

Conference Reports

Association for Educational Communications and Technology

**by Ursula Williams,
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Dame**

At the AECT convention in St. Louis in February, Jennifer James, a cultural anthropologist, was the keynote speaker. She spoke about changing mythologies in today's society. She defined mythologies as the stories that we as a society believe. Society works harmoniously when its members subscribe to the same mythology. The hunter-gatherer myth (man works to provide food, woman remains in the home to nurture the offspring) is one that worked for a long time, but that has been changing, probably most significantly since the end of World War II. Because of the dramatic increases in technology in everyday lives, James felt society has begun to change in significant ways and will continue to change dramatically. It was interesting food for thought for the large group of people who had gathered to talk primarily about technology.

IALL sponsored four sessions at this conference, "Implementing Video Server Technology in Language Learning Centers," "Facilitation in Problem-based Learning: A Training Design, Implementing Video Server Technology in Language Learning Centers" (presented by our own Robert Doyle of Harvard University) and "Strategies for Using Videos in the ESL Classroom." Considering its 8:00 a.m. Saturday slot, the session was well attended. We decided this year, instead of the usual interest meeting, to use the time slot for a session called "Language Lab Design Basics." Robert Doyle, Patricia Miller, Cleve Friedman and I gave brief presentations and answered numerous questions from the audience, many of whom attended this session just to get advice for their specific situations.

This conference marked the end of the official relationship between AECT and IALL. IALL member turnout at AECT meetings has been declining. It was felt that the IALL conferences better serve the needs of people who are interested in the use of technology specifically for foreign language teaching and learning. ♦

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**Claire Bartlett
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ACTFL'97 was one of the largest ACTFL meetings ever held! Approximately 5,500 participants total attended the 1997 conference. This large number was due in part to the fact that AATF held its annual meeting in conjunction with ACTFL annual meeting this year. Moreover, the location of the conference was the popular Opryland Hotel in Nashville, TN, one of the largest convention centers in the world!

As at previous ACTFL conventions, IALL had a booth in the Exhibitors' Hall and many of the conference attendees stopped to inquire about IALL and its role in the profession. A number of the visitors had never heard of our organization and were interested in learning how to develop a language facility to better promote the use of technology. Thanks to the continually playing "Best of IALL's Language Learning Center Tours" videotape, visitors were able to catch a glimpse of lab facilities around the country. Others spent time looking through the IALL publications or browsing through the IALL homepage and its numerous links to centers around the world. The Tech Fair keeps growing and featured a vast array of publishers and software companies. A significant increase of companies from Spain were represented and offered a large variety of software programs.

The IALL Interest Meeting drew a large crowd of old timers and many newcomers. After Chris Higgins's brief introduction to IALL and an introduction of the meeting participants, the group split up by IALL regions, so as to have the opportunity to meet and discuss issues of concern to each particular area of the country.

Each year ACTFL offers IALL a number of dedicated sessions which vary depending on the size of the conference. This year IALL was able to provide four such sponsored sessions. Sharon Scinicariello (Case Western University) talked about "Using Media in the Advanced Civilization Course to Integrate Language and Culture." She discussed the difficulty of teaching an advanced level course while integrating both content and language skills. She also stressed the importance of informing students of the goal of the course and emphasized the necessity to provide content at an adequate language level. Her recommendations for selection of good video and computer-based resources were "short segments," and a "combination of oral and written language." In addition, she underscored the need to select material that "demonstrates a point of view" in order to "stimulate discussion and debate."

The following day, Rachel Saury (University of Virginia) and Claire Bartlett (University of Houston) discussed "Strategies in Implementing Technology with a Foreign Language

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Faculty." Each provided examples demonstrating how to reach faculty members at differing types of institutions. Rachel described the purpose and objectives of the "Foreign Language Instructional Technology Interest Group," a forum for the discussion and promotion of foreign language education, created by the Art and Sciences Center for Instructional Technologies in collaboration with the Instructional Technology group of ITC, the Center for Liberal Arts and the faculty of various language departments at UVA. Detailed information about this group is available on the Web at <http://minerva.acc.virginia.edu/~asmedia/flitig.html>. Claire stressed the significance of coordinating syllabi and foreign language software applications. In addition, she emphasized the importance of evaluation to measure students' progress following the use of language software programs. More detailed information can be found at <http://www.hfac.uh.edu/mcl/modern/fl/home.html>.

Later that afternoon, Lauren Rosen (University of Wisconsin—Madison), in her talk entitled "Language Encounters of the Web Kind" described "the animated student interest in language and culture" when "web activities are created by language instructors as an integral part of their curriculum." Her presentation was accompanied by videoclips demonstrating live classroom activities. You can read more details about Lauren's activities "Teaching with the Web" at <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/lss/lang/teach.htm>.

At the end of the day, those who could still walk were able to attend Patrice Caux's presentation, "A Hypertext On-Line Bulletin Board: An Experiment with Intermediate Students." Patrice (Middle Tennessee State University) told of intermediate French students using a WWWBoard for discussions. You can see a detailed description of Patrice's presentation and relevant information concerning this CGI tool at the following address: <http://www.mtsu.edu/~pcaux/presentation/wwwboard.htm>.

The last IALL-sponsored session was given on Sunday morning by Samantha Earp (University of North Carolina) and Christopher Higgins (University of Maryland—College Park). The title of their talk was "Educational Technology in 2000: Planning for the Next Millennium." Together they drew a technology plan for the next century. They also distributed a helpful bibliography of resources. A strong emphasis was given to funding which led to numerous questions from the audience who had clearly come to find some answers or solutions to take back to their institutions.

The highlight of ACTFL was keynote speaker Maya

Angelou. You might now realize how much you have missed if you did not attend. ACTFL '98 will be held in Chicago, November 20-22, 1998. Check the web site for information at www.actfl.org, and plan to join us. The number of sessions with a "Technology" heading is growing very rapidly and as a member of IALL you will find ACTFL '98 appealing! ♦

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