

LLTI HIGHLIGHTS

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Welcome to "LLTI Highlights!" This is my first of a continuing feature, upgraded to column status to reflect the impact of the LLTI. I hope it will be a helpful section for all—both seasoned users and those who are just beginning to catch a whiff of some of the good things that are being cooked up on the LLTI listserver. I must say that as someone who is NOT a computer expert but is a regular user of LLTI, it has become difficult to imagine my job as a language lab director without this service. LLTI allows lab personnel to correspond with each other on issues that concern them daily: equipment needs, software, AV materials, lab management, professional concerns and announcements, and more. It is a great feeling to know that you have almost instant access to a large group of colleagues who have many of the same problems and questions you have. LLTI represents the first ongoing "town meeting" of lab directors! As you can see, I am very enthusiastic about LLTI, and I hope you can share in its benefits. In this issue I will first offer a review of some of the basic features of LLTI for newcomers, followed by a summary of several interesting discussions which have taken place in the past few months.

LLTI—THE BASICS

LLTI stands for Language Learning & Technology International, and has been introduced in previous issues of the *IALL Journal* (see Vol. 24, No. 1, Winter 1991). In a nutshell, it is an electronic forum used primarily by language lab professionals to discuss the many issues that are relevant to their everyday work. LLTI was begun in 1991 by Otmar Foelsche and colleagues at Dartmouth College, and has now grown to incorporate a worldwide audience of over 300 subscribers, a number which is growing steadily.

LLTI is available free to anyone with a Bitnet or Internet computer connection. The LLTI is a moderated discussion list, meaning that messages posted by users at their individual computer stations do not appear instantly for other subscribers to see, but rather are reviewed or "moderated" by Otmar Foelsche or Joel Goldfield at Dartmouth and Plymouth State Colleges and then posted to the list. To join in the fun, you need to subscribe. See the end of

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this column for information on how to do that.

LLTI—THE HIGHLIGHTS

One of the nice things about LLTI is that there are NOT hundreds of messages being posted every day, as compared to some lists. It is not an ordeal to read all of them, and most lab professionals will find that most discussions are relevant to their work. Below is a sampling of some of the topics that have been discussed in recent months—along with a brief summary of the discussions that developed. *All exchanges have been paraphrased in my own words.*

Videodisc Pricing

A lively discussion emerged on the pricing of videodiscs. The concern expressed was that the high price of certain videodiscs, especially the “good” ones produced by university faculty, was becoming a deterrent to the actual use of the discs. If they are going to become part of the curriculum, how can a lab afford to buy many copies? An observation was made that if the price of videodiscs didn’t come down, they would be replaced by CD-ROM programs, a trend that others see as likely anyway. One LLTI subscriber shed light on the high pricing structures, explaining that the foreign language disc market is so small that publishers are skeptical about making any profit and are often simply trying to recover costs. How can we work with publishers to make everyone happy?

One solution offered was to promote the distribution of materials by smaller firms that do not spend as much on marketing and can live with lower volume and profit. Another suggestion was that perhaps all labs need to begin requiring students to pay lab fees—or “course fees”—to offset the cost of expensive lab materials. But can we ask

them to pay money for something they cannot keep when the class is finished, as they can do with their expensive textbooks? Hey, come on, those biology students who pay lab fees aren’t complaining—at least not to us—and no, they do not take those frogs home with them....

As you can see, this spirited discussion was full of real concerns that affect the ultimate mission and role of the language lab, how it interfaces with instruction, and how we are going to pay for all of the technology and materials. Let’s not go the way of the frogs....

New Macs?

An inquiry was made about new Macintosh models. If one is in the envious position of investing in new machines for CALL, which Macs would LLTIers recommend?

The Centris 610, the Centris 650 and the LC III were mentioned. Both Centris computers come with a built-in CD-ROM drive. Although the 650 is more powerful, the 610 was reported to have built-in Ethernet, a feature favored by one respondent.

Equally as interesting as these specific technical considerations were the other comments which slipped in, such as “it is vital to get faculty involved” in selection and production of the software, otherwise you may end up with “a shell of equipment” with no good software inside. Other excellent suggestions were: to acquire a mix of machines, the fastest one being the server; and to try to plan for a periodic purchase of new machines, say every two years.

Lab Floors

What about vinyl for a lab floor?

Universal agreement on this one: carpeting is better. It's quieter and more inviting. One person indicated that it may even be cheaper to maintain than vinyl. With regard to static electricity, it is important to choose a "commercial type carpet with antistatic protection". A good-quality carpet should hold up well with regular cleaning. One catch—no carpet can stand up to coffee spills.

Instructional software

Many inquiries were made about which types of software people could recommend. A lot of good software seems to reside at individual institutions, and it may or may not be available to the public. In response to the need for knowing more about which software programs are "out there", a consensus appeared to be forming that what was needed was a "software initiative" in the form of a computerized database that would list, annotate, and perhaps even review software products. The "LLTI-IALL Directory" (see below) may be a large step in this direction. *[Editor's note. The software database is a major IALL initiative. See President's Page, page 5.]*

THE NEW "LLTI-IALL DIRECTORY"

Otmar Foelsche, LLTI moderator, has announced that a new dimension has been added to our computing possibilities. IALL, in conjunction with Dartmouth's Kiewit Computation Center and the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning, is now supporting a new service called the LLTI-IALL Directory. This directory is available via Gopher from host gopher.Dartmouth.edu and via anonymous ftp from ftp.Dartmouth.edu (for more information about Gopher or "FTPing",

contact your academic computing department). This new directory contains files which will be valuable to IALL members and others. It contains these subdirectories:

- Calendar
- Demo-Software
- Dropoff
- IALL-Database
- IALL-Publications
- Jobs
- LLTI-Archive
- Notices
- PD-Software
- Reviews
- Subscribers
- Templates

This service is still being developed, so some of the subdirectories are not yet accessible. One of the features of the LLTI-IALL Directory is the Dropoff box, which will allow users to submit or "drop off" files for inclusion in the directory. The directory will be supervised by Otmar Foelsche at Dartmouth.

The directory promises to be very valuable, and will provide, along with general news of interest to IALLers, a database of information about computer software relevant to foreign language teaching. We're looking forward to seeing how this service takes shape!

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE TO LLTI

First, you must have access to Bitnet or Internet so that you can use electronic mail. Your "E-mail" I.D., which becomes your "E-mail" address, must be obtained from your institution's computing services department.

To subscribe to LLTI, send an electronic message to:

LISTSERV@DARTCMS1.BITNET

LLTI Highlights

or
listserv@dartcms1.dartmouth.edu

Type the message:

**SUB LLTI yourID@hostname
yourfirstname yourlastname**

When your message is received, the listserver will respond with a message describing various basic procedures. You can now begin receiving messages posted by the other users. You can respond to any of them by sending a message back to the same address you used to subscribe.

To learn more about LLTI, send a message REVIEW LLTI. If you have problems, you may send mail directly to Otmar at

Otmar.Foelsche@dartmouth.edu

Or, contact a fellow LLTIer!

*Contributions/suggestions for the "LLTI Highlights" column may be sent directly to David Pankratz at Language Learning Resource Center, Loyola University of Chicago, 6525 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60626, (312) 508-2846, or electronic mail:
YLGODLP@LUCCPUA.BITNET*

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