

LAB NOTES

THE LAB DIRECTOR: MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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[Editor's Note: In the last issue we printed Robin Lawrason's adaptation of this theme. Subsequently we received the original presentation made by Steve Smolnik at IALL '91 and found it to be equally informative and useful. We felt that out of fairness we should let you see the original incarnation of the theme.]

Whether it's your first year at your institution or you're a veteran of those hallowed halls, you're probably bringing some new information to bear each month on the way you do your job and plan for the next semester. In fact, I suspect that more than one of you would agree that it's impossible to personally keep up with the flood of information pertaining to Second Language acquisition, multimedia computing, audio and video signal manipulation, computer networking or even the capabilities of the new campus telephone system. In order to learn about the importance of changes in these fields, we must seek the help of our colleagues in other departments. Fellow administrators, faculty, and support staff in those diverse departments, likewise, are

busy concentrating on their disciplines, and need you to update them regularly on the state of affairs in your shop. Don't deprive them of information; make certain that you exchange notes with your important contacts on a regular basis.

MINISTER

This "Minister" is the Language Laboratory zealot in you straining to be known. Let it out. *Preach* interactive learning with the technologies available via materials and services from your facility, and with the technologies which you seek to add. Know the capabilities and the limitations of your facility, then go out door-to-door, phone-to-phone, to spread the word about the usefulness of your materials and services. Enlist colleagues who are already involved with the Lab to help you evangelize.

FACULTY

The teaching faculty in general are your target audience, your public, your congregation at large, spread across the campus. Simultaneously, you are a member of that congregation for each of them. Go among them, and be a fisher of women and men. You have more in common with some than

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with others, but despite your diverse disciplines, you're all in the same business of education. That business is your noble common ground.

Foreign Language Faculty

Take attendance: Using a database, you can log all student use of the Lab and of the materials. For each student visit to the Lab, my staff logs 20 pieces of information. Ten of the fields are for internal use only in lab management and equipment repair tracking; ten are sorted and printed every week for mailing to individual faculty members. On the back of each professor's print-out, I include a few paragraphs of Lab news: an update about some project of general interest to FL faculty, or information about upcoming events, conferences, etc.

Publicize your Support Services: Catalog your FL audio, video and computer software collections, then distribute the lists. Tell FL faculty how you catalogued the collections, and invite them to contribute to the collections whenever they may wish. If your lab and staff can administer the distribution of oral quiz signals off of one master tape, or the video signal distribution from a master video tape for film showings, make your FL faculty aware of the fact. Invite them down for a demonstration, especially if they've asked you to do it some other, more time consuming way in the past. In response to our FL faculty's habit of assigning 30 students to view a film of which I have only one copy within a period of three days, I announced that film assignments must be cleared through me, so that I could post group showing times. The in-class result: more students managed to see the entire film in time to prepare the assignment on time. The result for me and for my staff: fewer student complaints and fewer pleading requests to keep the Lab open late, or to loan the videotape out overnight.

Other Faculty

In the course of your professional reading, you're bound to come across information on non-print materials germane to other disciplines. When you do, copy the information and write a brief note to a colleague to say that the information listing caught your eye, and you'd love to talk about how such audio, video, or multimedia software might fit in with so-and-so's course or research interest. For example:

Government: I made sure that I talked up the ABC Interactive videodisc entitled "The '88 Vote" with the chair of our Government department. Although she told me a year ago that she didn't think it fit in with her courses, I recently saw her making her first visit to the faculty computing project open house in order to learn more about this "multimedia stuff." It's a step in the right direction.

Science: The hypermedia catalogues are replete with computer and video software treating various science topics. While the chemistry department, for example, already has its own Silicon Graphics workstation with molecular modeling programs in use, I've made sure that they know that I share their interest in the graphics capabilities of such hardware. I know that I may need their technical advice when I try to convince the Dean of Faculty to approve my budget request for more powerful video workstations in a year or two.

Art & Music: At Connecticut College, the Art department chair is interested in 3D computer modeling for sculpture, as well as in computer-generated 2-D art. The Music Chair is quite interested in digital manipulation and synthesis of music. The technologies involved in realizing their projects overlap quite a bit with the multimedia

technologies which may soon dominate interactive learning workstations, hopefully on our campus too.

COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION

President: I must admit that I have an easy audience with President Claire Gaudiani, who is already enthusiastic about the potential of hypermedia and interactive video workstations for education. She has also helped me in my evangelizing around campus by introducing me to colleagues with similar interests. Additionally, she is part of our French faculty, and speaks openly about her dream of an interactive computer-assisted on-line language and culture database from which her students might simultaneously draw writing and grammar help as well as cultural vignettes in some form of immersion-tutorial. The hardest part for me is fielding the subsequent inquiries about when such a workstation will be up and running for our students.

Dean of Faculty: Preaching hypermedia and interactive videodisc learning to the Dean has been an educational experience. Her field is government and politics, and she has never laid hands on a videodisc. She is, however a wonderful listener, especially when I speak about the interdepartmental interest I've found in computer-aided instruction. Subsequently, she has begun asking me how she can be supportive to my efforts; we've arranged a regular monthly meeting in order to trade information on campus-wide concerns of importance to the Language Lab.

Admissions: The Admissions office loves to tell visitors about new initiatives on campus, especially if they directly affect students' academic resources. The Language Lab fits this "academic resource" category perfectly, so I keep them updated about our efforts. In the past year, the Language Lab has grown from a 30-second stop on the

guided campus tours to a 2-3 minute stop, during which visitors hear about our learning materials collection, our hardware, and our future plans.

Affirmative Action: With "Multicultural awareness" growing in importance in every part of the college, I realize that my interest in multimedia instruction is also an interest in an effective delivery platform for educating the college community about its own ethnic plurality. The Affirmative Action Office listened to my proposal for training our own students to teach the faculty how to use computers to add cultural diversity to their courses and invested in the project. More about this in the "Affairs" section later.

OTHER ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Audio-Visual Services: The AV department has been a great resource, supplying the FL faculty with videotape recordings of SCOLA broadcasts, and offering perspective and advice on how to solicit involvement in multimedia learning projects from other colleagues on campus. I will discuss the cooperative ventures between our departments in the "Affairs" section, later.

Academic Computing: I've explained my vision for the growth of the Language Lab to all of the Computer Lab Directors, and to the Director of Academic Computing. They are, by the nature of their department, interested in seeing more academic integration of computer-based learning, whether in their own facilities or not. The Director understands that CAI projects do not work well without the delivery platform, and is interested in her department's direct involvement in compiling multimedia workstations which will actually see regular use.

Library: Last Fall, in the course of trying to get the Library to invest in a set of printed FL dictionaries for the Language Lab, I found

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out that they were interested in putting some reference materials on-line electronically, via CD-ROM drives, and in using laser-read barcodes to log all book circulation. Since last Fall, CD-ROM and Barcodes have been points of common interest. Hopefully, they will also become areas for common investment.

Pass the collection plate. Although this is covered in more detail in the "Affairs" section of this paper, it can be noted here that joint funding of projects, new equipment acquisitions and subscriptions to SCOLA can be successful mechanisms by which to draw your flock together to rally for a common cause. Make sure that you then develop a demonstration of the benefits of the investment so that the expense is justifiable by everyone involved.

It is not yours to judge... Don't hesitate to speak well of the successes which you and your colleagues enjoy as a result of their direct involvement with the Lab or as a result of your collaborative efforts. In other words, blow your horn, pat yourself and others on the back. But keep it professional in perspective, and by all means, do not speak ill of those who refuse to support you or who simply do not want anything to do with your efforts. Both you and they will be evaluated by someone higher up who will see the successes and shortcomings of each camp.

FOREIGN

Don't be a stranger. Identify your audiences. Gather Intelligence. What's so foreign about what you do? Ask them. Make it less foreign: Tell them.

FACULTY

Foreign Language Faculty: Go find out each semester what classes each professor is teaching. Ask each professor for a printed

copy of the syllabus; if a professor intends to have students use the Lab, you and your student staff will need the syllabus to have recordings and software ready at the right time; if a professor is not yet involving the Lab in his/her courses, suggest that with a syllabus in hand, you can keep watch for any ancillary recordings which might supplement the lesson plans.

Attend presentations organized by FL colleagues, so that you can learn more about their research interests. You may be able to help them with materials germane to their disciplines. The informal talk typical before and after such an event may bring to light some non-related common interests, perhaps laying the groundwork for future collaborative work. If I had not stopped in on a Spanish poetry reading by one of our Hispanic Studies Faculty, I would not have known of her interest in collecting recordings for use in a course in dialectology. Furthermore, I might not have known that the way to convince her to try using recorded excerpts of SCOLA broadcasts was to focus on the register level of the Spanish spoken on the videotape. Not speaking Spanish myself, I assigned the task of preliminary viewing to a student native speaker working in my Lab, and told her to make a brief table of contents for each broadcast. I also asked her to include a few notes on the level of discourse. I then *hand delivered* the videotape and my staff member's notes to the Professor's office, suggesting that the notes might more easily help her choose a short segment to use in her third semester Spanish class. That was last Fall. Now she is an ally in my effort to promote the regular integration of authentic video material into FL classes. She also now sees our growing Spanish language videotape collection as a resource database for her dialectology class.

Get yourself invited to language department meetings. Each semester, I ask for a half hour or so of time at a department

meeting for each of the languages taught at Connecticut in order to do a brief show and tell session about new materials on the market or in development at other schools. I speak of the current use of the Lab by that department, and offer a combination of practical insight on what we might do to further the relationship and some daydreaming about the imminent impact of cutting-edge technologies on language teaching. I also make sure I take along some hardware and software for the show and tell session, especially if I think it could be useful for a class in the coming semester. So after thanking the French and Italian faculty for cooperating with me to establish fixed show times for the films assigned for student viewing, I showed him how computer-digitized voice recordings could be manipulated, suggesting we could easily vary the order of questions on their next round of oral quizzes. Now, this department does not perceive computers as friendly devices, so none of them has yet asked to record a digitized quiz. A month later, however the chair of the department did offer to buy an additional stereo audio cassette deck for the Lab, saving my budget over \$300.00. In addition, at the end of this past semester, she asked me for the first time to come to the department meeting to help choose texts and tapes for the third semester courses for next Fall, since the department decided that the class will make regular use of the Lab.

Other: In the course of gathering intelligence about your colleagues' departments, you'll identify people and courses for whom and for which your interests involving non-print learning materials, CAI, IVD (interactive videodisc), special interest group electronic bulletin boards, etc. could be applicable. Take the time to contact your non-FL colleagues, much as you would the language faculty, in order to share what you've learned, and to offer some insight about why you're interested, how it might overlap, now or in the future, with the direct

missions of your facility, materials collection, or services.

Government: With the '92 elections looming on the horizon, I'll be hawking the ABC News IVD idea to the professor who will teach a course on "Political Parties, Campaigns, and Elections" this Fall. By late August, I should even have polish up my own HyperCard stacks enough to demystify and demonstrate the IVD technology as an understandable, harnessable learning tool. If it can work for FL, it can work for government and politics.

Art & Music: I'm now on a committee with the Art and Music Chairs to organize the Fall launch of our Center for Arts & Technology, so we will have numerous occasions to update each other on our initiatives.

COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION

President: I know that the President does a great deal of traveling in order to raise the profile and the endowment of the College, so when I talk with her about foreign languages and educational technology, I make sure that I ask what type of information she needs in order to make her audiences aware of learning technologies on campus. Then, I make sure that she gets that information, either from me, from the AV department, or from the Academic Computing and Information Services Directors. From our talks, she also learns about the direction in which I'm leading the Lab for FL faculty. These meetings have proven their worth in more than just funding for conference trips...

Dean of Faculty: With the Dean, I've learned to be a better listener, so that I can learn about her vision of interdepartmental projects, and especially about the internal politics affecting the individual FL departments. Monthly meetings with her have given me several cues on where I might

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graciously intervene in the name of the Language Lab to help certain new FL colleagues feel more welcome on campus.

Admissions: This fall, the Admissions Office will get from my staff a descriptive pamphlet on Language Lab services, materials, and future developments. I'll also pay them several visits to collect info on the new freshman class and to discuss their funding the production of a video and of some hypermedia software on languages at the College.

Affirmative Action: Our AA office will receive regular updates on how their funding is enhancing the educational resources for all students on campus. I'll also keep the AA staff involved by asking them to promote my software authoring project to colleagues looking to use multimedia materials and hardware to increase their students' awareness of the ethnic implications of topics in their courses.

Other Academic Support Services: The AV department, Academic Computing, and the Library Director will also get regular updates from me throughout the Summer and Fall so that they know what educational tech projects are in the works in the Language Lab, and also so that I can keep myself updated on their progress with similar projects.

AFFAIRS

"Package it, Sell it, Make it Happen." What kind of business can you do together? Be a leader and encourage them to invest time and funding in the initiatives you are leading. Get involved in efforts led by others.

FACULTY

Foreign Language Faculty: While you preach to the FL faculty the benefits of

involving the Language Lab in the curriculum, their faith is manifested by their acts of involving their students in the Language Lab for research and classes. As you learn about the FL faculty's interests, and as you make yours known to them, you'll find out what kind of business you can do together.

The FL chairs at Connecticut have, under my coordination, jointly funded the Pioneer videodisc player for an interactive workstation in the Language Lab. Since 5 FL faculty joined me in March to attend a conference on multimedia in the classroom, 2 of those 5 have asked for some instruction in Hypercard stack creation—one to drive a videodisc, and the other to work with digitized sound for pronunciation tutorials. This fall, I expect to jointly fund the purchase of at least one CD-ROM player with the FL departments, in exchange for some workshops on the pedagogical use of broadcast video for FL instruction.

Other

Art & Music: At Connecticut College, the Art department chair is interested in 3D computer modeling for sculpture, as well as in computer-generated 2-D art. When he and the music department chair conceived of a "Center for Arts and Technology," I made sure that I became involved at the early organizational meetings. The resulting Center will involve campus-wide sharing of computer, audio, and video facilities for hypermedia productions by any interested faculty. While the Language Lab cannot offer the most powerful workstations for such projects, the resulting high-profile publicity for the Language Lab's involvement in the Center for Arts and Technology will ensure my access to other departments' studios, and eventually, will cultivate additional support for upgrading the Language Lab's complements of hardware and software.

COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION

President and Dean of Faculty: I receive the full support of the President and the Dean of Faculty for every initiative of which I make them aware. I would not be here with you if they both did not believe that the Language Lab plays a key role in implementing new technologies in the academic life of Connecticut College. In order to reinforce the bond between my office and theirs, I communicate frequently with them, enthusiastically offering information on a variety of tech topics, such as how to reduce photocopier charges and waste paper by the use of e-mail, or what document imaging systems hold in store for the accounting office as well as for the Library Archives. I know that they don't have time to keep abreast of developments in technological systems which do not yet directly affect them, just like I don't have time to do all of the reading and writing which I would like to do. So I barter information for other information, or information for funding, or even information for a little help raising the profile of the Language Lab elsewhere on campus. After I sold the FL faculty on the idea of combining their individual and department video libraries in one collection in the Language Lab, I presented the idea to the Dean, asking only that she fund the installation of about 30 running feet of 7-foot tall built-in hardwood shelving units with glass doors, so that the collection would have a suitable storage and display area. At first, she liked the idea. She really loved it once I gave her the written proposal, complete with the notes about how the President had already contributed some materials to share with her FL colleagues. The shelves were built soon thereafter.

Admissions: When the admissions office finally takes the hook I've set, and asks for video mini-documentaries on the FL departments and on instructional technology on our campus, I expect that they will gladly contribute heavily to the production and equipment costs involved in realizing such a series of tapes. Although the AV department will be the most involved in the actual production work, the Language Lab will benefit internally among College departments, and externally, as the tapes are shown to prospective students.

OTHER ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Academic Computing: After my demonstration of the prototype of my interactive videodisc project at the Faculty Computer Open House, I earned a warm reception for my idea of installing FL software on the hard disks in one of the Academic Computing Labs for student use next year.

I hope that you can see that the Language Lab Director can be a sort of Minister of Foreign Affairs, raising the profile of the Services and Materials available through the facility, and then enhancing the facility, the services, and the materials collection by interesting colleagues to invest funding and time. While I know that success in the Language Lab cannot be codified and listed on recipe cards, I would hope that each of you can identify a course of development for the roles which the Learning Lab can play among other departments in an institution, and then, in giving a strong sense of direction to those plans, Package it, Sell it, Make it Happen.