

LLTI Highlights

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Welcome again to "LLTI Highlights," a column featuring summaries of selected discussions which have taken place on the LLTI—the Language Learning and Technology International listserv. This electronic forum is used by language lab professionals and others to discuss issues relevant to their everyday work. For information on how to subscribe to the LLTI, see the end of this column.

The discussions summarized here have been paraphrased; any omissions, errors or misinterpretations are mine. For each topic, the number in parentheses which follows it was assigned by Otmar Foelsche, LLTI moderator. This number can be used to facilitate a search of that topic in the LLTI archive, which can be a valuable research tool. A new web-based method for conducting archival searches is described in the "LLTI Archive" section below.

All-in-one TV/ VCR (#3265), February 1997

All-in-ones? Combo units? These combination VCR and monitor units have been popular for about ten years, especially in media centers. This LLTI discussion was started by Ursula Williams, who was about to make purchasing decisions. She inquired, "Anytime I have considered these units, which to me seem very practical, somebody says something like this: "Of course if something goes wrong with the VCR, you're out a monitor too while they fix it." That sounded logical. What I'd like to know is what the actual experience has been with these things and whether those who have used them would recommend them."

Every reader who responded recommended all-in-ones. The consensus was that although these units can be more expensive than buying a VCR and monitor separately, they are preferred from a practical and aesthetic point of view. Here are excerpts from the discussion:

Dick Kuettner: "I say go for it. I have been using one with a 19" screen for four years and another one with 13" screen for three years. Not a problem yet. I clean the VCR tape heads

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Student Self-Scheduling (#3263), February 1997

once a month and that is it. The key is...purchase an item which is marked "industrial use." The few pennies extra you might pay for heavy duty and for a four-head VCR will make a difference. I probably shouldn't make product judgements, but I have found that anything Panasonic I purchase is virtually guaranteed to last forever. Convenience of use and handling is another important factor."

Irene Starr: "I delayed several years for the reason you mention. Increasingly, I consider saving staff effort a big plus. The two we have do that because no one fiddles with the cables."

Warren Roby: "We have had a very good experience with Panasonic combo units. I bought them for my small work areas in the lab where they fit reasonably well. I have put two on carts for faculty to use in their offices to preview videos."

Louise Campbell: "Personally I prefer [them]: one great advantage is the single remote, making it easier to control volume, etc. along with VCR functions."

In summary, there was a lot of support for using these units and not a single thumbs-down. Most common uses cited were for public areas such as the lab, and portable units for faculty offices. There was one word of caution expressed by two users: you may want to avoid units that have a vertical slot for inserting tapes; these units have required repairs due to people putting the tape in the wrong way.

It goes without saying that it is essential for media centers to have good staff to assist users with all the technology. Because almost every lab employs student staff, creating a work schedule that meets the needs of both the lab and the students is as difficult as it is important.

LeeAnn Stone began the discussion like this, "Next quarter I am going to try something new and radical (for us)—I will have my students schedule their own hours for the quarter. I know a number of you do this already and so I'd like to hear how exactly you work this out.... Do you, for example, have all your staff come in [at one time] to hash out the schedule? Do they have a two-day...window to do so? How many students do you have...? Is it a complete free-for-all, or do you provide each student with ranges (such as 6 – 8 or 10 – 12 hours per week for first-year staff schedule during M – F, 8:00 – 5:00 hours)? Does anyone actually have a written contract with their student staff regarding honoring these schedules, showing up on time, getting coverage, etc.?"

Many proponents of self-scheduling responded with lots of interesting details. Here are excerpts:

Sonja Moore: "I have nine student assistants who work mostly between 10 and 20 hours a week. I do the schedule in the following way. I create an availability schedule based on their class schedules. In Excel, I note down any time they're not in class then they come in and cross off hours they don't want. I have a week's window when changes are made only with my permission and provided that someone else could cover that time slot. Lab assistants who have seniority get to pick their hours first. I think it works quite well. I also do have a written "contract" which they sign. It covers dress, behavior, answering the phone, showing up on time, etc. I also think it makes them realize the responsibility of their position."

Eduardo Lage Otero: "I have eight students and I basically ask them at the end of the previous semester to give me the number of hours they would like to work plus a copy of their class schedule. Once I have that information I create a tentative work schedule that they can review. After this I set up a meeting and we all look at the schedule together to see what we can do to ensure the lab is attended at all times. This seems to work pretty well even though it's always hard to get them to work early in the morning. I wonder why?"

Margaret Wadehra: "Last time we did scheduling for a group I supervise, it was done in about 10 minutes while I was in another room getting them dessert. All attended the meeting; all knew how it's done. The student who volunteered to handle the schedule went round the room, asking each person to choose a block of time. If anyone had not been there, he or she would have been at the end of the circle and given time based upon his or her written preferences. Although the student who fills in the schedule does exactly what I would have done if the pencil were in my hand, the students accept the schedule better: they've set it, not I."

Jan Enright: "I schedule a mandatory staff meeting at the beginning of each block (they are paid for that hour). It is a lunch/meeting/training session, at which time I offer the students pizza, etc. We discuss any problems that came up the previous block, ...have a demonstration of anything new they need to know and then I leave them with a calendar that has all of the shifts printed out on it. One person (usually the 'senior' person) writes on the calendar as they go through all of the shifts, marking down who takes responsibility for each shift."

Read Gilgen responded that self-scheduling is not done at his institution for practical reasons. He explained, "We do the scheduling of our 20 – 25 students, mostly because we have different types of duties and need to use some judgment in

who is assigned to what. However, once the basic schedule is set, we all meet and let them hash out any changes they want (basically shift swapping with each other). Also, we have certain limits and minima on how many hours a student can have, both the total, and consecutive hours worked. Too few hours means we spend too much time training for too little payback. Too many consecutive hours usually results in less effective work. We also have written policies and guidelines (a student handbook of about 20 pages) that includes things like coverage, attendance, etc. It boils down to something like 'three strikes you're out' <grin>."

"I just wanted to report back to you on my student self-scheduling experiment—it was a marvelous SUCCESS, and I owe much of it to all the input you all provided."

—LeeAnn Stone

Most LLTIers who use student self-scheduling wrote that they had one or more students act as "supervisors" or "lead workers," supervising the self-scheduling process. Also, most lab directors set guidelines before the scheduling begins: number of hours per shift and per week, special skills needed at certain times, etc. Finally, problems in finalizing a schedule are usually addressed by the director.

LeeAnn reported back to the LLTI with the results of her first attempt at having students self-schedule (under topic #3421). Here is an abridged version of her final posting:

"I just wanted to report back to you on my student self-scheduling experiment—it was a marvelous SUCCESS, and I owe much of it to all the input you all provided. ...I called a two-hour meeting...during...finals week. ...[A]nyone who could not make it had the option of giving their availability to a co-worker to get hours for them. Before the meeting, Judi and I discussed who could work weekends, evening, who would be the 'Student Supervisors'...(thanks Jan Marston!). ...We also provided ranges of number of hours each student could work (based on their work-study allocation, whether we had them on a 'probationary period,' etc.) We printed out instructions about the hows and whys of this new scheduling approach, and we printed out blank schedules.

"When the staff arrived, we asked them to work in pencil. First, the four Student Supervisors scheduled themselves across the board so as not to overlap hours, and to cover all of our basic M – F, 8:00 – 5:00 hours. These four are folks we feel can be left responsible for the facilities if Judi and I are both out of the office. They zipped through this scheduling in no time, had no overlap, and were all happy with the hours they got(!). ... At that point, I told the rest of the staff that they could now schedule their hours. Each hour shift was marked as to whether we needed two or three students on at a given time. The next thing that happened surprised me—I figured they would all kind of mosey up to the schedule and start

filling in their names here and there. However, instead, they more or less asked one of the Student Supervisors to help them coordinate this part.

"... I also had also told my staff that I don't care when they change shifts (on the hour or half hour, or in-between), so long as 1) they let us know and 2) all hours were fully covered. I think that this bit of flexibility, which neither Judi nor I could ever have scheduled for them, proved to enable them to complete the scheduling so quickly and easily. They know there flexibility in a way that is almost impossible to capture on some filled-in form.

"In all, it took less than one hour for all 20 students to schedule themselves for the entire quarter. To celebrate, I had ordered pizza, and it came just as the schedule was finalized! The pizza was out of my own pocket, but you know what? It was a great substitute for the hours we used to put into this scheduling process."

Guided/Annotated Reading Software (#3434), May 1997

This topic was launched by Sarah Withee, who was investigating software for developing guided reading lessons. She asked, "I am investigating options for developing guided/annotated readings, as well as reasons for creating such readings. The only program with which I am familiar is the *Guided Reading* template by David Herren. Does anyone know of other programs?" Here are some of the responses she received:

John de Szendeffy: "Have you tried *NewReader* and *Common Space*?"

Nina Garrett: "Mary Ann Lyman-Hager's *GALT (Glossing Authentic Language Texts)*, a text-annotation template for the IBM (written in ToolBook) is about to be marketed through Wylie. She and Bob Fischer, developer of *Libra* (Mac template for annotating audio/video for listening comprehension) have been collaborating on putting out a Mac template for annotating reading which will as I understand it be a sort of hybrid of 'Libra-for-reading' and 'GALT -for-the-Mac,' and I think that's due out very shortly."

"Another really interesting suite of templates is *ERRATA*, by Bob Hart at Illinois. *ERRATA* includes text annotation, but also includes templates for doing some quite sophisticated exercises with error analysis and detailed feedback. They're HyperCard-based but much enhanced. They're not really 'done' in the sense of being fully stable and bug-free, but we've had teachers doing some nice though limited things with them."

"As for using such programs to teach reading strategies, that's something I've been interested in and asking about for a long time: I've got lots of ideas about how something like

that should be designed but haven't either seen such a project or had a chance to try it myself. Anyone out there?"

Virginia Lewis: "I (we) at Southwestern are using Voyager's *Expanded Book Toolkit International Version* (authoring and student menus in nine languages) for annotated readings and are very happy with it. The technology is transparent (read: easy for faculty to use), and our pilot efforts have been very gratifying both in terms of student response (both to pedagogy and ease of use) and faculty reaction to greater preparedness in the classroom. Beyond that, teaching reading strategies is something I am very interested in (and committed to). Jan Marston and I did a pilot HyperCard reading comprehension stack at SMU several years ago which emphasized teaching reading strategies from the very first stage of the game (German 1). I've since taken that further with *EBT* (as it takes the emphasis off scripting and puts it on content)."

Wendy Baker Davis: "We use annotext (for Macintosh) to create guided/annotated readings. We have had good success with it. It was developed at Dartmouth, company is Panda Software. It is worldscript compatible so can work with Japanese and Hebrew. I worked extensively with a Spanish prof to develop eight different readings (she used them in a conversation class to prompt discussions) and just recently with the Japanese prof. to create one reading (we completed it in a just a few days). I think guided readings are especially useful for languages such as Japanese where the student's reading progress is often slower than their verbal progress. They need many more reading aids than a romance language might. My experience is that it is hard to find easy readings for Japanese learners as opposed to easy readings for other Romance languages. This is my opinion as an intermediate student of Japanese."

Otmar Foelsche, manager of the annotext development project, wrote, "... There is one capability of annotext that is often overlooked and that is its integration with a glossary utility called *DH-glossary* ('DH' standing for Dartmouth and Harvard, since it was a joint development). This integration allows clicking on all words of a text and an automatic look-up in a dictionary or in a text-specific glossary and the display of the result in a separate window next to the text."

"We have used the annotext *DH-glossary* to process many pieces of German 19th century literature. Today we are using it for processing text coming off the web. The beauty of this system is that *DH-glossary* can produce—automatically—a list of words that are not in an existing masterlist. This list of words can then be edited manually by the instructor and

added to the masterlist. When a new dictionary is compiled from the masterlist, almost all words from the 'processed text' can then be found. In addition, annotext allows the annotation of the text with other texts and all media in a consistent manner. It works well with Russian, Arabic and Hebrew. It also works with Chinese and Japanese. For these two languages a click on a 'word' obviously does not work, since there are no word borders in the text, i.e. spaces in Roman-based languages. But text can be annotated and the annotations can be made visible to the user through underlining or other 'style' means. More info is available at <http://eleazar.dartmouth.edu/panda>."

Finally, Jan Marston, co-developer of the HyperCard stacks referred to by Virginia Lewis, commented, "... I have continued to develop my HyperCard stack for reading strategies. I'd love to have a collaborator to continue developing this endeavor. Whenever a reading is prepared using the 'HyperLecture' [the stack Jan developed with Virginia Lewis], students routinely respond very positively. My colleagues, however, although they are quite happy to use the texts I gloss and annotate, still think it's too much work to prepare a text.... 'HyperLecture' provides the framework for learners to go between text and class, practicing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills during parts of two or three classes. ...[A] 'HyperLecture' becomes a comprehensive language learning experience requiring students to learn to use new vocabulary and structures in writing (their reading notes) and speaking (their participation in classroom discussion), all reinforcing their reading experiences."

Is a Console Necessary? (#3557), May/June 1997

This question, posed by Lydie Meunier, goes to the heart of what language labs do, or, as some might say, what they traditionally did. Is the expense of a new console justifiable? This long discussion considered the pedagogical pros and cons of using a console type lab. Here are excerpts:

Lydie Meunier: "Today, our Dean contacted me, asking me about the necessity and relevancy of a console in the Multimedia Language Lab. Some people that he contacted told him that a console was not worth the expense (and, indeed, this the most expensive part of the lab), yet the dean could not explain to me why. I will have to come up with a clear cut rationale on whether or not a console is necessary. Any thought on the issue?"

Chris Jones: "...[W]e decided not to install a console in our audio lab. Our decision was made based on responses to a very simple question asked by our chair to our faculty. "Would

you use a console with your students?" In our case, only one faculty member said that she would use the console. This was not enough to justify its purchase."

"You may also ask yourselves what types of activities that you would like to do in the lab and determine whether these require the use of a console. For example, if you intend on 'teaching' in the lab, a console is probably a good idea."

Mike Ledgerwood: "The question is would your current faculty use a console often and well if they had a console available? In all of my travels I see more and more faculty/instructors uninterested in using a console. As a result it makes sense not to have this expensive item. However, your faculty might be the exception. Once again, the technology should reflect the pedagogical practices of those using it as well as drive them...."

Daniel Tom: "Whether a console is necessary really depends on how your faculty intend to use the lab. Will the lab be used as a class lab? Will teachers conduct activities that require a console such as task-based class lab activities or testing where a tape is played and distributed to all the student carrels? Will teachers distribute video from the console to individual student monitors? Will teachers actively monitor students while they are in the lab? If faculty on a regular basis need the functions that a console provides now and into the foreseeable future, then having the console would be justifiable, but if faculty don't intend to use the console then don't get it."

Jenise K Rowekamp: "I guess we're in the [minority]. We have two console labs and they are in continual use by faculty and T.A.s. Many of the classes use the labs once a week or once every other week and pair activities are the most popular although the recording and listening features are also frequently used. For speaking and listening activities the console labs are as indispensable as the computer lab is for writing and reading. We would have a hard time doing without them."

Joel Goldfield: "It's difficult to unequivocally say that no professors will use the console, before one has offered some practical models and training. Also, there are dealers who make available virtual consoles, that is, software-based functions that allow the instructor(s) to tutor, pair up students for activities, view and talk with students, view students' work (including at remote room sites), etc. I am researching the 'distance learning' aspects possible here, and they are quite inspiring in certain situations.

"Other research I have conducted indicates the trend for colleagues who have been integrating CALL in their curricula for two or more years to be more likely to start bringing their entire classes into a language resource center for more than

orientation purposes, and on a fairly regular basis. Where these consist of 15 students or fewer, it's likely that the instructor will circulate among the students and comment 'in person'. Where the group is much bigger or located at remote sites, a virtual console appears to be a growing solution."

David Rees : "I'm really surprised at the replies coming in to Lydie about the language lab console. ... The console is essential to our interactive teaching methods for splitting groups, splitting video sources, intra-group pairing, inter-group pairing etc. What I gather from the replies is that the majority of labs are used as self-service facilities. Where's all the teaching going on if the lab's only a library?"

"One of the main advantages of lab teaching is that out of 24 students, 12 uninterrupted conversations can go on at the same time. I agree with the comments that obviously the need for a console depends on the pedagogical needs, but why aren't teachers taking advantage of the excellent pedagogical opportunities offered by lab teaching? Much research indicates that one of the best methods of second language acquisition is via the 'negotiation of meaning' involved in interactive learning. Where better to do this than in a lab, and therefore a lab with a console."

There were several responses to David Rees' support for using a console lab. Curtis Broderick suggested, "David, it sounds like you are having great success using your console system, and more power to you. But, and excuse me if this sounds condescending, 12 uninterrupted conversations to negotiate meaning seems very possible and more effective in desk to desk, face to face conversation without a cumbersome technology in between."

Jean-Jacques d'Aquin offered an answer to David's question about where the teaching is going on: "In the classrooms where the physical proximity of interlocutors is representative of the 'real' world and communicative experiences." In reference to the "uninterrupted conversations in the lab," Jean-Jacques responded, "You mean, 12 sterile, disembodied voices may be making noises at each other, in contrived isolation." Last, he provided a prediction for the future: "Where technology really shines is in providing indefatigable repetitions for practice purposes, and access to email and WWW info. The production of oral communicative exchanges is still best done by face to face.... The audio cassette console, which is what this thread seems to be about, even with anemic computer add-ons, is a dinosaur."

David Rees countered arguments against using the console audio lab with these comments: "You have this idea that

our lab contains 'disembodied voices' and that we're not in the real world. I agree entirely that a lab with separate partitions is archaic for much learning work which is why we would never dream of teaching like that. Our students sit in a U shaped lab set up, all able to see each other. Interactive teaching cannot work unless learners are able to pick up non-verbal signals indicating a lack of comprehension. ... [A]ll the students actively participate, instead of only the bravest and best in an 'open' classroom where the weakest often get left behind.

"You say that technology really shines at being able to provide indefatigable repetitions for practice purposes. Great, if that's really what you want to do. The use of a lab for repetition was very popular during the 'behaviorist' revolution in the States, but it rapidly led to boredom and lack of motivation which is why we don't use it at all. It is far from the 'real world' you promote." Finally, David noted, "The audio cassette console is only a dinosaur when used archaically. When used interactively it can provide an excellent marriage of technology and learning."

The LLTI Archive

All discussions which have taken place on the LLTI have been archived. This archive is a valuable and time-saving research tool. There are various ways to access the archive:

1) New!! Open WWW site <http://www.reference.com>. Select "Advanced Search" at the bottom of the page. At the Advanced Search page, enter your search term in section #1. In section #2, type in "LLTI" under "Groups." (If you enter a search term in section #2 instead of section #1, it will return only those items which have the search term in the message header.) Within section #2 you may also specify the dates of the postings you want to search. When I last used this service, it was not possible to go back further than January 1997. It appears that the service may be limited to searching entries made in that particular calendar year. This may not be a serious limitation since most of the research we do requires relatively current information.

A sample search I conducted using the search term "correcteur" turned up three entries on the French software program Le Correcteur. Because I had defined the group as "LLTI," all three hits were, of course, postings made to the LLTI within the time period I had specified—January 1997 through June 1997.

2) WWW. Go to the IALL homepage at <http://eleazar.dartmouth.edu/IALL/> which will also access LLTI. As with Gopher and FTP, WWW access will present the files grouped by topic number.

3) Gopher. Conduct a Gopher search through these menus in this order:

- Other Gopher Servers" (or some similar rubric—in other words, Gopher servers other than the one you are using locally)
- North America
- USA
- New Hampshire
- Dartmouth College
- Research Resources
- The Humanities
- International Association of Learning Labs
- LLTI Archive

At this point, chose one of the files, such as LLTI_1700-1799. This will bring up all those files which had the topic numbers 1700 – 1799.

4) FTP. The archive is also available via anonymous FTP to [ftp.dartmouth.edu/pub/LLTI-IALL](ftp://ftp.dartmouth.edu/pub/LLTI-IALL). You can download the "stuffed" versions (condensed files—for Macintosh users) of all messages up to topic #2399. Messages can be downloaded in either stuffed or normal uncondensed form (text or ASCII).

5) Listserv commands. You can retrieve the actual files by sending commands directly to the listserv: listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu To get a list of the archive files, send mail to the listserv with the contents: INDEX LLTI This will return a list of files which are the monthly archives. To request a particular month's archive, send the command: SEND LLTI LOGyymm After downloading one or more of these monthly archives, you can search them for particular words or topics using your own search tools, such as the "find" or "search" features in any standard word-processing program.

How to Subscribe to the LLTI

First, you must have access to Internet so that you can use electronic mail. Your email ID and hostname, which become your email address, must be obtained from your institution's computing services department.

To subscribe to the LLTI, send an electronic message to the listserv address. Use your name in the subscribe message:

To: listserv@dartmouth.edu

Subject:

Message: SUB LLTI John A. Doe

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.

Postings to the LLTI must not be sent to the listserv address, but must be sent to: LLTI@dartmouth.edu. To start a

new topic, send your message to this address. You can respond to a discussion in progress by sending a reply to a posting on that topic.

If you want to unsubscribe or simply stop mail while you are away from the office, use the SIGNOFF command. (You do not need to give your name.)

To: listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu

Subject:

Message: SIGNOFF LLTI

To learn more about the LLTI, send a message REVIEW LLTI.

Important! Please do not set up a so called automatic re-distribution list for LLTI on your own campus. These lists cause a lot of problems with returned mail going back to the LLTI editor rather than to the originator of the re-distribution list.

If you have problems using LLTI, you may send mail directly to Otmar Foelsche, list moderator, at otmar.foelsche@dartmouth.edu or contact a fellow LLTIer!

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