

# LLTI HIGHLIGHTS

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Welcome again to "LLTI Highlights!" This is my second contribution to a column which reflects the important role of the LLTI (the Language Learning & Technology International listserver). This electronic forum is being used by an increasing number of language lab professionals to discuss issues relevant to their everyday work, as well as issues of consequence in the future. For information on how to subscribe to the LLTI, see the end of this column.

As in my last column, I would like to offer a paraphrasing of some of the discussions that took place on the LLTI in recent months. There were several very stimulating ones, some with a definite eye toward the as-yet-up-for-grabs future of the language lab. Also included is a section on accessing the LLTI archives, information which is of interest to everyone who would like to check into topics previously discussed on the LLTI.

## TOPIC: VIRTUAL LEARNING CENTERS, OCT. 1993

Excuse me? As one philosophical reader, Ursula Williams, mused, "What is the relationship of Virtual Learning to, say, Real Learning?" But seriously, a very lively and future-oriented discussion was motivated by a leading question posed by David

Hanson of Colby College: "Now that multimedia computers are useful in language learning, and networks can extend the reach of such learning to other sites (including dorm rooms!), has anyone been thinking about expanding their Learning Center activities over the campus network?" His question was met with over a dozen good responses and even opened up a discussion on whether or not the traditional language lab had indeed become a "dinosaur."

Most readers agreed that the extension of many language lab services to other locations has already been occurring for a long time, beginning of course, when students started doing their audio lessons from cassette tapes at home. Read Gilgen used the analogy of the "rare books room" in the library to demonstrate that language labs have, or at least should have, long since given up that model as a prototype for lab operations. An increasing number of materials and services can now be "let out" and used outside the walls of the lab. This is becoming increasingly so as software is networked and thus made available all over campus. As one reader commented, this

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change is well underway, and it is our job to define its course.

Eloquent arguments were made, however, for the value of face-to-face social interaction in the language learning process. These exchanges cannot occur over cable, but rather rely on good old human contact. Some schools evidence this by the extensive and creative use of the traditional console language lab.

The middle ground was taken by Cindy Yetter-Vassot, who emphasized that the so-called virtual learning environment will never replace teachers, but that it is an "opportunity to allow students with different learning styles and different levels of language proficiency to finally get the sort of personalized instruction they need..."

A word of caution aimed at administrators and budget planners was expressed by some readers. If one is tempted to think that the "language lab without walls" will save money, think again. Materials will always be expensive, especially site-licenses for computer programs, and the wiring, cabling and technology needed to distribute programs all add up to a substantial cost. Also, don't forget that the need for professional technical personnel will not diminish—if anything, it will increase.

### **TOPIC: SCOLA FRENCH SUBTITLING, OCT. 1993**

Several readers reported that they wrote letters in "very strong words" to SCOLA to complain about the recent subtitling of the French news broadcasts transmitted by the SCOLA satellite feed. No one was quite able to determine SCOLA's policy or plans on this issue. It seems as if SCOLA users were left to their own devices, and language lab directors seem well-suited to finding creative, practical solutions. Solution 1: Tape cardboard to the bottom of the TV screen

so that the subtitles aren't visible. Solution 2: Pull the plug. Solution 3: Use newspaper instead of cardboard; static electricity causes the newspaper to cling elegantly to the screen, eliminating the need for messy taping.

*[Editor's Note: According to SCOLA, the French transmission is sponsored by TV-5 from Quebec. Since Canada is officially a bilingual country, TV-5 adds English subtitles to the broadcasts. SCOLA is attempting to make subtitling an optional service.]*

### **TOPIC: ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR LAB WORK, OCT. 1993**

Readers were asked to give their thoughts and experiences regarding whether it is feasible and/or prudent to set up a program whereby students receive one hour of academic credit for lab work, presumably individualized work. This idea was reported to have been proposed by one university's administration to reduce classroom teaching time.

All respondents assumed that this scenario would require that students spend a certain amount of time in the language lab. In the experience of most, this is of questionable value. Students who have merely been required to "spend time" in the lab feel imprisoned, do their biology homework, sign in their friends, resort to vandalism, etc. The time spent in the lab is only valuable if the user is doing activities which are integral to the curriculum and are followed up by classroom activities. One reader mentioned that if the idea is to propose regularly scheduled sessions with an instructor in a console lab, most schools are not able to do this because there are too many classes and not enough labs.

Some examples were given of how things are structured at various schools. Victor Aulestia reported that students at

UMBC (University of Maryland, Baltimore County) meet three hours per week with the teacher, and a fourth hour with a native speaker for conversation. Conversations are often based on material students learn from viewing video tapes in the lab. For the hour of conversation they receive a fourth hour of credit—not for the lab time itself.

The questions raised are: even if you try to free up teachers for one hour, who would be responsible for making decisions on what students are doing in the lab, how would they be monitored, are the assignments really effective, how will follow-up be done? Lab time should not be thought of as “down time” for faculty or staff.

#### TOPIC: VIDEO REWINDERS, OCT. 1993

##### Recommendations for videotape rewinders?

- Get one that works like a VCR, otherwise the “bang” at the end of the tape could stretch it.
- How about buying an inexpensive video player and using it only as a rewinder?
- Use old “broken” VCRs as rewinders.
- Try a Solidex Model 828. Durable, cost \$15 – \$20 each. (The “bang” didn’t seem to be an issue of concern for this respondent.)

#### ACCESSING THE LLTI ARCHIVES

Have you ever been hesitant to post a question to the LLTI because you recall that there has already been a discussion on that same topic? Do you remember someone offering good advice on a given topic, but don’t remember who it was? I’m sure there are plenty of “yeses” out there. Did you know that all LLTI discussions are archived?

Following is information on how you can access previous discussions.

In March of this year David Avery of the Kiewit Computation Center, Dartmouth College, posted a message to the LLTI in which he provided the basic steps for searching the LLTI database. He has informed me that the searching procedures remain unchanged. The information provided here is based on his original posting and recent discussions with him. The steps outlined below are intended for those accessing LLTI through the Internet. David points out that Bitnet users on a VAX/VMS or a VM/CMS computer can search the database interactively and are not dependent on the email interface described below. (David Avery’s email address is david.avery@dartmouth.edu.) Otmar Foelsche notes that for those who do not like to search the back files of LLTI on a CMS system, all files can be downloaded as Stuffit files to your own machine. They are located at <ftp://ftp.dartmouth.edu/LLTI-IALL/LLTI> archive.

##### *Contacting the listserv*

All database inquiries are made by sending email to the listserv at this address:

listserv@dartcms1.dartmouth.edu

##### *General Queries*

- To obtain general information about database searches, send an email message to the above address with the one-line command: SEND LISTDB MEMO

- To get a list of the archive files, send a message with the command: INDEX LLTI

- To get a particular month’s archive, send a message with the command: SEND LLTI LOGyymm [yearmonth]

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### Word Searches

Very helpful searches can be done by asking the listserv to locate LLTI postings which contain a particular word which is part of a topic or relates to a topic you are researching. For example, there have been several exchanges on the software program "Transparent Language." You can search the database for the word *transparent*. This will locate all postings that contain that word anywhere in the text. Postings may pop up that have nothing to do with the software program in question, but simply contain that word used in some other context. Therefore, it is important to search for words which you assume will appear primarily in postings related to the particular topic you are researching. Postings are listed along with their subject headings, however, so that you can usually tell which postings contain the desired information. Examples follow.

To receive a list of the postings containing the word *transparent*, send the string of commands:

```
// job echo=no
database search dd=rules
//rules dd *
search transparent in llti
index
/*
```

When I tried it, I received the message "Database LLTI, 19 hits" along with a list of the 19 postings, including subject name and when they were posted.

You can limit the search by adding a date, such as "since sep 93":

```
// job echo=no
database search dd=rules
//rules dd *
search transparent in llti since sep 93
index
/*
```

### Reading the Postings

To receive the actual text of the postings, send the command string:

```
// job echo=no
database search dd=rules
//rules dd *
search transparent in llti
index
search transparent in llti
print body
/*
```

### Things to Remember

To the best of my knowledge, the command strings must be typed as they appear here (although they do not seem to be case sensitive). You must type the commands one line at a time and include all slashes, asterisks, spaces, etc. Do not include your name, signature lines, etc., after the command string, as this will confuse the listserv.

Finally, happy researching! Listserv responses to searches are very fast—in most cases a matter of seconds. Searching the database may save you from having to wait for an important topic to reappear if it has been addressed previously on the LLTI.

## HOW TO SUBSCRIBE TO LLTI

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

To subscribe to LLTI, send an electronic message to:

```
LISTSERV@DARTCMS1.BITNET
or
listserv@dartcms1.dartmouth.edu
```

Type the message (Important! In your message, the following must be entered on a single line):

```
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 Foelsche at [otmar.foelsche@dartmouth.edu](mailto: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 Chicago, 6525 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60626, (312) 508-2846, or electronic mail:  
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