

# 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 listserver. 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 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. For information on searching, see the section "The LLTI Archive" below.

## Five Years Ago

I began writing "LLTI Highlights" five years ago, and I have greatly enjoyed authoring this column. I hope it has been helpful, informative, and possibly even entertaining. It was in 1993 that the late Marie Sheppard, former editor of the Journal, asked me to write a regular column about the goings-on on the LLTI. I gave this column the name "LLTI Highlights." The idea to report on the LLTI in the *IALL Journal* was actually begun earlier by Read Gilgen, I believe, when he was Journal editor. One change I made was to paraphrase and summarize selected topics discussed in the forum as opposed to quoting discussions in their entirety. It was my feeling that summaries would be most helpful for those who had missed the original postings or just wanted a review.

As I look back over the past five years, the thing that stands out most in my mind about the LLTI is how little it has actually changed. We are accustomed to rapid change in technological areas and yet the LLTI continues to perform the same superb function it did when it was begun. Let me quote from the Fall, 1993 "LLTI Highlights":

"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.

*"Although I feel that this column can continue to benefit readers, I would now like to "pass the baton" on to someone new. It may be you!"*

**CD Mini Tower  
and *Mundos  
Hispanos* (#3997),  
January 1998**

LLTI allows lab personnel to correspond with each other on issues that concern them daily; equipment needs, software, AV materials, lab management, professional concerns, 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 presents the first ongoing "townhouse meeting" of lab directors!"

One thing that has changed over the years, on the other hand, is the method for accessing the LLTI Archive. This was quite tedious five years ago, and involved sending text commands to Dartmouth's server—forget "point and click"! Searching the archive is now much easier and more efficient. Please see the section "The LLTI Archive" for instructions.

Although I feel that this column can continue to benefit readers, I would now like to "pass the baton" on to someone new. It may be you! I have spoken with Pete Smith, *IALL Journal* editor, and he has encouraged me to announce that the *Journal* will be looking for a writer to take over this column. If you read the LLTI posting (not even I read all of them!), enjoy what others have to say, and wish to make time once in a while to write about the the LLTI, maybe this job is for you. It certainly has given me a lot of satisfaction. I am now taking on a new project, the construction of a new media center at our downtown Chicago campus, that I expect will be very time consuming I will, however, be happy to help a future columnist with the mechanics of finding and reading previous postings, copying and pasting excerpts for inclusion in the column, etc.

Finally, I thank everyone who has helped me write this column, including everyone who has offered their expertise and posted to the LLTI. Most of all I extend thanks to Otmar Foelsche, LLTI moderator. As one of the original founders of this service and ongoing manager and moderator, he has provided us with a tremendous resource for our work. In the fall of 1993 I boasted that LLTI had over 300 subscribers, but today it has nearly 1,300! This is due in great part to Otmar's dedication and consistency in reading, sorting and re-posting all incoming messages. Enough said, otherwise I'll get sentimental. Back to work!...

If you've been wondering if it is possible to have students working from several stations with one CD-ROM program, perhaps this discussion clears up some mysteries. Jeffrey Mollhagen asked, "We have decided to purchase *Mundos Hispanos* for use in our classroom, but because we are using

it during class time, we want to avoid checking out and inventorying stacks of CD's. Our tech people have suggested using a dedicated computer with a CD mini-tower with a single copy of the CD-ROM program to serve 25 other computers. Has anyone tried this?

Maurizio Oliva didn't mince words. "Yes, we have. You cannot," he responded. He wrote that the three CD's which make up the *Mundos Hispanos* program cannot be run from a tower or stored on a server hard drive. He also offered an explanation: "The reason is that the engine would only recognize data from the local CD-ROM drive," which he conjectured was a "lame anti-piracy device."

Christopher Jones offered relevant information on this topic in general. He began, "Allow me to contribute a different perspective on this debate. People are extraordinarily quick to latch on to jargon and promote it to a standard. The idea of the "networkable" CD-ROM is but one example.

The CD-ROMs which are effectively networkable at the moment are text-only databases (like ERIC and so forth). The current crop of multimedia CD-ROMs were not designed for network use nor can they be adapted for such use."

From the technical viewpoint, he continued, "The reality is, whatever the speed of the network, loading a 10MB video across it on a mouse-up is going to result in unforgivable delays, from the human-computer interaction standpoint." Based on his experience, which includes development of a CD-ROM and working with a publisher, he summarized that although it is becoming possible to solve the technical problems, "... The current [commercial] model (and quite likely to continue for the medium term) is for the media to be stored locally (CD-ROM or now DVD), with the user application stored on the local hard drive."

Maurizio Oliva offered some good elaboration on some of the technical aspects of this discussion. One point he made was that the restrictions of CD-drives make them impractical for transferring data to other machines. In other words, if you want to use a server to distribute information, it is better to have the material loaded onto the hard drive of the server. He also made a suggestion for future developers—to start using MPEG standard for video, which he predicts will be more effective due to its high compression rates as machines become more powerful. I would refer you to his posting (#3997.5) if you are interested in the large amount of technical information he provided.

Otmar Foelsche commented that we should be looking at this discussion from various viewpoints and consider all op-

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tions for delivering CD-ROM programs to lots of students. For example, what about copying the CD-ROM material onto local hard drives, copyright permitting? Or, how about cutting multiple copies of CD-ROMs for use at individual stations, if copyright permits? This would certainly be possible for locally-developed programs, and CDs are cheap to produce. He also questioned the long-term viability of CD mini-towers, which he suspects will break down rather quickly, thus paralyzing a mini-tower based operation..

Chris Jones returned with another idea. Isn't it going to become more and more common for students to have computers with CD drives, making the best option for them to buy their own copies of CD-ROM programs for home use? A few copies could and should be housed in the lab, but the "dominant model could well be one copy per student." He summarized: "Clearly, most of our facilities at this point will have a hybrid setup, where locally produced (and wholly owned) materials might be centrally served, and commercial products purchased and used by individual students in most cases. Certainly sound is a better candidate than video for the server approach, as Bernard [reference not known] pointed out."

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Otmar Foelsche and John Szendeffy engaged in a technical discussion of what is possible in terms of distribution of programs, including video and audio files, via a network. It boils down to what type of network you're talking about, a local "lab" network versus a university network, for example, and the type of connections between server and machines. Here are some excerpts from Otmar's summary of their discussion: "John de Szendeffy and I had a private conversation recently on his claim that he can serve 25 simultaneous users with the same file from a copy of a CD on his high-end NT server. ...John is right and the explanation is simple: John is running his server's output at 10BaseT into a switch that provides separate connections, i.e. totally separate, dedicated 10BaseT wires into each lab machine. And that makes all the difference. My server was running 10BaseT in a non-conventional network." He continued: "John also mentioned a number of start-up problems with various protocols and the initial difficulties in tweaking the server to maximum performance. This is definitely not work for the faint-hearted! A controlled laboratory situation like this permits the fine-tuning of the server and client performance. When dealing with a huge network, fine tuning becomes far more complex and performance may differ in different areas of the network. ...From a lab director's point of view (assuming the copyright questions are solved) a

video server belongs in the domain of the computing center and should be serviced there—unless the lab has a competent technician for that purpose. The lab can ftp video files into that server and establish directories via a webpage.”

Finally, Otmar gave a glimpse of what can be done given a large-scale degree of cooperation and networking: “Our intent here at Dartmouth (assuming we can get all the copyright permissions) is to serve into the whole network via TCP/IP and make our holdings available on a 24 hour basis to all those who have computers (both platforms) with audio and video capabilities. Video is being served from a central server (SGI) in the Computing Center, audio is being served via AppleShare IP in the Language Resource Center.”

An important note regarding instructional content came from Maurizio Oliva: “...we loved *Mundos Hispanos* and we have not [found] anything comparable as far as *content* (note the argument) is concerned. But we did not judge [it] viable to require students or teachers to check out the 3-CDs set every time they wanted to use it or swap among the 3 CDs every time they were accessing a different section of the work. I do not think that should be the ideal of any developer.”

We are reminded not to forget that quality of content should drive our decisions when deciding on which programs to use whenever possible. Publishers can make those good decisions easier by providing options that allow us to deliver materials efficiently.

### **CALL: Optional? (#4296), May 1998**

Timothy Pope began this discussion with his query: “Is CALL a mandatory or optional component in language instruction at your institution? If mandatory, are CALL sessions part of scheduled class time, with the instructor acting as lab instructor or directly supervising the lab instructor?”

Many respondents stated that at their institutions CALL was required for some classes in some languages, but that there was no blanket requirement for all language classes. For example, Jenise Rowekamp wrote: “Some of the language programs here (German, French, Norwegian, Hindi, etc.) regularly schedule classes in the computer classroom (once every other week or so). The teacher is responsible for doing all the prep work and teaching the class. There is an attendant on duty to help with technical problems if they arise but the teacher is in charge of the class.”

Daniel Tom, Patty Lamb, and Wynne Stuart each stated that at their institutions some instructors schedule sessions in a computer lab, at which the instructor acts as the facilitator but with a technician on hand when questions arise. Patty Lamb

and Kelly Nelson explained that at their schools many students are first shown how to use a particular computer program in the computer labs, at which point it is their responsibility to come in and use the programs on their own time. In some cases computer work is required, in others it is recommended only. Many of the readers who posted responses to this topic emphasized the importance of bringing students into the lab or computer facility for a hands-on demonstration of how to use target programs.

Nicolas Lasoff informed us that at his institution there is indeed a comprehensive CALL requirement: "At Bennington, all classes have a mandatory CALL session. For the most part, students schedule these at their own convenience once they've had an orientation to the lab and the software that they'll be using. The orientation is part of a regular class meeting. Some upper level classes are creating CD-ROMs or web pages as part of the class. These classes meet in the lab on a more regular basis."

**"Noise" in the Lab  
(#3738),  
September 1997**

One of the fun things about writing this column is getting to go back and look over previous discussions. This one I missed the last time I wrote the column, but I would like to include it here.

It's timeless. Thanks go to Ursula Williams for posing this question: "One of the instructors came to me with an unusual request: could we please have a little more noise in the lab so that students would feel more inclined to speak up when they do taped [audio] drills?"

Pat Miller chimed in, "What a delightful message! Our lab has a certain noise level that seems acceptable to the patrons. It is definitely not quiet like a library nor is it a 'Blockbuster' environment. I find that the noise level changes with every semester and is dependant on the student population. I encourage activity in our lab though I have yet to institute piped in music."

Ed Dente was mystified: "Seriously, I find this interesting and somewhat puzzling. I have spent the greater part of my career trying to keep the staff--myself included--from disturbing the students with their (uhm..our) chatter. It seriously bothers the students who have their decks set to drill. In fact, we had to make a modification to the 9000 system we got to keep the headset mics off when they were pushed up. The ambient noise the mics picked up was driving the students crazy. ...The point...is that we do get complaints about noise. ...I am stumped by the request for greater ambient noise that your instructors are asking for."

David Rees, on the other hand, also supported the positive influence of "noise": "Our lab for 24 students often has 12 conversations going on at the same time, and this background 'noise' certainly helps students have the confidence to join in as they don't feel they are being listened to by everyone else. When they record (for exams, for example), things are very silent until the first brave student starts recording - the rest then happily follow like sheep! - so I am sure that ambient 'noise' strongly effects the...character of the room and the ease with which students will converse or record."

Curtis Broderick bemoaned the hush in his lab: "Ursula, I think you have something here. My lab is carpeted and is too quiet. We cannot get our kids to speak aloud, we can't!"

If you want ambient "sound", one solution was offered by Donna Apgar: "Not noise, ...Music!!!! Yes! We play music all the time...students are studying language at tables, working on computers, watching videos or perhaps listening to audio cassettes in an adjacent room. We play classical music CDs...lots of baroque...other international CDs...sometimes salsa...and at night we go for Celtic."

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Karl Fisher thinks students simply need to be encouraged to speak up: "Our lab is also carpeted and quiet, but many students do speak up when they are practicing. At our orientation sessions, we encourage students to do so. One professor here has students record a brief dialogue (under 1 minute per student), and then she checks their pronunciation. (20 students, 1/2 hour to grade the tapes, several times per semester.) So IMHO the way to get students to speak up is to tell them and remind them to do so (or even give them a graded assignment.) I don't see how increasing the ambient noise would be anything but a distraction to students that are trying to get their work done."

Meaty food for thought comes from some closing remarks made by Ed Dente, which may bring a smile to some faces, especially keeping in mind his plea for less noise (see above): "When our first lab opened in '67, I was a freshman studying Italian. The lab crew played music at the console, ate submarine sandwiches, smoked cigarettes, and sometimes played baseball with rulers and the rubber reel stoppers that would fall off the open reel racks. The faculty director would stroll in w/ a well-chewed lit Parodi cigar.... Ambient noise WAS high, and breathing was tough, but we students using the lab really enjoyed coming in and being part of the 'crowd'. The funny thing is, WE DID SEEM TO GET A LOT OF LANGUAGE STUDYING DONE, so maybe there is something to this ambient noise theory after all."

Yes, let's not forget that most of us are running language labs, not libraries. —But hey, can you keep it a little quieter over there??!!

## The LLTI Archive

Discussions which take place on the LLTI are archived in a computer database maintained by Otmar Foelsche, the list moderator. This archive is a valuable and time-saving research tool. There are various ways to access the archive:

1) Open Dartmouth College's World Wide Web (WWW) site <http://listserv.dartmouth.edu/archives/index.html>. Select "LLTI". The first option listed is "Search the Archives". Click on that link to go to the page which allows you to search all the documents for a term of your choice, such as the name of a product, a topic or a key word. You can also search for a word located in subject headings only. It is also possible to specify a time frame, allowing you to limit searches to recent postings. One of the options listed, narrowing a search by "author's address", was not working properly when I tried it. However, you can find postings by a particular author simply by entering that name in the "Search for" box. Remember that each time you add a search specification, the search parameters are further limited and will produce a smaller number of "hits."

From the main "Archives of LLTI" screen it is also possible to select a specific week, such as May 1998, Week 3. Selecting this link will return all postings from that week only.

2) If you are interested in relatively recent postings only, another way to search the archives is to open WWW site <http://www.reference.com>. Select "Advanced Search" at either the top or 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 June 1997.

3) IALL web Pages. Go to the IALL homepage at <http://eleazar.dartmouth.edu/IALL/>. Select "LLTI Listserv" and then "Search the Archives" This will take you to the same search pages described in option 1 above.

4) 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

Now, chose one of the files, such as LLTI\_2700-2799. This will bring up all those files which had the topic numbers 2700-2799.

5) FTP. The archive is also available via anonymous FTP to <ftp.dartmouth.edu/pub/LLTI-IALL>. You can download the "stuffed" versions (condensed files--for Macintosh users) of postings to the LLTI. Messages can be downloaded in either stuffed or normal uncondensed form (text or ASCII).

6) Listserv commands. You can retrieve the actual files by sending commands directly to the listserv: [listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:otmar.foelsche@dartmouth.edu) or contact a fellow LLTIer! ♦

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