

From FLEAT III to the *IALL Journal*: A Journey of Remembrance

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"[T]he tendency that we noticed at the conference [was that] LLA papers analyse[d] the in-class activities of students. IALL members tend[ed] to pay more attention to the technicalities of engaging students with the aid of technology. If such generalizations can mean anything, each of our organizational cultures could probably learn much from the other."

Some weeks ago, when Pete Smith reminded me of our plans to select a small number of articles from the FLEATIII/IALL97 conference for this Journal, it reminded me of how much the conference brought to us in Victoria, and, we hope, to those who came. Even if we were only to go by the numbers, the 'bridge' that FLEAT re-builds every few years between IALL and LLA seems to be very strong: we had to close registration at 425; attracted 139 new members to IALL; drew over 100 LLA participants from Japan; heard 120 presentations of various kinds, one-fifth of them by LLA members.

Re-reading the articles in the Proceedings after some time reminded me of the tendency that we noticed at the conference for LLA papers to analyse the in-class activities of students. IALL members tend to pay more attention to the technicalities of engaging students with the aid of technology. If such generalizations can mean anything, each of our organizational cultures could probably learn much from the other. Many of us who did catch the unique flavor of the mixture of our cultures in 1997 are already planning for Kobe/Osaka in 2000.¹

The months since FLEAT have been quite intense, with many changes. Several of our longest-serving permanent staff at the Language Centre have moved on to other pastures. For me, this sabbatical year has involved more than the usual amount of travel, and a chance to see how our trade is plied in other parts of the world. "Change" is evidently the operative word wherever one looks.

To illustrate some of the symptoms of change that I saw, here are four images from 1998 that made a lasting imprint — three dark, one light.

- A colleague from a large university in far-eastern Europe who attended WorldCALL on one of their five scholarships for colleagues from the less-developed world: she

told me after the first day that she was staggered by the array of CALL energies, intellects and programs she had seen already, but was having a hard time relating it to her own world. As the IT expert for her faculty, she had four computers and no warning when her institute would get its daily allowance of 4 hours electricity.

- At the other end of the European spectrum, in the west, is a country where I spent some time studying CALL last spring: convinced that CALL has a so-far poorly recognized role to play in the country's evolution within the EU, its Ministry of Education set out to prime the pump directly, by offering quite significant amounts of short-term seed-money and multi-year competitive contracts to CALL project developers.

- A colleague who has been in the thick of CALL publishing and university administration who, in private, was seriously (but, I think, temporarily) doubtful of what CALL had really achieved in twenty years.

- The V-P, Academic of a major university 'somewhere in Australasia' who told me with apparent admiration how a sister university had "quietly, without public fuss" shrunk its humanities faculty by almost half over 5 years.

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On the one hand, we enjoy well-attended conferences, with a huge variety of papers (to which I could add: generally high student interest in CALL; active, high-quality listserv discussions; good journals; improving theoretical research), on the other — in CALL's world, too — we must increasingly confront signs of doubt and the encroaching changes that are scything through many of our other social and educational assumptions.

When Pete Smith and I discussed the FLEAT papers that you will read in this issue of the *Journal*, we had no agenda other than the quality of the work and the potential for others to learn from it for their own projects.² As it turns out, each of the articles, in very different ways, reflects a kind of maturity that CALL will need to demonstrate more of, in the face of the changes that are under way.

These six papers show how modern CALL is intimately connected with enhancing what we have traditionally called a humanities, or liberal arts education — particularly where that involves improving intercultural awareness, increasing the individual's sense of having a role in a cultured society, helping in the acquisition of long-term learning skills, or improving the ability to think critically and express oneself well. To take one particular example: all of the articles reflect principled concern for the learners as students and as citizens, whether it is:

- acknowledging a need for flexible study options (e.g. Gölz);
- studying actual, in-class learning (Iwai);
- exploiting popular media in class (Keobke);
- meeting specific, academic language needs (Roche);
- relating historical trends to current society (Smith);
- addressing particular learning difficulties (Wilson).

Choosing these articles from so many others was not easy, given the range and quality of the FLEAT articles.³ Naturally, a journal has different criteria than a selection of conference papers — such as the expectations of the readers, based on a consistent quality and subject-area. With that in mind, I tried (with Pete's help) to select papers which are well-researched, have a strong, but not overly technical emphasis on the value of technology in enriching teaching and learning (both, preferably!), and a strong element of transferability for anyone willing to adapt these projects to their own needs. In other words, what pulled me to the six papers that you see here was their innovative, but firmly-grounded and clearly stated quality. I hope you'll agree that they well deserve their new platform. ♦

Notes

¹ See the first Call for Papers at: www.hll.kutc.kansai-u.ac.jp:8000/call1.html.

² Each author was asked to make revisions that were necessary through the passage of time, but to keep to the essentials of their original paper.

³ The Proceedings of the FLEAT conference are now available at a much reduced price, due to the weakness of the Canadian dollar. For details of the contents and how to order copies, see: <http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/fleat3/proceedings.html>.



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