

# REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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Most of the regional groups are less than two years old. Although many are still finding their way in terms of structure and organization, some are beginning to fulfill their purpose in taking the benefits of IALL closer to home.

In this issue we would like to highlight the NorthEast Association for Learning Laboratories group (NEALL), one good example of how IALL-type activities are now becoming available on a regional basis.

The Fall '91 NEALL meeting was held on October 26 and 27 at Rutgers University. Some thirty NEALL members from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania attended the event, which was hosted by Marion Yudow of the FAS Language Labs at Rutgers. The following is adapted from the *NEALL News & Notes*.

In the opening session on "Lab Management," four panelists described conditions at their respective institutions, after which many of those in attendance joined in a general discussion about the operation of various types of learning laboratory facilities.

Faced with the typical problems of faculty and student reluctance to use "old-fashioned" facilities, Diane Iglesias described the development of a "language laboratory without walls" at Lebanon Valley College (PA). Instead of installing a new lab along traditional lines, the school opted to give its Media Services Department responsibility for language learning equipment and materials so that they can be used in a more natural interactive setting. Centrally located in the campus library, materials are available to all students and can thus be used in connection with other subject

areas as well as for language practice. Faculty who wish to use audio or video material in class can request to have equipment set up, and students can use materials in the Media Service Center or borrow audio tapes for individual study.

**Connie Thomas** of Ithaca College (NY) described a twenty-position audio lab located on the fifth floor of the school library, where it shares space with the Instructional Resource Center, making it possible for students to go back and forth between audio and video material. The lab staff consists of a full-time director and eight to ten international students. In addition to practice in the lab, which is open 14 hours a day, students can have tapes duplicated for work outside the lab. Communication is maintained with all faculty members to advise them of lab needs and services. The main problem noted was the separation of the lab from foreign language classrooms.

A secondary school perspective was provided by **Robert Tracy** of Ridgewood High School (NJ), who teaches French and directs the thirty-position lab with the assistance of one full-time staff person. The languages requiring lab use are French, German, Spanish, and Chinese. Approximately forty class sessions are held in the lab every week, in 20- to 22-minute modules, primarily for students in lower-level courses. In addition, the lab produces a lot of take-home tapes. Computer-assisted instruction is also available in the lab, using some handed-down equipment.

The last panelist, **Robin Lawrason** of Temple University (PA), discussed factors which influence the effectiveness of a lab: location, space, materials, and staff. The

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Temple facilities enjoy a suitable ground-floor location, but do not have very much flexibility due to the lack of flat space, making it difficult to have much teacher-student interaction. Another important factor is the integration of taped material with classroom activities; toward this end, teaching assistants are required to familiarize themselves with the lab material, and to encourage students to use the tapes throughout their courses. In addition to in-lab practice, students participate in a distribution system in which they buy the first two tapes of a series and then bring them back to be erased and recycled with new material.

The preceding was a sample of what took place in just *one* of the sessions! The remainder of the NEALL conference included additional excellent presentations by NEALL members on "Computer-Assisted Instruction" (**Leny Struminger**, Rutgers), "Video in Language Teaching" (**Lida Baldwin**, Washington College), and

"Creating Talking Courseware" (**Thomas Thibeault**, SIU).

The conference also included a business meeting where, among other things, the name was changed to NEALL, a \$10 annual membership fee was instituted to help cover the cost of the newsletter, and where **Robert Henderson** agreed to continue serving as regional President until elections are held next Fall. Another innovative approach was taken to hold smaller, sub-regional mini-meetings in the Spring, with no formal presentations. This will allow greater participation due to decreased travel costs and time commitments. We'll be interested to hear how these turn out.

As the NEALL group has shown, regional groups can be of great value to all of us, whether we can also attend the international IALL meetings or not. IALL encourages all of its members to become involved in their appropriate regional groups. Remember: **YOU COUNT!**