

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Kathleen Ford

If ever you are asked to serve IALL concurrently as a Regional Group Leader AND as the coordinator of IALL's biennial conference, I have one piece of advice to offer: GO FOR IT! Speaking from personal experience, I can tell you that it has not been easy trying to keep both balls in the air continuously over the past two years. But it has been positively fascinating.

ARMCHAIR ADVENTURES

The Regional Group Newsletters, which are sent to the specific memberships of their respective groups as well as to IALL Board and Council members, are chock-full of all sorts of intriguing information: in-depth descriptions of meeting sites; summaries of meeting topics; announcements of relevant symposia in a local area; employment opportunities; names and addresses and activities of colleagues who are just a city or state away from you. Imagine the variety in eight more newsletters like that of your own region!

Some of these items of interest have been reprinted in this column, and many are regularly reported at the meetings of other regions. If they don't already do so, ask your group leader and newsletter editor to share this wealth of knowledge with you. It's an easy and inexpensive way to travel the world, going straight to the people and places that are on your list of professional curiosities. You, too, will be surprised to discover that there are just as many differences as there are similarities in our identities and activities. It's really quite amazing.

Invaluable though they are, the newslet-

ters can only give a fuzzy and incomplete portrait of the type of people who are interested in technology for language learning. To see the Big Picture, you need access to an equally valuable tool: the IALL Megabase. That is, the database of bona fide IALL members plus the databases of the nine regional groups plus a "blind" database of learning centers in colleges across the nation. I originally created this tool with only the thought of mailing brochures for IALL '91, but as I worked on the merges, I began to realize that this document has a much greater purpose in life. I can't describe the Megabase here in detail, but I would like to give you a glimpse of this rich resource.

WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE

The cumulative total of all databases was 1,887. Three hundred of these entries were duplicates (e.g., people who belong to IALL as well as a regional group), so these were deleted. The remaining 1,587 entries make up what my staff and I began to call the IALL Megabase.

Our first data analysis revealed that dues-paying IALL members comprise 25% of the Megabase. It also showed that the Midwest region accounts for 25.5%. The other regions range from 2.2% (South Central) to 7.9% (North West); 4.9% is the average. Our most senior regional group, New England, registers 6.5%, and our newest group, Rocky Mountain, has a 5.8% share. I should note that the databases of some regions may include only those who have paid dues.

Next, we investigated percentages of

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the Megabase that are unnamed records, for example, libraries or "blind" entries for anyone who might answer to the title of "Director/Coordinator, Language Learning Center." In this category, IALL's database is 22.7% unnamed, Midwest's is 34.4%, and Rocky Mountain's is 4.5%. All other regions have no unnamed entries. Far from being a negative aspect, a look at individual unnamed entries leads me to believe that these represent outreach efforts.

We then analyzed the records by type using keywords in the Affiliation field. The breakdown is as follows.

College -	37.8%
University -	33.8%
High School -	9.4%
Foreign -	5.8%
Library -	3.7%
Other -	3.4%
(e.g., to an individual's home address)	
Business -	2.8%
Institute -	1.9%
(e.g., Center for Applied Linguistics)	
Government -	0.7%
(e.g., US Air Force Academy)	
Association (e.g., JNCL) -	0.5%

COMMENTARY

First, I believe that congratulations are in order. You and I, all of us in IALL and the regional groups, have laid a solid foundation. The Megabase is the prize for all of our legwork, phone calls, E-mail, and travel. There is strength and power in numbers, and we've earned it!

Certainly, there is still work to be done. While we may have always felt that way, we may not have known where to begin. Now, with the Megabase, we can establish priorities based on rational numbers. We might begin with more data analysis to take a closer look at the many facets of this resource. It may turn out that the Megabase will be of greatest value as a historic document. Hopefully this one will be the first of many that, taken together, will chronicle the growth and diversity of our membership.

This article opened with a passive scenario: "If ever you are asked to serve IALL...." On second thought, perhaps you shouldn't wait to be asked. CARPE DIEM! And experience a little fascination of your own!