CALENDAR

- **February 13, Wednesday**
  3:30 P.M. C 210
  The staff of the LLA will demonstrate the newly installed Videodidact® computer system in C 210 (see * on page 7). Refreshments.

- **February 27, Wednesday**
  3:30 P.M. C 210
  David Ware, Technology Supervisor, NSIT, is giving a rescheduled presentation at which he will demonstrate the new Polycom video conferencing system in C 210. Refreshments.

- **March 1, Friday**
  - Deadline for requests for LLA matching funds (see ** on page 7).
  - Submit to Michael Berger.
  - Deadline for contributions to the spring issue of *The Native Speaker*.

Visit the LLA’s web site at [http://humanities.uchicago.edu/lla](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/lla)

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In 1990 when Academic Director Emerita Lynn Killean planned the Interactive Multimedia Resource Center (IMROC, Cobb 210) for the Language Faculty Resource Center (LFRC), it was designed to be a computer classroom. However, there were never sufficient funds to purchase the necessary equipment. Now, thanks to a generous grant provided by the Mellon Foundation, the project is complete; Cobb 210 is a computer classroom! We selected a hard-wired system that we think is sufficiently elegant and straightforward in its operation to invite users. The Videodidact® system works equally well with Macs and PCs; and although the present equipment is all Mac, there is the possibility of using Virtual PC so that both platforms can be accommodated. (For more information about Videodidact® please see the descriptive notice about this system in this issue.) We hope that you will attend the seminar in February where we will introduce the system. If you cannot make this meeting, we can schedule others in the coming months. Please inform the staff of the times that work best for you. An additional enhancement to Cobb 210 is a multi-region DVD unit that plays a variety of standards. Please contact Kay Yang (phone: 2-9772, email: kyang@uchicago.edu) for further information.

We constantly lobby for additional media-equipped classrooms. Meanwhile the LLA will continue to provide a variety of equipment that may be borrowed for use in the classroom. We also know that there has been frustration with malfunctioning equipment in the media cabinets and difficulty in getting repairs effected. To make this process somewhat easier for teachers, the LLA and Humanities Computing Services (HCS) offer the following service. If you are using a classroom in Cobb that has equipment requiring repair, please inform Michael Berger (phone: 2-9772, email: m-berger1@uchicago.edu). He will contact Networking Services and Information Technologies (NSIT) about the problem and follow through on the repair. If you are using a media-equipped classroom elsewhere on campus, please contact Chris Kosmidis, Director of HCS, (phone: 4-1882, email: cgk@uchicago.edu), and he will provide the same service.

The LLA is gaining expertise in helping faculty who want to put language materials into their Blackboard (Chalk) site. The staff welcomes inquiries about this and other web-based projects you may have in mind.

Karen Landahl, Academic Director
On October 19 and 20, Kay Yang and Michael Berger of the Language Laboratories and Archives attended the MidWest Association for Language Learning (MWALL) Fall 2001 Conference at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. This year’s theme was "3T: Teacher, Technology and Technical Support".

Ms. Yang and Mr. Berger were joined by Keiko Yoshimura, a graduate student in the Department of Linguistics, who presented "Bringing Japanese Texts with Audio On-Line" on the second day of the conference. A description of her presentation can be found below and in a related article in this issue of *The Native Speaker* (page 5). Some of the more interesting presentations are briefly described below. If you would like more information about them, please send email to Kay Yang (kyang@uchicago.edu) or Michael Berger (mberger1@uchicago.edu).

**Using DVD to Teach Listening Comprehension**

The relatively new DVD is a useful tool for foreign language instruction. DVDs have features that make them easier to use than videotapes, including multiple language tracks, subtitle options, and better audio and video quality. Duncan Charters, from Principia College in Elsah, Illinois, explained how he developed Spanish language courseware by using DVD technology. He chose a movie, *Tango*, directed by Carlos Saura, who is an internationally known film director from Spain, because the conversations are succinct and easy to understand. In addition, the glimpse of life in Buenos Aires that the film offers, exposes students to some aspects of the culture of Argentina, which also helps to enhance their listening and comprehension skills. The hand-outs the professor made for his students consist of vocabulary and verb lists, dialogues and comprehension passages. Mr. Duncan’s project has provided students with a useful and enjoyable learning tool.

**Equipment Reservation and Check-In/Out System**

As technology changes, facilities like the University of Chicago’s LLA—that archive teaching and research materials, as well as provide the equipment on which to use these materials—tend to be crowded with old and new equipment. From the LLAmangers’ point of view, the equipment-tracking system developed by the Language Center in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota seems like an effective way to inventory and track the movement of equipment. The University of Minnesota’s database system was created with *FileMaker Pro*, and portions of the database are accessible via the web. Stephanie Treat of the Language Center at the University of Minnesota has provided the LLA with a copy of the database for evaluation and for determining whether it or a similar system would also be useful here.

**The "SEEL Project"**

There was good news at the MWALL Conference for instructors of Slavic and East European languages. The presenter said that because many of the languages in this area are less commonly taught, those who instruct or conduct research in these languages tend to be isolated and often try to solve the same or similar problems individually. To help prevent this reduplication of effort, "The Slavic and East European Less Commonly Taught Languages Project" (The "SEEL Project") has been developed by Jeff Holdeman of Ohio State University and Mark Lauersdorf of Luther College. One can log on to the SEEL web site to use the teaching materials that have been collected (materials for Czech are the only ones now available). Contact info for the developers and information for those who would like to contribute to the SEEL project can be found on the web site. Although portions of this web-based project are not yet accessible to the public, the number of members has been steadily increasing, and the SEEL project is becoming an important communication and learning tool for teachers in this field. The URL for the original version of the Czech test-site of the SEEL project is http://slavic.ohio-state.edu/people/holdeman/seelproj/.

**iShell**

Tom Browne of Macalester College, Saint Paul, Minnesota, presented Tribeworks *iShell*, an easy-to-use authoring program for creating dynamic media applications on computers running Windows and Mac OS. Once image, sound or movie files are prepared, mixing all these items in this multimedia application appeared to be relatively simple when compared to other software applications. The 30-day trial version can be downloaded from http://www.tribeworks.com.
Bringing Japanese Texts with Audio On-Line
Keiko Yoshimura presented her recent web-based Japanese project. Because Japanese characters are difficult or impossible to display as fonts on web-based programs (like Chalk here at the University of Chicago), she chose to create Portable Document Format (PDF) files to deliver Japanese characters as images that can be viewed on multiple computer platforms, e.g., Windows and Mac OS. For more information about this presentation, please see the related article in this issue of The Native Speaker (page 5).

Chatroom and Speaking Skills
An experimental teaching method that employs the Internet chat feature was presented by Olaf Böhlke from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. His German class is held in a computer lab, where students are divided into four groups of four or five students each. They chat with each other by typing in the Chatroom feature of the course management system (CMS) WebCT (a web-based course tool similar to Blackboard/Chalk used at the University of Chicago). (It is interesting to note that according to the presenter’s survey, 1,700 institutions use WebCT, while 1,600 currently use Blackboard.) Mr. Böhlke saves the texts of the students’ interactions and makes corrections to them. He discussed the pros and cons of his pilot and concluded that this approach is most effective for students who have relatively weak speaking skills.

In summary, the MWALL Conference provided a great opportunity to witness diverse pedagogical and technical approaches to language instruction at many regional institutions. Of all the information presented at the conference, the summary of a faculty survey conducted by Olaf Böhlke from Creighton University was most intriguing. All the faculty members who answered the survey emphasized the lack of technical support for using course management systems, like Blackboard and WebCT, on their campuses. Why should this happen when there are usually a good number of information technology assistants available on each campus? Mr. Böhlke answered that the technicians did not know how to use the CMS for a specific purpose, like teaching a language. His answer leads to two points: First, instructors still take (and should continue to retain) the initiative in using advanced technology in their classes no matter how quickly or significantly technology changes and no matter how many technicians are available to assist. Second, technical staff at units like the LLA should be available to assist instructors in achieving their goals by understanding the specific need and then employing the technology that is best suited to attaining the goal.

At the business meeting it was agreed by vote that the name of MWALL would be changed to MidWest Association for Language Learning Technology (MWALLT) to reflect the recent change of the name of the international organization from International Association for Language Learning (IALL) to International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT).

Kay Yang is a manager and the multimedia specialist of the LLA. Michael Berger, the manager of the LFRC, is also faculty liaison and grants administrator for the LLA.
Setting the Region Code of Your DVD-ROM Drive

Chris Kosmidis

There is a potential problem in using DVDs from regions outside the United States on DVD-ROM drives installed in computers in this country. Switching between DVDs from different regions may lock the DVD drive to a specific and undesired region. This could be a serious issue for faculty who want to play DVDs from other regions on their computers.

As a result of DVD technology-licensing agreements, the world has been divided into six regions. Each region has been assigned a number or code. This division is somewhat analogous to the VHS standards used around the world: NTSC, PAL, SECAM, etc. The result is that DVDs produced within a region can only be played on stand-alone DVD players manufactured for that specific region. Most DVDs are produced in the following regions: Region 1 (North America); Region 2 (Europe—except the former USSR, Japan, the Middle East, and South Africa); Region 6 (China).

Foreign-made DVDs can be played on the DVD drive installed in computers, but switching between DVDs from different regions can lead to unintended and unwanted results. At the time of manufacture, the region code of the drive is left unset. When the first DVD (e.g., from Region 1) is inserted into the drive, the region code of the drive is set to the same code as the DVD disc. Each time a DVD of a different region is played, the DVD drive's region is changed. This may occur up to four times before the setting is permanently locked to the last region used, which may or may not be the primary region that the user wants. (Please note that software CDs can still be read by DVD-ROM drives once the drive has locked onto a specific region.)

Here is an example: if a Region 2 DVD is first used in a DVD-ROM drive installed in a computer, the drive is set for Region 2 (Europe, etc.). This represents change 1. If a disc from Australia (Region 4) is then used, the drive's region becomes 4 (change 2). If a disc from Canada (Region 1) is then used (change 3) and then a French disc (Region 2) is played (change 4), four total changes have been made. If a European disc (Region 2) is then used, the drive's region will be permanently set for Region 2. The DVD drive will not be able to play DVDs from regions other than Region 2.

Up to this time, this issue has occurred infrequently in the Division of the Humanities. However, with the growing popularity of DVDs (and the use of foreign titles from abroad), it is likely to occur more often in the future. A good way for language faculty to avoid region locking on the DVD drives in their computers is by checking with the LLA about viewing DVDs from other regions on the LLA's DVD players, some of which will play multiple standards (i.e., PAL, SECAM, etc.) from multiple regions (1, 2, 3, etc.).

Chris Kosmidis is the Director of Humanities Computing Services.
Japanese Sounds On-Line Project

Keiko Yoshimura

The following is a summary of Keiko Yoshimura’s presentation at the MidWest Association for Language Learning (MWALL) conference this fall, which was held at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Please see the related article about the MWALL meeting on page 2.

Learning a foreign language often involves listening to the language in question for an extended period of time. The purpose of such an exercise is to improve speaking and listening comprehension skills. Different media can be used to deliver language materials, but the most common one employed is the audiocassette tape, which has been used for elementary Japanese courses at the University of Chicago for years. There have been some concerns about audiocassettes, such as the time-consuming process of going to the section one wants to listen to on the cassette, and the availability/accessibility of the materials due to the LLA’s schedule. Considering the above issues, the instructors in the Japanese program in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations (EALC) at the University of Chicago decided to develop a pilot project using the Course Management System (CMS) Blackboard in its local version Chalk to provide audio and text materials to students via the web. CMS programs like Blackboard have been growing in popularity in recent years.

The final product of this project allows students to see the text and click on a word/phrase/sentence to listen to the corresponding sounds on-line. Students do not need language support software on their computers to access this material. All they need is a web browser and Acrobat Reader (both of which are available in the Connectivity Package distributed by NSIT). Students can also enlarge text, skip certain sections using bookmarks, and use text-to-text links.

The developers’ initial technical concerns involved three questions: 1) How can text in Japanese characters be displayed on the web? 2) How can audio and text files be linked to one another? 3) How can sound files be minimized in order to avoid large files? The first two questions were answered by using the Acrobat software and the third by down-sampling the sound files. The following description will explain how these tasks were accomplished.

Text

The Japanese texts originally appeared in the textbook for Japanese that was written by Hiroyoshi Noto, who teaches in EALC at the University of Chicago. For use in Chalk the texts were edited in Microsoft Word with Japanese Language support (using the Japanese word processor Kotoeri), and were formatted and converted to Portable Document Format files (PDF files) using Adobe Acrobat (see Figures 1 and 2 on page 6). The text of the practice exercises appears in blue (for questions), red (for answers) or black (for directions). Students can click on the blue- or red-colored letters or parts of words that serve as links to recorded sound files. Black text is not linked to other files. Any student who has Acrobat Reader, which can be obtained via download, can access the PDF files.

Sounds

The audio was originally recorded at a sampling rate of 48 kHz on Digital Audio Tapes (DATs) at the Language Labs and Archives’ Studio in the early 1990s. These recordings were meant to complement the textbook written by Mr. Noto. The sound files for this project were created from the original DATs. The sounds were transferred to the computer and edited at the LLA with the Sound Designer II software. The editing process involved copying and pasting segments of sound and saving them as separate .wav files to match each word/phrase/sentence of the text to which they would be linked. The original sound files were too large to attach to a PDF file. However, compressed sound files are not compatible with Acrobat. The Digital Media Lab, which is part of NSIT, suggested that down-sampling the files would be an effective way to decrease the size of the sound files by changing the sampling rate to 22 kHz. Down-sampling was achieved with a software program called Cleaner. Files can also be reformatted with Cleaner and, since Acrobat does not accept the .wav format for sound, the files were changed to the .mov format.

Linking

Once the texts and sounds were both ready, they were linked using Acrobat. For this project, a segment of text that was to serve as a link was first selected, and then
Fig 1. Example of Word List/Dialogue

Fig 2. Example of Practice
other text and audio files that were to be linked to the
text segment were selected. Bookmarks were also cre-
ated and usually appear on the left side of the text. The
bookmarks serve as links to specific pages. Each page
of a file can have a bookmark, and clicking on it will
take the student to the page associated with it.

**Uploading**

It is relatively easy to upload course materials to the
*Chalk* site. To upload prepared materials, a developer
would complete the following steps: 1) select "Control
Panel" from the course page, which opens the "Content
Area"; 2) select "Course Documents", then "Add
Folder" and then "Add Item"; 3) select "Content
Attachments" and then "Find Item"/"Browse for File";
4) select the item (e.g., a text document); 5) add content
information (if desired); and 6) "Submit". (Please con-
tact Ken Sadowski of NSIT, who offers workshops and
training seminars on *Chalk* (phone: 2-6445 or email: k-
sadowski@uchicago.edu) for further information about
this process.) Students who are registered for a specific
course have access to the materials for that course via a
password-protected file on *Chalk*.

This project was initiated by instructors in the Japanese
language program and is headed by Harumi Lory. It
was supported with the technical assistance and equip-
ment of the Language Labs and Archives, and the
Digital Media Labs of NSIT. The Center for East Asian
Studies provided the initial funds for this project, and it
will receive additional funding from the Consortium for
Language Teaching and Learning in 2002.

KEIKO YOSHIMURA is a graduate student in linguistics
and is one of the developers of the Japanese Sounds
On-Line Project.

From the Calendar on Page 1

* Videodidact® at the LFRC

Videodidact® is a computer classroom control system
which allows the instructor to send his/her screen to
students, receive a student’s screen image, send the
screen of any student to another student and send any
screen to a projector. In addition, the instructor can lock
or blank a student’s screen and take control of the stu-
dent’s keyboard. Other features include call buttons,
with which students can let the teacher know they need
assistance, a highlighter on the instructor’s screen, and
the distribution of audio and video from different
sources. For more information please attend the demon-
stration of the Videodidact® system on February 13th
at 3:30 P.M. in Cobb 210.

** LLA Matching Funds

Each year the LLA provides matching funds to teachers
who would like to purchase pedagogical materials. The
applicant must obtain consent from the chair of their
department and secure the commitment of their depart-
ment to cover 1/3 of the cost of the materials. The LLA
will then fund the remaining 2/3 of the cost. These
funds are rather limited so applicants are encouraged to
submit fairly modest requests. For more information
contact Michael Berger at 2-9772.