Conference Reports

Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

by Kathleen James,
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The forty-second annual meeting of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the country's oldest and largest gathering of foreign language professionals, had as its theme "Voices from the Field." There was, as usual, a wide array of activities, including pre-conference workshops, concurrent sessions, special interest sessions, exhibitors' sessions, and the keynote address. For the first time this year, and of particular interest to members of IALL, there was a Technology Fair on Sunday morning.

Among the largest of its kind, the exhibitors' displays opened Thursday evening and closed on Saturday afternoon. Prize drawings were held at vendors' booths periodically throughout the conference. The IALL booth, with a video monitor displaying the IALL '95 Lab Tours tape, attracted attention even though it was tucked away at the very end of the hall.

Technology Fair

The Technology Fair brought together over twenty-five software vendors to demonstrate their wares. While browsing the displays, attendees had the option to take breaks to sit in the audience and participate in panel discussions emceed by David Herren (Middlebury College). Panelists included several IALL members who spoke with authority on satellite communications, multimedia/hypermedia, and the Internet. There was active participation from the audience, and referrals were made to both CALICO and IALL.

Presentations and Speakers

David Herren and Janice Ribeiro (Brunswick School, Greenwich, CT), conducted their annual pre-conference workshop, always a sell-out, on hypermedia. The keynote speaker and recipient of the James W. Dodge Memorial Foreign Language Advocate Award was Madeleine May Kunin, Deputy Secretary of Education. While governor of Vermont, she led Vermont through significant reforms and advancements in edu-

cation. She is now involved in the Clinton administration with key issues of educational reform. Earl W. Stevick (a legend around the Foreign Service Institute) was the recipient of the Award for Outstanding Service and Leadership in the Profession.

Technology Sessions

Sessions devoted to instructional technology included:

- "New Technology in German Instruction: E-mail," presented by Helene Zimmer-Loew, AATG, and Irmtraud Hubatsch, Goethe Institute.
- "New Technology in German Instruction: Distance Learning & Teacher In-service Development," presented by Helene Zimmer-Loew, AATG, and Donna Van Handle, Mount Holyoke College.
- "Beyond the Manual: Adapting Transparent Language to the Foreign Language Classroom," Michael Kline and Beverly Eddy, Dickinson College, presenters.
- "A New Generation Authoring System: Training, Teaching, & Testing." Judith Frommer, Harvard University.
- "Reading Without Pain: Teaching Foreign Language Texts with the Aid of the Computer." Otmar Foelsche and Bruce Duncan, Dartmouth College.
- "Is Happiness Achievable with a CD-ROM? Technology & Foreign Language Teaching." Joel Goldfield, Fairfield University and Clara Yu, Middlebury College.

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Multimedia Sessions

There were various exhibitors' sessions dedicated to multimedia, including:

- "The French Experience, New BBC Multimedia Resources for the French Classroom." National Textbook Company.
- "Transparent Language: Literature, Sound, Action!" Joel Goldfield, Fairfield University.
- "Modern Technology for Assessment & Practice: Yes, We Need It!" Sony Electronics, Inc.
- "Classroom 2000." Gessler Publishing.
- "Teaching with Multimedia: Tools from Yale University." Yale University Press.

As last year, more textbook companies are investing in the production of multimedia materials to complement their courses. Throughout the exhibits, it is obvious that technology-assisted learning materials have come into their own.

IALL General Interest Meeting

The IALL General Interest Meeting took place on Friday morning. The audience of thirty old-timers and newcomers exchanged valuable information, shared challenges, and offered solutions. IALL represented, especially for the newcomers, a central clearinghouse for information and guidance on a variety of topics, including:

- laboratory designs
- equipment choices
- software evaluation and purchase
- job descriptions for laboratory directors
- sources of materials

As always, the Northeast Conference assembles a veritable treasure trove of new and exciting materials as well as the tried and true. As a former colleague of mine once expressed it "is our annual shot in the arm."

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IALL '95
by Michael Langthorne, University of Notre Dame

[Editor's Note: The following account of the DeBartolo Hall facilities, where IALL '95 was held.]

For those who strode along diligently on the tour of DeBartolo Hall during the May '95 IALL conference at the University of Notre Dame, this synopsis of our instructional technologies, ways they are being used, and future directions may briefly bring back the memory of aching feet. For those who were otherwise occupied during the tour, let me state from the outset that we are not at any time claiming that we (the techies) have done everything right, nor that any of the technologies we propose to faculty are meant to replace faculty or diminish their facilitation of the teaching/learning process.

DeBartolo Hall

Edward J. DeBartolo Hall is a gift from the DeBartolo family, completed in August 1992, and just now beginning its fourth year of operation. The hall is a generic classroom building containing 83 classrooms, almost exactly half the classrooms at Notre Dame, and likewise containing (except their youthful spirits) nearly half the student body during any given class period. "Generic" means different things to different people.

Since there are no faculty offices in DeBartolo Hall, many faculty were at first surprised at having to trek across campus for a "one hour class." Many are enticed now to stay in the building beyond that hour. For the first three years of operation there was a very fine faculty lounge on the third floor overlooking much of the campus, and that space will now house a newly forming center for teaching excellence, which will still offer a cup of coffee and comfortable seat to all who stop by to find out what the center can offer.

"... we have one 450-seat auditorium, three 250-seat lecture halls, six 100-seat classrooms, twenty-four 50's, sixteen 30's and thirty 20's."

Educational Media's Media Resource Center is also located in DeBartolo Hall, both as the place to drop off and pick up materials used in our Media-On-Call media retrieval system, as well as the place to preview potential classroom media or order media from national distributors. Also in the building is the university's largest 24-hour public computer cluster. Because all clusters and classrooms are wired for 10Mb ethernet data transfer, it is convenient to pop into the cluster between classes to check email or the Internet, to track student progress using computer-based materials (even full multimedia projects), or to log-on directly to the faculty's own personal computer in his/her office. The final inducement to spending additional time in DeBartolo is to visit the heart of the media retrieval system in the Master Control room.

While most faculty or students will only be vaguely impressed by the racks and racks of source devices that feed their media into the classrooms, we have begun outfitting eight media development carrels. Whether converting existing course materials to so-called "new media," editing videotape, digitizing audio clips, or digitizing 35mm slides or short video clips, we have created a walk-in reservation space that can be used easily (with brief training) directly by faculty or students. More complex services, such as CD mastering, we still consider tricky enough to require a technical support person's assistance, but such help is easily arranged by making a reservation 2-3 days in advance. Be-

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fore DeBartolo Hall, analog-to-digital input devices and digital-to-analog output devices were available only to the techies on campus. We desperately wanted to get away from the off-putting idea of, "If you can locate Dick in Building A, he has this one device, and then Jane in Building B or C has this other device, and if they both help you capture that image and transfer it into a different file format which works with that new program you bought, the one with the 500-page manual written for space aliens, then you might be able to try something new in your classes." In my opinion, this is the worst publicity any computing center/media center/language lab can have, and should not be tolerated on any campus.

So, after all that, what about those 83 classrooms that are the original raison-d'etre of DeBartolo Hall? Three classrooms are devoted to collaboration—two for computer collaboration, one for human collaboration with a computer as an optional tool to facilitate the collaboration. Confusing enough? If you thought "multimedia" is tough to define, "collaboration" is even more difficult because you can't buy that software off the shelf from Microsoft or anyone else at the moment. You have to dream it up. Collaboration of course implies people working in teams, sharing a whole task, dividing a task into components, or interacting with others. These three rooms are used in ways envisioned by Business, Freshman Writing, and other departments that have made themselves familiar with some of the possibilities of rooms where every student, or small groups of students, all use computers during a normal class period.

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Then, in descending size, we have one 450-seat auditorium (which all of you shared on several occasions during the conference, but now offering light-valve projection), three 250-seat lecture halls, six 100-seat classrooms, twenty-four 50's, sixteen 30's and thirty 20's. Because Media-On-Call and the data network are pervasive in the building, we can nearly tell the Registrar that all the technology is generic, and that his office can simply concern itself with numbers of students registered to determine room usage. Unfortunately the 37 rooms which support computer projection cannot all support Macs, Intels and Suns simultaneously, so in fact the Registrar does have the extra challenge of getting the correct users into the correct computer projection rooms on the correct days. The 46 rooms not equipped with projection (built-in) can make use of portable computers and portable color LCD plates (on overhead projectors) to take advantage of computerized presentation packages.

Technology in Use

How are these technologies being used? The variety of uses cuts across the curriculum, and I can't begin to list all the projects that have been created. Humanities (our College of Arts and Letters) is creating some of the most dynamic, most creative "courseware," while the sciences tend to use both media and computer presentation as "supporting moments" within a lecture. Use of the technologies, creative or general, cuts across age and gender—those who get the "bug" push us constantly with ideas.

The Future of DeBartolo

And what of the future? I could pretend I know what's coming next, just not telling, but that wouldn't fool this group. The Web, the big WWW is in everyone's future, and more and more faculty are beginning to explore putting whole units of their course material on the web. Another trend is toward faculty acceptance, even encouragement, of submitting homework electronically.

Clearly one thing that will happen over the next few years is the use of wireless data technologies. How those might apply to language labs is anyone's guess. I must say I was surprised by some of the things NOT demonstrated by manufacturers exhibiting at your conference. A certain enormous corporation still pushing analog tape when they could have demonstrated their own mini-disk technology? But I can't really complain. While not heavy computer users, the two largest users of media in DeBartolo Hall are in Romance Languages—French and Spanish—and they each use about 10% videodisc and 90% analog videotape. We'll see if that's still true in five years, but at least we know that, if in five years video CDs are replacing both tape and videodiscs, our Media-On-Call system will still handle faculty needs.

Michael Langthorne is the Associate Director of Educational Media at the University of Notre Dame.

CALICO '95

by Mary
Sansaverino,
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This year over 400 people with an interest in language learning and technology descended on the beautiful Vermont college town of Middlebury to attend CALICO 1995, "Computers and Collaborative Learning". The college and the town were very welcoming, the weather was perfect, and the conference was stimulating.

Beginning on June 19th with a series of Pre-Conference Workshops and ending on June 23rd with a well deserved tour of the local establishments, the CALICO conference kept all attenders and presenters on the go. Sessions ran from 9:00 am until after 5:00 pm. After this the Special Interest Groups, which form a very important part of CALICO, were able to meet until late into the evenings.

Pre-Conference Workshops

The pre-conference workshops, held on June 19th, concentrated on authoring software for language professionals: Hypercard, SuperMacLang, and the Defense Language Institute multimedia templates were all featured. IALL members figured prominently in this venue with Claire Bradin ,Tom Browne, Judith Frommer and Otmar Foelsche as some of the workshop hosts.

Tuesday, June 20th was reserved for the CALICO courseware fair. Twenty-eight different presenters were available for demonstrations, one-on-one consultation, and just saying hello. Courseware on display included interactive video software, digital learning lab software and hardware, Windows-based software, Macintosh-based software, and multimedia authoring software.

Conference Activities

"The session covered a broad range of topics, from computerized diagnostic testing to learning how to conduct an information technology need assessment."

The CALICO Symposium sessions started on June 21 and kept everyone completely involved for three days. The sessions covered a broad range of topics, from computerized diagnostic testing to learning how to conduct an information technology needs assessment.

The keynote address was given by Stephen Ehrmann, from the Annenberg/CPB Project. He discussed how issues of collaborative learning, discourse, and multimedia relate to the larger challenges facing post-secondary education. He described how our experiences with technology and learning could help us become leaders in our institutions and let us respond better to what he calls the "Triple Challenge": improving learning outcomes for our students, extending access more fully, and controlling spiraling costs.

IALL and CALICO

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Industry and academia met at the 13 ongoing conference exhibits. IALL was one of these exhibitors. Although we did not have any technology on display our booth was very well attended, as was the case during the IALL meeting held during the CALICO conference. IALL's President-Elect, Nina Garrett, is also an outgoing CALICO executive member, and in her address to the IALL meeting was able to note some of the close ties that exist between the two groups.

Of course a conference like this is a good time to make new acquaintances and discuss points of common interest. This was the case for me. As IALL's CALICO representative I was able to meet with Eleanor Johnson and talk about some of the ways that CALICO and IALL could strengthen our ties. Although our conversation was only introductory, we touched on topics involving exchange of guest columns in our respective journals, journal reprints, and sharing information via the World-Wide Web. We also agreed to continue with the exchange of booths at our respective conferences.

All in all, CALICO in Middlebury was a memorable meeting of language learning and teaching colleagues. If you would like to obtain a copy of the conference proceedings, email calico@acpub.duke.edu and ask for your copy. It is available for $15.00 plus postage and handling. At over 180 pages and with the addresses of all the presenters, it is a good resource book.

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