REPORT ON IALL '93: DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE LAB

This conference report is an amalgam of the contributions of nine different authors offering information on various subjects. Its purpose is to provide the reader with an overview of the week's activities as well as to highlight areas of specific interest. The contributors are: Trisha Dvorak (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Carmen Greenlee (Bowdoin College), Pamela Griffin-Castro (University of Minnesota), Robert Henderson (University of Pittsburgh), Irene Starr (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Jackie Tanner (Georgetown University), Joseph Toth, (University of Chicago), Ursula Williams (University of Notre Dame), and Sharon Zachau (University of the South). The report was coordinated by Dick Kuettner (Washington and Lee University) and edited by Dick Kuettner, Joseph Toth and Karen Landahl. Note: the selection of presentations does not indicate that these were judged the best. It does reflect the presentations attended by those who agreed to be contributors to this report.

THE CONFERENCE AND ITS PURPOSE

Every two years IALL sponsors a national conference held at the academic institution of an IALL member. The nature of these conferences—part theoretical, part applied, part hands-on, part visionary—reflects the multifaceted "personality" of IALL membership, as well as the organization's willingness to represent and respond to different needs and points of view. Pre-conference workshops, conference sessions, and vendor displays give participants the opportunity to become more knowledgeable and more skilled; interest sessions and focus groups help each to feel more aware of and connected to the IALL professional community. This sense of community was particularly evident at this year's conference, held June 1 – 5, 1993, at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. Hosted by John Huy, Director of the Ermal Garinger Academic Resource Center, the conference was organized around the theme, "Defining the Role of the Language Lab". This theme focused on what is currently an issue for all of us: How do others define us and how do we define ourselves? What are the challenges and the opportunities represented by the diverse "places" occupied by language labs in today's college and university environments? How do we best meet them?

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING

Much of the preliminary design of IALL '93 began at IALL '91. Planning the conference is a two-year task. After the call for papers went out, more than 50 proposals

arrived from late January until March 1993. John Huy (IALL '93 Coordinator), Ursula Williams (Program Coordinator), and the program committee made decisions about which proposals to accept and how to bundle together sessions on similar topics, and—most important—discussed how well the conference program would realize its theme. Also, they selected the plenary speakers: Gary Becker ("Copyright and Multimedia"), Cal Downs ("Effective Organizational Communications"), and Tom Grundner ("National Public Telecomputing Network"). Many thanks are due John and his staff for their hard work in creating the outstanding conference we enjoyed!

THE LAB DIRECTOR'S JOB DESCRIPTION

How many times has an administrator asked you, "Just what is it that you do?" A roundtable was organized to discuss the clarification and standardization of the elements within the title, Lab Director. We recognize that each institution has its own specialty areas and flavor, but there are similarities. Four experienced lab directors—Kathy James, Dick Kuettner, Phil Richardson, and Jackie Tanner—elaborated on the tasks, skill levels, and knowledge required to handle basic areas of responsibility that all directors/managers face. Becoming a director is not an organized step up a career ladder: much of the training is on-the-job or catch-up-as-you-can. Technology is expanding our roles and work loads; unless the administration acknowledges this increasing responsibility with additional staff, problems can occur.

A job description is a list of what is to be done—not how to do it. It also describes the educational background and experience that are needed, as well as the expectations, supervisory duties and fiscal responsibility that are involved. But it may lack a statement of what kind of accountability the

institution has in ensuring that funds and space are available to do what the job description cites as important.

Time constraints prevented answering all questions raised, but indications were that the job description issue is important to those who attended and that it would help them if IALL were to formulate a statement to which institutions could refer when writing a new position description. Through IALL-led discussions, members can continue to identify areas of concern and target those for specific *IALL Journal* articles or conference topics. IALL could provide its members with a management development program that would strengthen the skills needed to manage a multimedia language or humanities center. The four presenters plan to provide a more cohesive and usable outline for the *IALL Journal* which will reflect suggestions made during the session. Dick Kuettner and Jackie Tanner will be including material on the lab director's job description in the upcoming "Lab Director's Kit".

LANGUAGE LAB DESIGN BASICS

A full day pre-conference workshop explored the fundamentals of lab design. Presenters included Carmen Greenlee, Edmund Dente, Robin Lawrason, Mike Ledgerwood, and Roger Sanchez-Berroa. The day's presentations, based upon information found in the IALL Lab Design Kit, focused on 6 areas: needs assessment, physical design, audio, video, satellite reception, and computing. Carmen Greenlee's discussion of needs assessment emphasized the importance of undertaking a thorough study of an institution's needs before designing the physical space for a language laboratory. Ed Dente began his discussion of space planning, recounting his own recent experience: the design and building of the new Olin Language Building at Tufts University. He spoke on the relationship of

architects, language faculty liaison, the university's physical plant representative, and the language laboratory director in the design and building process. Roger Sanchez-Berroa, Robin Lawrason, Carmen Greenlee, and Mike Ledgerwood each commented on the challenges of designing for audio, video, satellite reception, and computing given rapid changes in the development and delivery of new technologies. Each gave examples of equipment which could be purchased with a range of budgets as well as information for those undertaking everything from renovation of an existing laboratory to those planning new building projects. Lively discussions between attendees continued throughout the rest of the week with promises that the discussion will continue at IALL '95 with reports made on projects completed during the interim. In the meantime expert advice on lab planning projects can be found in IALL's *Lab Design Kit* and *Designing the Learning Center* of the Future. (See order form in "End of the Reel" in this issue.)

CASE STUDY: A TOUR OF THE HOST'S FACILITY

The language laboratory of the University of Kansas in Lawrence (the Ermal Garinger Academic Resource Center) occupies a suite of rooms on the fourth floor of the Humanities Building. With Ms. Diane Magnuson as our guide, we began the tour at the service desk just inside the front entrance. Here we got a good look at the lab's computerized check-out system, which consists of a networked group of DOS-based computers from Zenith Data Systems. Each item added to the Center's collection, whether audiotapes, videotapes, books, or lend-out equipment, is bar-coded using software from Winnebago. As the item is entered, the program automatically generates a barcode, and labels are printed on-site. Check-out involves passing a light-pen (also from Winnebago) over the barcode of the

item to be loaned, then over the appropriate barcode for the transaction taking place. The computer automatically records the transaction. The Center achieves tight inventory control with this system.

What is available for students and faculty to borrow at Garinger? After the instructors provide class lists, the Center staff is able to determine the number of audiocassettes needed per lesson for each student in each course. These audiocassettes may then be borrowed for one week. The Center has an extensive collection of videotapes (VHS) in many languages including Chinese, French, German and Russian. Instructors may borrow the tapes but students must view them on-site. (Nine VCRs with monitors are provided for this purpose.) Five VCR-monitor combinations are mounted on mobile racks for faculty to roll to classrooms in the building. One of these racks holds a videotape player that can convert from the PAL and SECAM standards to NTSC.

The listening lab proper now boasts a brand-new Sony LLC-9000 console with twenty student positions. Completed just before the conference opened, the installation was retrofitted into the existing carrels. The remaining carrels contain 39 stand-alone Califone student decks and the personal VCRs and monitors.

Other facilities in the Center include a sound-proof booth, a repair shop, and a video distribution center. With students acting as recording engineers, instructors use the sound booth to create original materials on audiocassette. The booth is also used during the course of the year to conduct tutorials. The well-stocked repair shop is staffed by a student technician who works part-time. Diane indicated that very little equipment need leave the lab for repair. The video distribution center receives the SCOLA signal from a dish on the roof,

records the programs as requested on three VCRs, and then sends the recorded programs to classrooms on the fourth floor.

METHODOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY

IALL '93 offered several sessions demonstrating ways in which various proficiency-oriented methodologies could be enhanced by the use of technology. LeeAnn Stone's workshop, "Designing Effective Task-Based Activities for the Language Lab", allowed participants to actually take part in several activities described in IALL's publications, *Task-Based Activities, Vols. I & II.* (See order form in **"End of the Reel"** in this journal.) Although these activities sound promising and potentially useful when described in the books, they took on a whole new dynamic when actually experienced. Participants learned how very involving and effective such activities can be. They also encountered practical hitches such as details of student recording and shuffling students around to various stations. This session demonstrated the lively ways in which the audio language lab can increase and improve possibilities for teachers looking for ways to provide instant communicative situations in which their foreign language students can interact.

Role-play activities have been developed as an effective method for improving the communicative competence of foreign language learners. In his video demonstration, "The Effect of the Drama Method at the Media Studio", Dr. Yoshinobu Niwa showed how students at Chubu University in Japan increased their fluency and command of conversational English through the course of a semester by role playing and recording their performances on video. Dr. Niwa gave the students a final, more challenging assignment: develop and tape an original scenario. The result was a truly delightful skit, which clearly showed that

students enjoyed and benefited from the double motivation of producing and recording their own work.

A session presented by Pete Smith and Danielle Roth-Johnson, "Elvis pour Quarante Dollars: Multimodal Video Input in French Language Instruction", demonstrated the use of technology for improving receptive rather than productive skills. Both Krashen's call for exposure to large amounts of authentic target-language material and recent research indicating the value of presenting language learners linguistic input in two modes simultaneously provided the theoretical basis for using closed-captioned television for language learning. Technical details concerning the availability of various closed-captioned broadcasts as well as those concerning equipment and hook-up were discussed. Videos of French broadcasts with complete same-language scripting were presented in support of the claim that such a use of technology could be of tremendous value to students trying to make sense of spoken language by simultaneously presenting them with the written word.

Both new technologies and language-learning theories are continuously undergoing tremendous changes. At times the language laboratory has appeared too static to provide the dynamic, interactive activities called for by many proficiency-oriented teachers. These IALL sessions, demonstrating how recent technological advances could actualize or enhance teaching methodologies for classes as well as individuals, were valuable to anyone seeking to adapt the language learning center to proficiency-oriented teaching methods.

SOUND CONSIDERATIONS IN DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDING FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

This workshop was conducted by Karen Landahl, Alexander Francis and Michael Ziolkowski. In her opening remarks, Landahl quoted Dwight Bolinger's declaration that "language is embedded in gesture". (p. 18, *Aspects of Language*, 2nd Ed.) While acknowledging that gesture and other context provide important information for gaining communicative competence, she contended that for the acquisition of speech production and perception presenting the learner with a high-quality audio signal is essential. She also asserted that only by offering a rich, fully-specified audio signal to learners can one be confident of supplying them sufficient information to develop the sound system for a foreign language.

The discussion then turned to the technical method they favor to capture, manipulate and reproduce these "rich" signals—digital audio recording. Although analog recording—depending on such variables as choice of microphone or quality of tape—may still yield excellent results, a real advantage in digital audio recording emerges when one comes to duplicate a digital audio tape (DAT). Since the signal recorded with this method exists only as "zeroes" and "ones" (as on a computer), there is virtually no loss of signal or increase in noise in dubbing from one DAT to another. A second real advantage in digital audio recording lies in the ease of editing the signal. Here a caution was in order: one must resist the temptation to filter a signal; for example, in order to conserve storage space on one's computer. A signal can be filtered, in a sense, by recording it at a low sampling rate. Francis noted that most speech uses frequencies from 800 – 8000 Hz. (A telephone-based language course, therefore, may filter speech too much, inasmuch as the telephone bandwidth cuts out the high end of the freqency range.)

Much of the remainder of the workshop constituted a short course in the physics of speech production. The presenters noted that the quasi-periodic signal produced by the vibration of the vocal folds is shaped by the "resonance chambers" of the throat and the oral and nasal cavities to produce the sounds of speech. The upshot of their discussion of the physiological, acoustic, and perceptual aspects of speech is that research has not definitively determined what it is in the speech signal that each individual chooses to respond to for understanding and speaking. This is the reason the presenters are concerned with providing the listener with a "fully-specified" signal.

COPYRIGHT CONCERNS

Copyright makes more sense when you understand what its purpose is and who is protected, according to Gary Becker—the nationally known expert on copyright law and IALL '93 workshop leader. The historical purpose of copyright is to stimulate and protect creativity. Rights to duplication, performance (e.g., a running film or computer screen), and display (a freeze- frame or overhead data screen) belong to the creator. Not everything is copyrightable. On maps, for example, street names and directions as well as geographic features cannot be copyrighted, but format elements such as scale, color, legend, or folds can. If ideas such as the love triangle could be copyrighted, then only one book with that idea could exist. The essence of the current copyright dilemma is that we have tools at our disposal which allow easy copying. It is important to remember that off-air video recordings refer to broadcast programs, NOT cable or satellite, with a few exceptions. Penalties for copyright infringement can vary from $500 to $250,000 plus 1 – 5 years in prison. Liable people range from students making illegal

copies to their supervisors, including school trustees. Some states have mandated that all higher education institutions come into compliance with copyright. Members should make it their policy to get written permissions to make copies. A result of the IALL round table on copyright was that the organization should work towards producing guidelines, signage, and posters that all members could use and post. (See "Summary of the IALL '93 Copyright Workshop" in the **Lab Notes** section of this journal for the first part of a more complete exposition of the workshop's contents.)

The Chicago Manual of Style states that "the right of fair use... should not be allowed to decay through failure of scholars to employ it boldly." (p. 93, 12th Ed.) Irene Starr presented an example of such a bold use in the case of MTV's threatened suit, later withdrawn, against Communications Professor Sut Jhally of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He compiled MTV clips (replacing the original sound with his narration) to create and share with other scholars a classroom video critical of exploitation and commercialism in American culture.

A VIEW TO THE FUTURE

With IALL '93 the organization has shown—as it has with previous conferences—that it can perform the valuable service of bringing together experts in numerous areas of shared concern, from management and curricular issues to computer networking and software design, allowing conferees to learn from each other's knowledge and experience. The vitality of the association is dependent upon the willingness of its members to become involved and to devote their time and effort to the preparation of conference presentations (as well as **Journal** articles and other publications and projects). It is reassuring to realize that IALL has in its ranks a growing reservoir of

knowledgeable and hard-working professionals. We look forward with optimism to exciting conferences at Notre Dame in 1995 and at Victoria in 1997, which is a joint meeting with the Language Laboratory Association of Japan.

CONGENIALITY AND FELLOWSHIP

A report about an IALL conference might be incomplete if it did not also include the aspects of congeniality and fellowship that are increasingly evident at these biennial meetings. We lab directors are a unique group. There's usually only one of us at any institution, we manage facilities with a very specific purpose, and we've learned to wear an astonishing number of hats. Often the lone manager of a facility, we must be everything from CEO to Tape Duplicating Technician to Personnel Manager to Maintainer of Computer Resources. And no one at our campus understands us, so it is a wonderfully affirming experience to meet with others who do. (It should be noted, by the way, that many larger institutions were represented also by some of the assistants on their staffs, an encouraging development.)

The level of congeniality was evident in the number of small group discussions that took place in every nook and cranny of the Kansas Union; in the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) lunches, many of which were very crowded; in the MWALL pep rally at the Alumni Center; in spontaneous large-group dinner plans; in the opening night festivities at Liberty Hall, complete this time with pyrotechnics of irresponsible origin and heroics originating with Tom Browne and Karen Stoumbaugh; in the aptly named Pub Crawl; in the closing festivities at Naismith, which we're not permitted to talk about but which have grown to a stature that will require a Closing Festivities

Chairman for IALL '95; and in the Board meeting that took place on the Morning After, and that, flooded out of its first-floor meeting room, moved with aplomb and dignity to drier quarters on an upper floor.

It is these shared experiences, together with the sessions, meetings, and vendor exhibits that are the basis of an IALL conference, that form the fabric of this organization. Enthusiastic participation in conference sessions is the hallmark of a good conference, and the conference committee can take the credit for that. John Huy alone gets credit for inventing opportunities unique to Lawrence, Kansas and environs, for members of the Association to learn more about each other and to form some of the bonds that will help a growing organization strengthen its identity.

Ursula Williams (host of IALL '95 at Notre Dame) and Kathleen Ford (host of IALL '91 at UCLA)

Closing night festivities: Ron Balko and Carmen Greenlee whooping it up with one of the KU staff.

A visit by Lawrence's finest during the opening ceremonies

IALL Conference hosts: Ruth Trometer (IALL '89—M.I.T.), John Huy (IALL '93—Kansas), Kathleen Ford (IALL '91—UCLA)
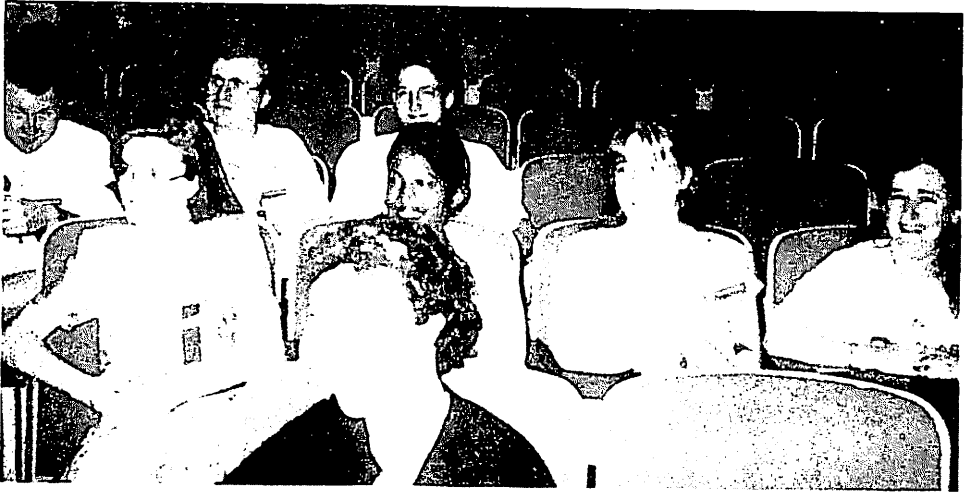
*Irene Starr and part of the hardworking staff of the Ermal Garinger Academic
Resource Center at the closing ceremonies.*

*David Herren, Kathleen Ford, José Luis Montiel, Carmen Greenlee, Shelly
Breen, and a very nice man who remains unidentified.*