CONFERENCE REPORTS

CALICO '92 OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM REPORT

by David Herren
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The Computer Aided Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) annual meetings held February 27-29, 1992 in Monterey, California marked the first CALICO conference of the "new administration" of that organization. CALICO, for many years based at the Brigham Young University, has recently moved central operations to Duke University under the direction of Dr. Frank L. Borchardt. Dr. Borchardt serves additionally as the Principle Investigator in Duke University's Computer Assisted Language Learning Project and as a professor of German there.

This year's meetings departed in some ways from the experiences of the past. Setting the tone of the new administration in his opening remarks, Dr. Borchardt praised the efforts and progress of the previous administration, though he anecdotally committed the organization to holding its future meetings only in "attractive places" recognizing that "at least some" of the attendees came to Monterey "for other than purely academic reasons." Additionally, all of the sessions were "tracked" to give one a better idea of the content of the sessions when reviewing the conference program and planning one's daily attendance. Particularly

useful this year were several sessions focused on the needs of the "newcomer"—those individuals with limited exposure to the use of computer technologies in language instruction. As one might expect, the newcomer sessions were very well attended.

Further, CALICO '92 held special importance for IALL. This year for the first time, IALL had an official liaison to the CALICO organization in attendance in the person of the author of this report. The IALL board and membership have long recognized the importance of cooperative efforts with other professional organizations whose interests overlap with the interests of IALL. This recognition is expressed through the liaison appointments to the various organizations such as ACTFL, AECT, the Northeast Conference and of course, CALICO.

In discussions both formal and informal, several avenues for greater cooperation between the two organizations were investigated and proposed. Among those areas whose mutual benefits seem undeniable and clearly prescribed: both organizations have tentatively agreed to exchange advertising space in their journals, to exchange exhibit space at one another's conferences, and to support sponsored sessions at those

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conferences. CALICO also appointed an official CALICO liaison to IALL (and other organizations as well). Other areas of cooperation discussed included a sharing of IALL's regional structure. CALICO does not currently maintain any regional organizational structure but has tentatively agreed to create such an arrangement using the same geographical/regional system as the current IALL structure. Further, CALICO has expressed an interest in sponsoring a series of workshops on the use of computer-based technologies at IALL regional meetings as a method of "outreach" to individuals with mutual interests. As a part of this, IALL has committed to keeping CALICO informed of the dates of all of our regional, national, and international meetings, and has provided CALICO the names of the IALL regional group officers (all of which would have the added benefit of avoiding meeting conflicts such as the upcoming overlap of the FLEAT II meetings in Japan and CALICO's International exposition later this summer in Naastricht, The Netherlands, August 12-14). Of course any official cooperative efforts will need to be ratified by the IALL board, but in general, those with whom I have had an opportunity to discuss the cooperative arrangements seemed positive and supportive. Dr. Borchardt himself was very eager to improve upon and develop IALL/CALICO relations (to put everyone's mind to rest, the word "merger" was never used!).

Interactive video in the form of the video laserdisc dominated the types and varieties of sessions presented, followed closely in number by demonstrations of various authoring systems for the MS-DOS, Windows and Macintosh environments. Authoring systems are designed to allow the instructor with limited or no programming experience to create their own "courseware" materials rather than relying upon "off-the-shelf" applications which may or may not align themselves with the

methodologies of the instructor concerned. This is a direction that seems to be very popular considering the acceptance of the fact that no materials, whether computer-based or otherwise, can be expected to fill the needs of all instructors perfectly. Demonstrations on the whole appeared to be about evenly divided between the two hardware platforms (Macintosh and IBM-compatible) in contrast with earlier CALICO conferences. Demonstrations of specific language instruction software applications played a larger role as well, while the number of "natural language processing" and "machine translation" sessions played a smaller role than in the past.

The newest and perhaps most exciting technological development which was demonstrated in several sessions concerned digital video. Briefly, digital video has to do with the process of "recording" video directly to the hard drive of the computer. The video segment can then be played directly from the hard drive to the computer monitor without requiring that a laserdisc or video tape player, and separate monitor or video input card be installed in each student workstation—such devices are thus only necessary in the instructor's development workstation. Clear advantages include cost (the QuickTime technology, part of Apple computer's Macintosh operating System 7.x, can be used even on the most modest color capable Macintosh such as the LC), facility and timeliness with which video-based exercises can be produced (no expensive or lengthy videodisc mastering process is necessary), and the ease with which materials can be developed (as part of the operating system, no special authoring system is really necessary—video can actually be pasted in to any Macintosh word processing document—Wild Magic, one of the components of the QuickTime technology is appropriately named!). Current disadvantages of the digital video technology center around the quality and size of the images themselves.

The video frame rate is typically only 15 frames per second utilizing existing hardware (full motion video is 30 frames per second; celluloid film production is 24 frames per second). As the speed of commonly available machines increases, so too will the frame rate. The size of the digital video files is large as well, requiring a hard drive for student delivery (but then what doesn't require a hard drive these days?). Unlike earlier experiments with digital video, compression routines keep the file sizes within reason—one 2 minute video segment with accompanying sound demonstrated by Otmar Foelsche of Dartmouth required barely over a megabyte of disk space. Clearly this is an exciting development which deserves further attention.

As one might expect when relying upon a fickle and delicate technology such as the microcomputer, not all of the sessions came off flawlessly (not even the author's own session!). Nonetheless, if the commitment and efforts of the current CALICO staff were any indication, future CALICO conferences promise to be filled with useful information provided in an improved and improving format, well supported by the conference organizers. CALICO '93 will be hosted by the College of William and Mary and held in Williamstown, Virginia on March 11-13, 1993 with pre-conference workshops beginning the 8th of March. I hope to see you there!
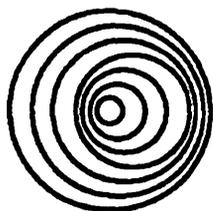
IALL '93

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