LLTI Highlights

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Welcome again to "LLTI Highlights," a column featuring summaries of selected discussions which have taken place on the LLTI—the Language Learning and Technology International listserver. This electronic forum is used by an increasing number of language lab professionals to discuss issues relevant to their everyday work. For information on how to subscribe to the LLTI, see the end of this column.

The discussions summarized here have been paraphrased; any omissions, errors or misinterpretations are mine. For each topic, the number in parentheses which follows it was assigned by Otmar Foelsche, LLTI moderator. This number can be used to facilitate a search of that topic in the LLTI archive. More on the archive to follow.

La Petite Sirène (#1735), March 1995

This topic contained tips for anyone trying to purchase foreign language versions of U.S. feature films. The question asked was, "Does anybody know where one can obtain the full-length French version of Disney's 'The Little Mermaid'?"

Suggestions and comments offered:
- Try Multi-Cultural Books and Videos, Inc., 28880 Southfield Rd., Suite 183, Lathrup Village, MI 48076. They recently sold "Le Roi Lion" and have other Disney movies.
- Carlex (1-800-526-3768) carries many titles in French and Spanish, but they said that "La Petite Sirène" had been taken off the market.
- Try Periodica Inc. in Quebec, Canada. Tel: (514) 274-5468 Fax: (514) 274-0201
- A supermarket in Canada sold the tape for $30.00. Attempts in the U.S. failed.
- Possibly for sale in Paris at the FNAC store.

Physical Site of the Language Lab (#1771 & 1775), March 1995

This discussion was started by Lane Standefer, who wanted LLTIers' input on his university's plan to house a new language lab in the same building with academic computing, but away from the language departments. He was concerned

that not having the lab located in the same building as the language faculty and classrooms would decrease the usage of the lab for language classes and would also have a negative effect on the spontaneous use of audio-visual materials and equipment.

It all depends on how your lab is used, responded Bruce Parkhurst, referring primarily to student usage. Also, she posed several good questions for consideration: "How easily could you split up your services? Could you maintain an equipment depot in the classroom building…? Could you use the opportunity to lobby for having equipment permanently installed in classrooms? Could you forge new areas of operations in conjunction with the computer folks in the new building? Always try to see what you could ask for; if you will be forced to change how you provide service, ask for the moon."

"Several more writers also felt strongly that it is important to retain the physical proximity between the language "people" and the lab."

"Not speaking as a lab manager but as a teacher and multimedia type," responded Carol Fidelman, "I am really against this 'ghetto-ization'of electronics. Things should…be moving in the other direction, with equipment being integrated into the classroom and used in the teaching process. She suggested that the proposed separation of technology from the teaching environment will "choke creativity and exploration of the use of all the wonderful stuff that is out there…."

Several more writers also felt strongly that it is important to retain the physical proximity between the language "people" and the lab. Marie Sheppard provided an example: at her school, French and Italian are in the same building as the lab, and she does "significantly more business" with them than with the other departments. The lab is more evident to them and "communication is up close and personal between the French and Italian faculty and the [lab] staff."

Finally, Mathew Mattingly offered valuable first-hand experience. Two years after leaving the site of the old lab in the "cramped, damp, sometimes flooded basement" in the foreign languages building, he is convinced that his move to new quarters was a positive one. He stated, "It took some adjusting for people to come to the other side of campus, but no major problems. As far as last minute 'informal' requests, that did have to change some," although Mathew suggested that this was primarily a result of the increased number of services the new center offered. Harking back to the questions Bruce had posed earlier, Mathew reported, "We also included two media-capable classrooms in the new facility, so the lab could be more integrated with computers as more faculty use the new technologies. Moving away was a positive thing all around and worth a little inconvenience."

Wouldn't it be interesting to hear from the faculty there and at other schools where the "new lab" is in a building removed from the language departments, how they have experienced the impact of the move on their teaching?

Panasonic AGW1 Problems (#1879), April 1995

Katie Sprang started this discussion with her query, "About six months ago, we purchased four Panasonic AGW1 multistandard video machines, and we have been having the weirdest problem with all four of them. After using them for a short period of time, the heads become so caked with metal particles off of the tapes that we lose the picture.... Has anyone else been experiencing this phenomenon with AGW1s purchased in the last year or so?" She added that Panasonic service people reported that the problem lies with videotapes, not with the tape heads.

There were many responses, and they seemed to fall into a few categories. First, some writers mentioned that they make heavy use of *older* AGW1s without any problems. Next, some writers reported that they have purchased new AGW1s in the past year, but have experienced no problems. Finally, there were at least two respondents who reported similar "strange" problems with recently purchased AGW1s.

During this discussion, it was made clear that "shedding" is a normal characteristic of videotape, and therefore regular cleaning of the heads is important. Furthermore, a bad batch of tapes or even one poor-quality tape can literally gum up the works. Some writers agreed that the so-called "cleaning tapes" that are inserted into the VCR are at best poor at cleaning—if they clean at all—and at worst can damage the heads.

David Wohr cautioned users to make sure that if they are using "cleaning tapes," that they are actually accomplishing what they intend. He went on to explain that due to some of the automatic operations of the AGW1, it is possible that if the record protect tab is out on the cleaning tape, the heads are not being cleaned at all, even though the VCR's lights show "Play." What is happening is that the tape is being scanned, not played. He says to correct this by actually pressing "Play" or "Record" while the tape is inserted. Another reader reported that the "automatic cleaning" feature advertised on some VCRs apparently only cleans playback heads, not recording heads.

Finally, Katie added that her "problem machines" had seen very few hours of use before they went bad, and that no "cleaning tapes" had ever been used. Watch the LLTI for further developments.

WWW Sites in Russian (#1833), April 1995

In recent months literally hundreds of World Wide Web (WWW) sites relevant to foreign language study have been posted to the LLTI. (Particularly industrious has been Robert "Tennessee Bob" Peckham, who has posted numerous sites for Spanish, French, etc.) The WWW is growing in astronomical proportions, as those fortunate to have a link to this Internet resource have noticed. Mercifully, it appears that "hub" sites are developing for particular languages where one will find listings of many sites.

Within this one discussion of Russian sites, too many were listed to reproduce, but here are some good leads:

- http://fllc.smu.edu
  Jan Marston reported that this site provides "annotated" links to other Russian sites, including Cyrillic-only sites. She reports that "We are trying to pick up where TBob Peckham leaves off: he finds 'em and we put 'em on our list to annotate."
- http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/guides/russian.html
- http://www.pitt.edu/~cjp/rees.html/
- http://grafton.dartmouth.edu:8001/lrc/culture/europe/russian.html

In the course of this discussion, Peter Patrikis mused "Is there no way to coordinate this effort of reinventing the link? ...I suspect that a great deal of time and money is being wasted in duplication of duplication of other efforts."

Robert Ponterio responded, "On the FLTEACH Page [gopher://www.cortland.edu:80/hGET%20/www_root/flteach/flteach.html] we have been focusing on links to the various compilations that others have been keeping. Our aim is to keep our own list of personal favorites very short and let others compile more extensive listings that we can access. The LRC at Dartmouth is first on our listing [http://grafton.dartmouth.edu:8001/lrc/]. ...a language department might do better to provide a selection designed specifically to meet the needs of its own students and faculty without trying to include everything."

Which Recording Medium? (#2016), June 1995

Frank Ryan started this topic with his question, "Record onto what?" in reference to which would be the best original medium for re-recording old masters of French audio recordings compiled over many years. He elaborated, "Do we continue with analog audio cassette as the original, use DAT, or put everything directly onto a computer file? For the next few years we expect that we will make these recordings available to students as analog cassette tapes, and in CD-audio format, and as sound files via local network."

Bruce Parkhurst responded, "I'm shy of preserving words/sounds/images as computer files only.... I still support analog tape (for remastered materials) and back up on DAT for original recordings."

Derek Stearns Roff wrote, "Tell us more, Frank. The main problem with CD quality digital sound is that it takes up so much space. Your description...makes me guess that you will need multiple gigabytes of hard disk storage.... Big bucks for storage, heavy traffic for your network."

Mathew Mattingly summarized nicely, proposing that there seem to be four main issues involved in making this decision: the physical stability of the medium, the expense, the fidelity or resolution, and the likely future existence of a playback device for the medium. He notes that in Frank's case he thinks cassette would be a good candidate because "a) the medium has a proven track record if reasonable precautions are taken in storage, b) cassettes are cheap, c) the original medium is the limiting factor of fidelity so little would be gained by going to DAT or CD, and d) the ubiquitous cassette recorder is likely to be around in its present form for a while, despite challenges from the digital realm...." However, he mused that something he has thought about is that "the next generation of kids, having grown up with random access and digital audio, will have little tolerance for cassettes with their linear searching and less than crystalline sound quality. 'All the fidelity you need' may not be what they need."

Finally, good advice came from one of Frank Ryan's colleagues in the music department at Brown University. (Sometimes we forget that we are surrounded by knowledgeable people right within our own institution!) He wrote, "Probably the best long-term archival medium is CD. The next best would be DAT. Analog cassettes are probably the cheapest, and not prone to dropouts over time, but they **are** prone to breaking." However, he went on to give a warning, "Of course, the problem with any digital medium is when it deteriorates, it doesn't just get fuzzy-sounding, it actually **drops out**" [as opposed to analog tape recordings]. Finally, a reference was made to an article on this subject: Rothenberg, Jeff: "Ensuring the longevity of digital documents." Scientific American. Jan. '95. pp. 42 – 47.

"'...The next generation of kids, having grown up with random access and digital audio, will have little tolerance for cassettes with their linear searching and less than crystalline sound quality.'"

A Fond Farewell (#2029), June 1995

This topic was special. Marie Sheppard announced that she is taking an early retirement to devote full energies to her ongoing bout with cancer.

As you know, Marie was editor of the *IALL Journal* for the past two years, and she did an excellent job. I'm sure that

many of you who read Marie's posting would agree that it was characteristic of her talent for handling the task at hand, her positive attitude, and her concern for her colleagues. On a personal note, I wish to say that it was Marie who asked me if I would consider starting where others had left off and write a little column "about the LLTI," which is now "LLTI Highlights." Through this work, I have had the opportunity to enhance my understanding of the many issues related to language lab operations, and thereby grow within the profession. Thank you, Marie.

The Welcome File

I would like to reprint here excerpts from the "Welcome File," a file sent to each new LLTI subscriber. This file informs new users—and reminds experienced users—of the basic background and purpose of the LLTI. It also includes comments on the types of topics that most benefit readers.

Excerpts

"This is a Listserver located at Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA. It is supported by the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning located at 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511-6526, the Kiewit Computing Center, the Language Resource Center at Dartmouth College, and IALL.... LLTI is a moderated listserver. Editing is done by Otmar Foelsche, Director, Humanities Resources, Dartmouth College.... Email otmar@dartmouth.edu."

"[The LLTI] serves as a distribution point for information on language learning and technology, language lab technology, computer supported language learning, interactive video, interactive audio, language workstations, international standards, conversions, compatibilities and more, with an international perspective.... LLTI considers itself a forum and a databank. Subscribers will be able to post notes and queries as well as search databases on specific topics."

"[The LLTI] works well on specific issues, like a single question (what has been the experience with Tandberg's IS10 machines? or: where can I get materials for teaching Swedish?) or focused problem (how do I convert Chinese text from DOS to Mac?). It does not work well on very broad issues like "how to set up a learning lab," or "what does the research say about effectiveness of CALL?"

"If you have a specific question: you can post a question to the list or you can check the LLTI archive to see if the issue has already been discussed. Members of this list have shared enormous amounts of valuable advice on all aspects of our profession. This advice is accessible by searching the files directly on the listserv here at Dartmouth or by pulling down

the complete archive to your own machine from ftp.dartmouth.edu/LLTI-IALL/LLTI-Archive

"If you have a question on a broader issue: please don't post immediately to the list. Instead, you might want to consult one of the publications of IALL (International Association for Learning Labs), which, by the way, is supporting this listserv and the ftp server...."

"As a matter of fairness to all subscribers to the list, then, please be an informed user. Consult the excellent publications prepared by IALL, consult the archive files on the listserv and on the ftp server, and reserve your use of the listserv to those questions and issues that are not covered in either of the above."

The LLTI Archive

All discussions which have taken place on the LLTI have been archived. This archive is a valuable and time-saving research tool. There are various ways to access the archive:

1) Listserv commands. You can retrieve the actual files by sending commands directly to the listserv: listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu

   To get a list of the archive files, send mail to the listserv with the contents: INDEX LLTI. In return you will receive a list of files that identify the archives by month.

   To request a particular month's archive, send the command: SEND LLTI LOGyymm

   After downloading one or more of these monthly archives, you can search them for particular words or topics using your own search tools, such as the "find" or "search" features in any standard word-processing program.

   As of this writing, it is no longer possible to conduct global searches of the entire LLTI archive by sending commands to the listserv. This feature should be restored soon—look for news in the next "LLTI Highlights."

2) Gopher. Conduct a Gopher search through these menus in this order:
   • "Other Gopher Servers" (or some similar rubric—in other words, Gopher servers other than the one you are using locally)
   • North America
   • USA
   • New Hampshire
   • Dartmouth College
   • Research Resources
   • The Humanities

- International Association of Learning Labs
- LLTI Archive

At this point, chose one of the files, such as LLTI_1700 – 1799. This will bring up all those files which had the topic numbers 1700 – 1799.

3) FTP. The archive is also available via anonymous FTP to ftp.dartmouth.edu:/pub/LLTI-IALL You can download the "stuffed" versions (condensed files—for Macintosh users) of all messages up to topic #899. Messages #900 and up can be downloaded in either stuffed or normal uncondensed form.

4) WWW. Go to the Dartmouth College Home page at http://www.dartmouth.edu. Link through these items:
   - Organizations
   - Language Resource Center
   - LLTI-IALL Folder
   - LLTI Archive

(Note: In case you forget or don't have handy this Net address and sequence, remember that most generic Net searches for "llti" will locate the Dartmouth Language Resource Center and thereby the archive.)

As with Gopher and FTP, this WWW access will present the files grouped by topic number.

How to Subscribe to LLTI

First, you must have access to the Internet so that you can use electronic mail. Your email ID and hostname, which become your email address, must be obtained from your institution's computing services department.

To subscribe to the LLTI, send an electronic message to the listserv address. Use your name in the subscribe message. Ex.:

To: listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu
Subject:
Message: SUB LLTI John A. Doe

When your message is received, the listserver will respond with a message describing various basic procedures. You can now begin receiving messages posted by the other users.

Postings to the LLTI may not be sent to the listserv address, but must be sent to: LLTI@dartmouth.edu. To start a new topic, send your message to this address. You can respond to a discussion in progress by sending a reply to a posting on that topic.

If you want to unsubscribe or simply stop mail while you are away from the office, use the SIGNOFF command. (You do not need to give your name.)
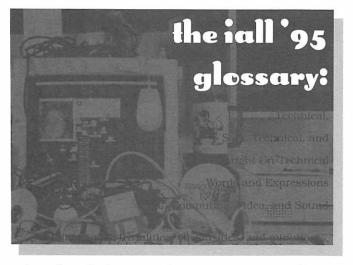
To: listserv@listserv.dartmouth.edu
Subject:
    Message: SIGNOFF LLTI
    To learn more about the LLTI, send a message REVIEW LLTI.
    If you have problems using LLTI, you may send mail directly to Otmar Foelsche, list moderator, at otmar.foelsche@dartmouth.edu or contact a fellow LLTIer! ■

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