



FROM THE PRESIDENT

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I'm just back from our 1993 conference in Lawrence, which served, as our conferences always do, simultaneously to reassure and to challenge. Less than ten minutes into the first presentation I was reminded once again of the energetic diversity and cutting-edge, yet unselfish, expertise of our membership, that manifests itself in not simply a willingness to learn from one another, but a delight in doing so.

Recognition of the challenges emerged more slowly, as throughout the conference fellow IALLers from all over the country and abroad shared thoughts on their activities and their needs, their hopes and their worries, their ideas and their goals. These informal conversations recalled the dramatic changes that we have experienced over the past several years. Only a decade ago the job description for a lab director could require expertise in a single medium—audio—and truly lead one to feel as if “the basics” had been covered. Now, that basic description might list, in addition, video, satellite, computers, networks, and multimedia. Lab directors have always had to manage a budget, but now they often have to create it as well, familiarity with funding sources and grant proposal

writing have become as much a part of some of our jobs as handling basic accounting. Increasingly we are concerned with personnel issues—staff hiring, training and motivation—while we continue to struggle with these old perennials: how best to partner our faculty colleagues in the exploration and use of our resources, how to achieve professional respect and recognition in our institutions. Renovating and re-equipping to state-of-the-art are still goals for most of us, but in the face of the dizzying pace of technological change (and in the absence of clairvoyance), flexibility becomes the second most critical part of the equation. And what are we to make of the fact that the spread of electronic network connectivity allows, among other things, for communication and learning to happen independent of time and distance in a “place” that has no walls at all?

What does all this mean for IALL? How can our organization help each of us in a profession that clearly depends on constant self-education? How do we best encourage the development and sharing of expertise? Perhaps most fundamentally, I believe it means that as an organization we are never more truly representative of our

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membership than when we are in motion: exploring, experimenting, evolving. In recognition of this, at IALL '93 I proposed to the Board and the Council a series of initiatives intended to address the twin issues of the development and sharing of expertise while at the same time encouraging movement and participation among our members. These initiatives involve the examination of a number of questions: What are the partnerships that can be most fruitful for us? What are the products that our membership needs? What are the activities that IALLers are most interested in pursuing? Specifically, the following Task Forces are being set up (some of them are hard at work already), each of them charged with examining all sides of an issue and recommending a course of action:

- **Software Database Project:** What software would be included? What information about each product would be described? How would the database be created and maintained? Where would the database be housed and how would it be made accessible to the members?
- **Video Publications:** How valuable would it be if IALL produced a series of videos on technology-based language learning: communicative and interactive teaching in a lab environment, for example, or techniques for teaching/testing with audio, video or multimedia resources, or techniques/suggestions for low-budget materials production? What are the topics of greatest interest? Who would be involved in the production? Would corporate or foundation funding be possible to help underwrite costs?
- **Professional Certification/Recognition:** Many professional organizations provide consultation (or guidelines at the very least) for institutions needing to evaluate the professional capacity of

those involved in activities related to that organization. How desirable would it be for IALL to develop such services with respect to any of the following: minimum requirements for lab directors, promotion and tenure for faculty involved in lab activities or the development of technology-based materials, and guidelines for the evaluation of lab facilities?

- **IALL Outreach:** In addition to sharing our expertise through our print publications, individual consulting, and regional and national conferences, how useful would it be if IALL created a workshop series that could be "contracted" out to interested universities and/or affiliate conferences? What topics would be the best to include in such a format? What standards of quality and reliability would be expected for "official" or "IALL-sponsored" workshops? What procedures would best insure adherence to such standards? Who would benefit? Who would participate?
- **IALL Teleconference Series:** What information might best be conveyed in this manner? Who would benefit most? Who would be involved as presenters? What would be the costs, and would corporate or foundation support be possible?
- **IALL Apprenticeships:** Many IALL professionals started out as students working in a lab environment. What incentives or special programs can/should IALL offer to attract and serve student members?

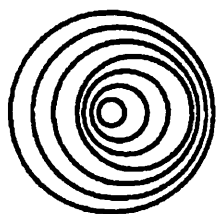
IALL needs your input with respect to these various initiatives. IALL is not a "them" out there doing the work and making decisions. IALL is YOU. IALL is US. This brings me full circle from reassurance to

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challenge to reassurance again: there is no better reason to feel confident about this undertaking than to remember the strength, creativity and resourcefulness of those who make up this organization. I know you'll let me know what you think, and I'm counting on you to lend a hand as well. Working together we can—and will—meet our challenges.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trisha Dvorak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Contribution/suggestions for the "President's Page" may be sent directly to Trisha Dvorak at Language Laboratory, University of Michigan, 2018 MLB, 812 Washington, Ann Arbor MI 48109, trisha.dvorak@um.cc.umich.edu



IALL '93



David Pankratz of Loyola University of Chicago



The IALL booth buzzed with activity!