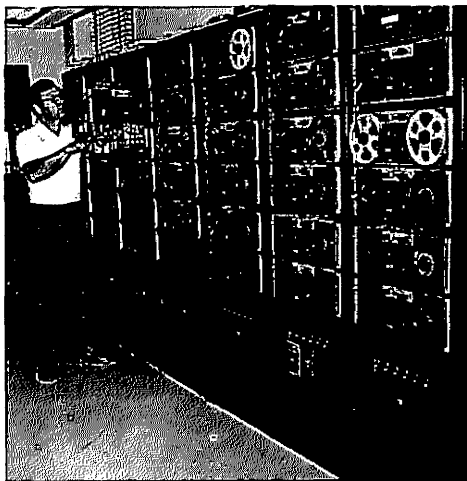
The 131 carrels are the standard 30" wide by 48" high (Raytheon Model STB), 95 being audio-active, and 36 being audio-active, record, television. Modular student amplifiers are Raytheon Model SP150 and are entering their fourth year of use with virtually no problems. The headsets are TELEX Model 240-19. Our particular batch had a defective mike boom, but Tolex continues to replace or repair defective sets at no charge.



The student record position contain Raytheon model SP3700 dual-track recorders, a 9-inch Admiral television monitor and a double A.C. outlet for student use of filmstrip and slide previewers. The only difficulty with the recorders has been the need for occasional replacement of the pressure pade, and student roughness has damaged few fine-tuning controls on the TV's.



As the photo indicates, students have a selection of 23 audio-channels available at any time, including one channel for each language which plays a different popular song each day. The source decks are Raytheon RP-9511's with audio-recue features via foil sensing and clear re-cue tape. Half of the 46 source decks feed the French (and Italian, when offered) side of the lab, the other decks (plus a Garrad SLX turntable) feeding the German, Spanish, Latin and English-As-Second-Language side of the lab. Over 60% of our enrollment at USL is in French - hence this division. For purposes of dealing with large groups, (testing, for example) the throwing of a single switch allows any of the 46 sources to feed the entire lab.



## **New Installation**

Rather than devoting any set number of channels to a given language or level, posting a weekly syllabus, etc, the system uses the format of constant flexible demand. Following teacher assignments, or by consulting the simplified tape numbering system posted at the entrance to the lab, the student contacts the console operator to determine on what channel his tape is playing. If the tape is not playing on a source deck, the console operator asks the control room personnel via intercom for the number of a channel on which the tape is not currently in use, and the tape is taken down and the newly-requested tape is put on the source deck. The entire process takes approximately 60 seconds. In this manner, students have access to whatever tapes they want and source deck malfunctions do not necessitate changing postings on a bulletin board, etc. It also accommodates upper level course sections without investment in several copies of the same tape, for students find the system more convenient for needs than a library system. Although the source decks are four-track playback units, it was determined more practical to use the single track on each tape, rather than doing the painstaking work of attempting to put four programs of nearly equal length on one tape, filling in with a tone or music, and generally increasing the possibility that a student would have to come in on the middle of a tape program already playing. Also, if a student is the only person listening to a given channel, he can cause it to rewind in mid-stream merely by dialing off it for a moment.

In the extremely rare event that all 23 channels for either half of the lab are in use, the student can always be instructed to sit on the other side of the lab, and his tape will be played there. Obviously students who wish to work more intensively than on the 10-15 minute lesson segments can borrow or purchase their own tape, record a given segment at a "record booth", then work slowly through their own versions in the standard record-compare mode. They are also encouraged to bring their own cassette recorders and patch cords so that they can make their own recording of any lesson portions they wish to review "at home."

Although the frequent student calls take up a great deal of the time of the console operator, they do produce in students the notion that the operator is there to assist, and this reduces embarrassment when the operator monitors individual students, or when students wish to ask for assistance. Because of the student credit hours provided via the lab-for-credit option, the console can be manned for 34 hours of its 43-hour week by a faculty member assigned to the lab, the remainder of the time by language majors.

## **New Installation**

An afterthought, but none-the-less effective addition, was the creation of two lab-within-lab arrangements. A 27-position portion of each side of the lab can be taken from the purvue of the master console by throwing of a switch, and these two-mini-labs are then supervised by their own miniature consoles also within the main console enclosure. Thus a faculty member can work with an entire class in lab or, because the number of positions taken from the main console is flexible, worn with a small group of students seated in a given area.



The student who sits at the record-television booth also has access to the 23 audio channels as well as three video channels—two of which are fed IVC 700 videotape recorders. The department has studio-grade cameras and a switcher-fader console on which it has produced some video programming to accompany textbooks in use, but the major source of programs are video tapes of FL instructional films for which permission has been given to copy for in-house use. The third video channel is the campus wide channel on which FL programming can be made available on request. Students from the foreign language methods classes can also see demonstration lessons and view their own micro-teaching experiences via this system.

Although the language laboratory is located on the first floor of the humanities building and the nine foreign language classroom (as distinguished from FL seminar and conference rooms) are on the fourth floor, the video channels and three of the audio channels can also be received in the classrooms, the TV being handled on 23" Admiral receivers and the purely audio programs being broadcast via loudspeakers in each room. Each room also has an intercom line to the lab control room to facilities starting programs on cue, reviewing certain segments of a videotape, etc.

## **New Installation**

The work of student aides (employed at the rate of two per hour through federal and state student aid programs at no direct cost to the department) consists of issuing time cards, computing the time, changing and maintaining the tapes on the 46 audio decks, dubbing or recording from the studio by means of two 1024 Magnacord units, or dubbing onto cassette or 8-track formats for student and/or faculty use.

The 120-foot short-wave radio antenna stretched across the roof of the building provides live radio programming from around the globe which can be fed into any of the program sources, along with any other live programming desired. This is also true of live video programming.

Besides the 3/4 time faculty member for the console, the student credit hours produced permit the employment of a 3/4 time lab supervisor who handles slight-to-moderate maintenance duties and a 3/4 time lab director whose duties are primarily administrative. Both of these persons are also available to the department for assisting with the making of transparencies, and filmstrips, setting up recorders and projectors, etc. Major maintenance problems are handled by the campus-wide electronic service program, an adjunct of the department of electrical engineering, while major television maintenance is handled by the chief engineer of the campus department of Radio and TV.

While this particular laboratory operation requires intense work on the part of the console operation and student aides during peak hours, it has been found to provide a great deal of flexibility for students and instructors who are no longer rigidly bound to a course syllabus. It further permits students from upper level courses and from infrequently-taught courses to use the lab at their convenience. In addition, any university student, alumnus or faculty member can use the laboratory, and several programmed courses from other disciplines were piloted there before other facilities were found. Any member of the community can use the lab, even if he takes no other university courses, for the payment of a \$15 lab use fee.

With the exception of the video programming which we would like to correlate more closely with course work, we have found that these various means of increasing student options have given the lab fairly heavy use, and have provided a good return on a \$120,000 investment.

University of Southwestern La.  
John F. Kunkle.