Last year at this time the first phase of the installation of the Videodidact™ Classroom Management System in Cobb 210 was completed, and several classes were just starting to use this resource. Now, a year later, the second phase of the project is nearing completion. During this phase, five Dell PCs are being added to the installed base of 15 Macs, as well as video conferencing capabilities for the entire classroom. I encourage you to make an appointment to take a look at and perhaps try this innovative system at the LFRC.

In the autumn issue of The Native Speaker I described the new barcode system at the SS4 site and the new equipment reservation system at the LFRC. Both of these were extensively tested during the quarter (in a trial by fire!), and I am glad to report that both operated admirably. What’s more, both systems work better thanks to the demands put on them. I would like to thank the students, the faculty and our staff for their understanding and patience and for their comments and suggestions, which contributed to the development of these two programs. The new barcode and reservation systems benefit all users of the LLA regardless of which side of the Media Room window or reservation desk they’re standing on! We plan to continue to improve these systems, so your additional comments and suggestions are still welcome.

We had a slight changing of the guard between Autumn and Winter Quarters: Ki Shih and Nikki Adams are out until Spring Quarter, and Joanna Lowenstein is back (until Spring Quarter). Additionally, we just hired a new student, Katherine McFall, as Student Assistant. She will be spending most of her hours at the SS4 site this quarter. There is always a slight shuffling of staff between sites at the beginning of a new quarter, so you may need to reintroduce yourself to a new or transferred employee who will be glad to assist you.

Michael Berger, Manager
Last October Michael Berger and Barbara Need attended the annual meeting of the Midwest Association of Language Learning Technologies (MWALLT) at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, across the river from Fargo, North Dakota. As usual, it was good to see our colleagues from language departments and learning laboratories around the Midwest. Besides attending presentations and demos relating to language and technology, we had ample time to socialize at the luncheons and dinners that our host, Ron Balko, graciously arranged for us. Dinner on Friday night was at the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center in Moorhead. On display at the Center is a Viking ship built in Moorhead, which was sailed to Bergen, Norway in 1982. There is also a reproduction of a stavkirke, a traditional Norwegian church made entirely of wood. Dinner on Saturday night was a hog roast at the Fargo Air Museum.

Of course, the meetings were devoted to the serious business of language teaching in a technology-rich environment, but that does not mean that language learning cannot be fun. For example, one presenter described how PowerPoint was used to create games such as Jeopardy™ and Who wants to be a millionaire™ for language study. Other sessions focused on using specific software within the context of a language lab. For instance, Markus Loftouse of Oberlin College discussed the multilingual features in OfficeXP, and John Stewart of the University of Michigan talked about setting up an OS X lab. Helpful advice in setting up and running a lab came from Ursula Williams of Notre Dame University, who talked about redesigning the lab for wireless technology, and from Jian Wu and Jenise Rowekamp from the University of Minnesota, who talked about planning and selecting a digital language lab. Monika Dressler and John Stewart from the University of Michigan gave advice on "Running the lab on the cheap: lessons from battleworn skinflints", offering ways of saving money and reducing the amount of staff time needed to explain the functioning of equipment. We have already implemented some of their suggestions, such as a simple method to lock down headphones in SS4 and installation of descriptive templates on computer and AV equipment in C210 to cover over all the buttons not required by teachers.

There were also a number of sessions on specific programs and techniques that have been implemented by various MWALLT institutions. These ranged from Tammy Berberi's discussion of using chat in her language and literature courses at the University of Minnesota in Morris, to a discussion of Wende Online Interactive by the developers and programmers at the University of Minnesota, to a presentation by Michael Berger of the Middle Egyptian Texts for On-Line Research (METEOR) project at the University of Chicago. Other members of the University of Minnesota team presented results from the Mallard© and the Vistazos© programs and techniques for using Internet video. The last presentation of the meeting was by Hideo Tomita, professor of Japanese at Kenyon College, who talked about the variety of materials he had made available to his students online.

For additional information and copies of handouts from the conference please contact Barbara Need (2-7045) or Michael Berger (2-9772).

Barbara Need, the manager of the Language Labs (SS4 site), is also archivist and computer specialist for the LLA.

The campus of Concordia College
Help for Projects  
– Where Do You Go?

Barbara Need

Often, faculty and students at the University of Chicago want to record the speech or actions of informants and students. Today one has a wide choice of equipment to use: for instance, one can make analog or digital audio recordings, and if one chooses to record digitally, one can use DAT, mini-D or CD-R formats. There is also a considerable variety of formats in the world of digital video: DV-CAM, mini-DV, DVC-PRO and DVD. Once a researcher has collected his or her data, s/he must view and analyze it for features of particular interest, perhaps playing the tape many times. Ideally, the originals are stored in surroundings free of heat and excess humidity, while copies are made and used for analysis. But this raises the question: where can one find the equipment, media and expertise for audio and video projects at the University?

The place we want you to think of first is the Language Laboratories and Archives. We can assist you in planning your project, selecting the appropriate equipment, lending you equipment, providing you with media, storing your originals, backing up your recordings, and, if your interests lie in phonetic analysis, providing you with the hardware and software for your analysis. If you are interested in shooting video we have digital cameras, and software that allows you to capture your footage to computer, edit, and then save to DVD.

To take a hypothetical example: you are planning to interview English speakers on the north side of Chicago. There are several things that you need to do before you can start recording. An important first step is to apply for and receive Institutional Review Board approval for your project (projects using human subjects must be reviewed by an IRB; projects in the Humanities are reviewed by the Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board or SBS IRB). You can get information about IRB procedures from their website (humansubjects.uchicago.edu/sbsirb/index.html). Next, you need to consider what types of equipment will be required for your project. For this one you would need a field recorder, one or two microphones, and recording media (i.e., audiocassette, DAT, etc.), all of which can be found at the LLA. In addition, the staff of the LLA can give you advice about the proper equipment and recording technique to use for your project. Once you have finished recording your subjects, you can use the Language Lab's sound-transfer suite to make backup copies of your recordings. (You can use the transfer suite even if you use recording equipment other than the LLA's.) Whether you are transcribing the material you collected or are transferring it to computer for phonetic analysis, you should never use your original recordings. Transcription machines, which are designed to play short stretches of tape, stopping and rewinding frequently, will stretch and damage your tape. Playing a recording over and over again, whether or not you are using a transcriber, has a negative effect on the quality of your recording. A note about archiving your recordings: If you have designated the LLA as the archive for your materials (for instance, in your IRB request) and you use the LLA's recording equipment, the original media and one copy are available to you free of charge. If you prefer to use your own equipment, the LLA will still provide you with one free copy of your original recorded materials if you store the originals with the LLA. We do require that the masters of your recorded materials eventually become part of the LLA's Archives.

Some language teachers and researchers will need to use video rather than audio recordings. As with the audio study described above, you may need to obtain IRB approval for a video project. The LLA has digital video cameras, microphones, lighting equipment and recording media that you can use. Once you have completed videotaping, you can return to the LLA and use the video-editing software to prepare your materials for distribution. For more informal projects you can use the easy-to-master program *iMovie* at SS4. For a more professional product you can use Apple Computer's *Final Cut Pro* at C 211. You can output your final product to analog or digital video tape, CD-ROM, DVD or onto the web.

Every project is unique and these are just some ways that the LLA is available to assist you with your audio and video projects. If you have a research project in mind or want to develop pedagogical materials, contact us (at 2-7045 or 2-9772) to discuss your options.
Do Your Students Use the Lab?  
LLA Statistics Can Help Keep Track of Your Students

Barbara Need

With the advent of the new bar-coding system at the Social Sciences site of the LLA coupled with the use of FileMaker Pro to track registrations, attendance and usage, the LLA is in a position to provide you with a wider variety of information concerning its functions than ever before. When I first used the LLA as a student of Phonetics, all students filled out request slips for the material they needed, and those were counted by hand. When Karen Landahl became director in the late '80s, patrons were also required to register (by filling out a form with their name and department) to use the LLA. Since that time we have been able to create a profile of the people using the facility (undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, staff, etc.). Still, patrons were required to fill out paper slips with information about course name and number, the materials and equipment they wanted to use, and the time they spent at the SS4 Site. And these slips were still being counted by hand. Furthermore, the only way to collect information about specific time periods, classes, or equipment use was to sort and count in multiple ways. For instance, the number of hours individual video-players were used was tracked—but this relied on students remembering to tell the staff which machine they had used. The slips were also sorted by time started and those with times after 5 P.M. were counted as a group. Then all the slips were resorted by language and course number and those were entered into another part of the database.

Last year, we began to use a FileMaker Pro database to track patrons and their use of SS4. This year we have added the barcode reader, which scans the Chicago Card barcode, as well as barcodes assigned to each item (audiotape, videotape, etc.) in the LLA and enters this information into the FileMaker database. This new system allows us to continue to provide information about the users of SS4 and also gives us a way to examine that usage in different ways. Now that we have FileMaker data from part of 2001, 2002 and part of 2003, we can see how usage of the SS4 Site has changed during this time. For example, we had 971 patrons registered to use SS4 during Autumn 2002. This compares to 749 for Autumn 2001. One reason for this increase is due to a change in the Spanish curriculum: this year every Spanish language course is using the Cara al Mundo video series, which each student is required to watch. As a result, the number of registered students of Spanish has risen ten-fold over last year (31 patrons during Autumn 2001 vs. 338 patrons during Autumn 2002). We also show an increase in the number of visits by students and teachers of Spanish from 45 in Autumn 2001 to 1,242 in Autumn 2002.

Late last Autumn Quarter, I confirmed that Friday mornings at 10:30 were the busiest time of the week. In the first seven weeks of last quarter, we had an average of 21.6 patrons using SS4 during the half hour between 10:30 and 11:00, compared to only 10.6 visits during the previous half-hour. This was the result of two groups of students coming to SS4 at the same time: those from Chinese 101, who were just getting out of class, and those from French 206/306, who were coming in to use the Sony console area. Now this, in itself, was not very surprising—the Chinese 101 students regularly come after their class and a group of 12-15 students will spike the attendance figures. But what was surprising was that data from the new system identified another unexpected peak period of activity: other than Friday mornings the next busiest times of usage during the week were on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 3:00 to 3:30 (which was also the case during Autumn 2001). For a variety of reasons, this time period has not been targeted for student staffing at SS4. However, now that we have these numbers in hand, we are planning to schedule more student staff hours during the periods of highest usage.

We continue to provide attendance statistics for teachers who request this service. It is already clear that information from the new databases at SS4 reduces the time teachers have to spend counting and organizing slips. Though we plan to discontinue the use of slips soon, we will still provide all the attendance data that teachers need from our databases.
Notices

Lights! Camera! Action!
Video Production in the Foreign-language Classroom
Wednesday, February 12th at 3:30 P.M. in C 210

In response to the growing interest teachers have in incorporating video into language teaching, the LLA will offer a workshop on video design and production. In the first part of the workshop, Kay Yang, multimedia specialist of the LLA, will introduce the resources available at the LLA for video projects and discuss some of the student projects completed at the U of C in recent years. In the second part of the workshop—after screening selections of students’ video projects for Chinese—Fangpei Cai, Senior Lecturer of Chinese, will talk about how he has used student video projects as a teaching and assessment tool over the last decade. He will discuss how students prepare for their projects in class and describe what video projects can contribute to the foreign-language learning experience. Ms. Yang will conclude the presentation with a demonstration of some of the hardware and software used at the LLA for video production.

Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning Grants

The University is a member of the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning, along with the Ivy League schools and MIT. Each year the Consortium provides the University with funds with which to foster language learning and research projects at the local level. In addition, funds are also available at the national level for large-scale projects or for those projects that develop materials that can be used at other Consortial schools. For more information contact Michael Berger at 2-9772.

Kazazis Gift

The Language Labs & Archives is the recipient of a major gift from the estate of the late Kostas Kazazis, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Linguistics. The gift, offered by his widow, Christina von Nolcken, Associate Professor in the Department of English, consists of a considerable quantity of language study aids, including Teach Yourself language-learning materials (tapes, texts, etc.) for many languages including German, French, Thai, Vietnamese, and Xhosa. Mr. Kazazis’ academic interests were motivated by the fun he had learning languages. Thus, in addition to a variety of dictionaries, grammars and phrase books, his collection also contains many foreign-language editions of the comic book Asterix. If you have a specific interest, please let us know—we will be cataloging and evaluating the gift over the next several months. Information about the collection will be sent out to language departments after we ascertain exactly which languages and what types of materials are represented in the gift.

THE NATIVE SPEAKER is the newsletter of the Language Laboratories and Archives, edited by Michael Berger and designed by Kay Yang. Comments, inquiries and submissions can be directed to the editor, Michael Berger. For more information, please visit our website at http://humanities.uchicago.edu/lla.