CONFERENCE REPORTS

IALL '91: "SUCCESS IN THE LANGUAGE LAB"

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IALL's second biennial convention met June 25-30 on the beautiful campus of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Our thanks go to Kathleen Ford, Director of the Language Laboratory at UCLA, who coordinated the event, and to UCLA's Office of Instructional Development, co-sponsor of the gathering. And no small thanks are owing to the Associated Students of UCLA, who catered the morning coffees as well as the two evening dinners. We were especially looking forward to that "Southern California Welcome" on Wednesday evening the twenty-sixth, and we were not disappointed (except, maybe, for that nippy breeze?). The workshops had begun earlier the same day, covering topics such as lab planning and interactive video. A tour of the extensive facilities of the Office of Instructional Development concluded the working part of the day.

A lucky few whose schedule permitted them to arrive a day early were able to take in a two-day seminar on the use of the Sony "Hi8" video system. Sponsored by the SONY Corporation and conducted by Murray Wilson (President of Technical Production Services of Savannah, GA), the course aimed to introduce us to the concept of desktop video as a communication medium and to give us hands-on experience in producing a video of our own. Mr. Wilson repeatedly stressed that video production has become too complicated and expensive, while the advantage of Hi8 is that it brings superb quality to a format that is both economical and inherently easy to use. The Hi8 equipment and the tape cassettes it uses are more compact than other formats, and the editing system is so simple that even inexperienced instructors can shoot and edit their productions in the space of a single morning, thus saving a great deal of money.

On Thursday morning, June 27, about ninety of us assembled in the auditorium of Fowler Museum for the formal opening of the conference. Kathleen Ford and Dr. Larry Loeher (Director of the Office of Instructional Development) welcomed us to UCLA. Ruth Trometer, outgoing president of IALL, presented the members of the IALL board and introduced us to the incoming president, LeeAnn Stone. The day's theme was "Lab Management," and Ms. Stone brought on the first keynote speaker, Richard M. Ruggiero (Professor of Instructional Technology, California State University, Northridge).

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Mr. Ruggiero lost no time in answering the question posed in the title of his talk, "Will new technologies drive organizational changes in the language lab?" He responded with a firm Yes! The technologies available today, he explained, challenge the "paradigm" we inherited from the '50s, when the language laboratory was a central depository for expensive equipment that required skilled personnel to operate and service it. Today, departments are buying their own equipment. Some faculty members have their own video libraries, which they can show in the classroom. Production and maintenance services, too, have left the media center. What can we do to defend ourselves? Urging a pro-active approach to change, Mr. Ruggiero first recommended that we develop what he called "creative media services"; that is, we should get involved with media production. Next, we should shift our emphasis from the language laboratory to a (multi-user) learning lab, which he finds schools support better than a language lab. Finally, he advocated we look more closely at redundancies that may be occurring at our institutions: we can attain greater efficiencies by centralizing personnel, equipment, space, record-keeping and cataloguing.

More than two dozen breakout sessions followed this and subsequent general sessions. Their titles offered a tempting smorgasbord of topics but only a few highlights can be covered here. (Apologies to those who are not mentioned!) The afternoon of the 27th three presenters gave their views on "Generating non-budgeted income: survival technique or beginning of the end?" Read Gilgen (University of Wisconsin, Madison) opened by saying that the talk would *not* be about finding grants. Instead, he addressed the question of how to deal with a shrinking budget. Overall, Read cautioned us to be wary of requests from administrators and departmental chairs to charge for our services. Might we not, he proposed, favor the money-making activities at the expense of others? Might not a "chargeback" system just shift the costs elsewhere? For example, departments may have to cut into their budgets to pay our fees. It is better to decrease services, in his opinion. Meanwhile, work hard, he concluded, to raise your base budget: showing that you can manage funds responsibly makes a good impression. Bruce Parkhurst (Boston University) spoke next, entertaining us with her "nickel-and-diming" methods to raise funds for needed equipment and programs. Bruce turned the floor over to John Huy (University of Kansas), who emphasized that at his institution charges are strictly for the purpose of recovering costs. In conclusion, Read urged us not to be "tempted by easy money": we should focus our attention on convincing deans that our departments serve needs.

In the next breakout session William Cline (Professor of Spanish, Eastern Michigan University) spoke to an issue raised at some previous gatherings: "Interactive video: one monitor or two?" He took for granted at the outset that video excels at bringing the student a cultural context for spoken language study, while the computer offers the advantage of controlling the pace of instruction. The question here was, Do students using a single-monitor workstation learn more than students using dual monitors? Working under a two-year Title VI grant, Mr. Cline and two EMU colleagues developed five identical Spanish culture lessons for the two different kinds of workstation (an IBM clone with one monitor and a Macintosh SE with a separate video monitor). The researchers found that students using one screen did not "apparently" learn significantly more than those using two screens. The students did, however, express a distinct preference for an icon-based interface (unlike that on MS/DOS). For their part, the course developers found that the Mac-based "Course of Action" was the easier software to use and that costs of software, hardware and set-up time definitely

favored the Mac environment.

Janet Wohlers followed Cline, speaking from her experience as a curriculum developer at Weston High School, Weston, MA. The school, she noted, hires outside evaluators to test students' proficiency in learning languages — so serious are they about proficiency. Wohlers' own goal is to make equipment as easy as possible for the faculty to use. She buys industrial-quality equipment, stressing the need for durability (such as in the case of the "pause" feature on a videotape machine). Her language lab stocks VHS and standard 8mm video exclusively as the production media. Ms. Wohlers encourages student participation in her activities: she invites them to help her develop visual exercises on computer and tapes the skits the students create.

Thursday's late-afternoon general session was devoted to Chubu University — site of the FLEAT II conference, which is set for August 1992 and jointly sponsored by IALL and the Language Lab Association of Japan. LeeAnn Stone announced that IALL is offering up to $500 each for 20 persons to travel to Japan for that event. Yoshinobu Niwa (Professor of English at Chubu University and President of the Language Lab Association of Japan) used a videotape to illustrate how a video studio and an "SI" (self-instruction) room at Chubu are helping students learn English more congenially than the tedious Grammar-Translation Method used in the classroom.

That evening we gathered in Royce Hall for the regional groups dinner. The food was imaginatively prepared and the company delightful. Thanks again to Ms. Ford and the Associated Students of UCLA!

Friday, June 28, was Multi-Media Day at the conference, and James S. Noblitt (Research Professor of Foreign Languages, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) delivered the day's keynote address: "Technology and Language Learning." He proclaimed that in the last 18 months it has become evident "technology can do it"; i.e., can produce successful results in language pedagogy. Therefore, he sees a shift of emphasis to what he calls "sociology," basically a change of relations among the faculty, administration and the language lab (which he envisions becoming a "resource center" or "language center"). Since faculty members have no time to develop courseware, he said, the media center can fill this role. He used "Système D," of which he is co-author, as an example of software currently available. Another product — now in prototype — called "Listening in French," demonstrated what multimedia can do in the way of providing contextualization. In the end, Mr. Noblitt left us with the concept of the "three-legged stool," an ideal situation in which 1) we encourage the leadership of faculty "who believe the message" (of technology), 2) our labs provide close technical support for their efforts, and 3) we find a champion in the administration.

Among the breakout sessions scheduled for that afternoon was "Computer Virus 101," aimed at a non-technical audience by Paul R. Estes (Director of the Language Lab, Arizona State University). Mr. Estes confined his talk to the IBM environment, which — it turns out — is less easy to infect than Mac systems. In the IBM world, at least, the blinking lights on the disk drive will signal unusual activity (booting up takes too long or the computer addresses the various drives in the wrong sequence). By the time he finished his remarks Mr. Estes could not reassure us that one software supplier or product could protect us completely. He did, however, leave us with a list of sources to consult.

Renate W. Albrecht (Director of the Language Lab, Stanford University) shared her experiences in developing an interactive video course called "Mundraub," intended for second-year German students. Her project began with a 15-min. videodisc

prepared from a German TV program of the same name. With a Mac SE, HyperCard and disc-segmentation software called "Video Note," she broke the program up into seven sections and further "segments" for convenient student reference. A variety of exercises she worked out drill students on content (as opposed to grammar). Among the features her students like in the program is: 1) it enables them to exercise control and 2) it allows them to focus on details in the dramatic action they might otherwise miss. A value Ms. Albrecht found in this kind of endeavor was that it "credentialized" the developer with the faculty: "You can do this, too!"

That afternoon's general session was devoted to the glories of E-mail. After going into the technicalities of how the system works and what you need to get on it, Read Gilgen pointed out the pluses of using E-mail:

- most of us have no colleagues on campus, so networking can bring us into contact with colleagues elsewhere;

- E-mail allows us to communicate quickly and inexpensively (a show of hands indicated that few of us are charged for bitnet); and

- E-mail eliminates phone tag (which is not only annoying but expensive).

He also suggested that E-mail could be useful for collaborating on reports. Marie Sheppard (University of Colorado, Boulder) told us about her discovery that E-mail could put her students in daily contact with people in the "target culture." There are, she said, bulletin boards at universities all over the world. The discussion that followed brought up one serious limitation of the present networking systems — the lack of non-Roman or accented fonts to render certain languages.

"Faculty involvement" was the theme of Day Five of the conference. Nina Garrett (Professor of Modern Languages, Cornell University) led off the day's presentations with the third keynote address, "Faculty involvement in CALL: Challenge or threat?" Up to now, she asserted, the faculty involved in computer-aided language learning (CALL) have been those excited by its potential. Now the challenge is for us to interest those who feel threatened by technology. But the answer does not lie in simply linking technology to traditional pedagogy. Research, she believes, holds the key to motivating faculty to come around to the view that technology can lead to new ways of teaching. The "neat thing" about technology (i.e., the computer and programs) is that it can collect all kinds of data on what happens in language learning — something we can go to the faculty with. The next steps are getting the intelligent use of technology into methods courses and then truly integrating technology into the curriculum (that is, not just using it for add-ons). She saw us meeting this challenge with a teamwork effort combining the theory of second-language acquisition with teaching technique and technology.

One of the morning breakout sessions was devoted to "The use of video in the classroom and learning lab." Evelyne Charvier-Berman and Mercedes Thompson (both from El Camino College) took turns with this topic, sharing their considerable experience as teachers of Romance languages. They were clearly sold on video as an instructional medium, pointing out that students live in a "media-saturated world" and that sight is the dominant sense. Before they let the audience sample some of their own productions, they set out a detailed list of theoretical principles on the preparation and use of video course material in the classroom. Among their points of advice:

- make sure the lesson presented to the student is well-structured (i.e., do not simply send the student to the lab to view a video without instructions, exercises, etc.);

- personalize the lesson (i.e., relate the content of the video to the life of the student);
- use images to the full (what colors do the students see?, etc.);
- keep the video exercises short — about 3-5 minutes; and
- use the video at any time in the course of a class.

In the afternoon Thomas F. Thibeault (Director of the Language Media Center, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale) approached the topic of courseware development from a broader perspective in his talk, "Managing in-house courseware development." Although Mr. Thibeault himself came to the conclusion that doing courseware on his own was the only way to get the results he wanted, he weighed the disadvantages and advantages of in-house development. Among the disadvantages he noted were the limited funding and staffing you may find at your institution. Again, your product may have limited marketing potential, while your marketing know-how itself may be inadequate. Finally, the people you work with — like the student help — are non-professionals. But the advantages seem to outweigh all these objections. As an in-house developer, you are in a far better position than an outsider to assess needs at your institution. You can continue to improve your own product, getting feedback from your students. Campuses have many resources that can help you: an audio-visual department (they can help you scan images for your program); a department of education (they can provide people already trained in computer-aided instruction); computer sciences departments (they can offer advice on technical hook-ups); and so on.

A general session rounded out our activities for IALL '91. Pamela Castro (Coordinator, CESL Lab, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale) reported on some results she obtained from a study of 20 Spanish-speaking students learning English. Among her findings was that the language lab is important in helping students to remember the English they have learned. (Many of them know no other English speaker besides the teacher.) She found, too, that the lab helped to reduce the students' anxiety level as they looked forward to taking the TOEFL test. But she learned that the lab did little to overcome the resistance to learning associated with the students' age. (The average age of her students was 35.) In the end, Ms. Castro was left with inconclusive results concerning the value of the language laboratory in improving student mastery of English.

Read Gilgen wound up the presentations with a word on the *IALL Journal*—particularly with a view to encouraging our contributions. He first cited John Huy for doing an excellent job in bringing in more ad revenues and Kelly Nelson for "holding the whole thing together." He stressed the efforts of the journal staff in making the publication more practical (i.e., less theoretical) and in putting it on a regular schedule. But why should we submit our work for publication? He pointed out the advantages of sharing our ideas with others and of satisfying our institutions' demand for publishing. Refereeing is available for some articles, making them eligible as works that satisfy the publication requirement. The three annual deadlines for submitting material to the journal are: September 1, January 1, and April 15.

In her closing remarks LeeAnn Stone invited our sincere applause for Ruth Trometer, the outgoing president. Ruth, Ms. Stone said, has been behind the strengthening of IALL in the past few years. With that, we concluded the conference — valuable for both lessons learned and the ties we have made and renewed.

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

WELCOMES IALL '93

A visit to the University of Kansas is pleasant any time of year. But its gently rolling hills, abundant flowers, shrubs and manicured lawns make it especially pleasing during the spring and summer months.

The campus is located atop Mount Oread, also called the Hill, a tree-covered overlook studded by limestone buildings with red-tiled roofs. Although the distinctive university skyline can be seen for miles, the University of Kansas is regarded by some as one of the nation's best kept secrets.

The main campus of 26,436 students is located in Lawrence, a growing community that has retained its small-town character. The city offers eclectic boutique shopping in an historic downtown and a variety of restaurants and entertainment.

The Watkins Community Museum is one of 17 city structures on the National Historic Register. A restored 19th Century opera house is another downtown landmark.

Back on the Hill, the Museum of Natural History is ranked as one of the top tourist attractions in the state. KU's Spencer Museum of Art is unsurpassed as a university art museum. It houses a 21,000 piece collection and art library. The university schedules outstanding offerings of music, theatre and dance. In intercollegiate athletics, the Kansas Jayhawks compete in the Big-Eight Conference.

Membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities provides national recognition for the breadth and quality of research and teaching at the University of Kansas. KU is 15th among public universities in number of freshmen National Merit scholars enrolled in fall 1989, the most recent year for which figures are available.

Easily accessible, the campus is only 50 minutes from Kansas City's Mid-Continent International airport. And the amenities of the metropolitan area including jazz, barbecue, shopping, museums, concerts and sporting events are nearby.

Convinced you should see KU? Plan to attend the 1993 meeting of the International Association for Learning Laboratories. Discover the University of Kansas for yourself!