

**Annual Report of the
Interactive Language Resource Center
1998-1999**

Submitted by Daniel E. Meyers, Director

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The Interactive Language Resource Center (ILRC) at Miami University is a restricted reference laboratory open to students, faculty, and staff of the following departments: French and Italian; German, Russian, Hebrew, and East Asian Languages; Spanish and Portuguese; and Classics.

The ILRC's mission is to serve the four language departments in actively implementing computer assisted language learning technology into foreign language education, to act as a central repository of foreign language related materials and multimedia resources, and to promote technological advances related to foreign language education through workshops, individualized assistance, conferences, and regular announcements.

Total officially logged attendance figures for this year indicate that **15,960** students visited the ILRC facilities. This brings a total of **399,629** known students who have visited the ILRC and its predecessor, the Language Laboratory, since these facilities began operations in the early 1960s. Attendance figures by language and activity are shown below:

Attendance Figures for 1998-99 Academic Year

Language	Fall 1998	Spring 1999	Totals
Chinese	128	115	243
Classics	20	55	75
French	2,223	1,516	3,739
German	1,418	1,718	3,136
Hebrew	77	3	80
Italian	657	459	1,116
Japanese	633	363	996
Portuguese	3	0	3
Russian	37	78	115
Spanish	3,338	3,108	6,443
Guest	5	6	11
Totals	8,539	7,421	15,960

Attendance Figures for Previous Ten Academic Years

Year	Fall Semester	Spring Semester	Yearly Totals	Visits since lab opened
1988-1989	5,881	2,676	8,557	253,966
1989-1990	5,698	2,302	8,000	261,966
1990-1991	6,936	4,492	11,428	273,394
1991-1992	5,349	3,497	8,846	282,240
1992-1993	5,800	3,512	9,312	291,552
1993-1994	8,679	4,403	13,082	304,634
1994-1995	9,621	7,147	16,768	321,402
1995-1996	11,801	8,146	19,947	341,349
1996-1997	10,754	7,567	18,321	359,670
1997-1998	13,830	10,169	23,999	383,669
Avg. Visits	8,435	5,391	13,826	

Attendance Figures for by Day of Week and Time of Day

Day	Fall	Spring	Totals
Sunday	277	280	557
Monday	1,881	1,278	3,159
Tuesday	1,864	1,694	3,558
Wednesday	1,686	1,379	3,065
Thursday	1,887	1,909	3,796
Friday	891	881	1,772
Saturday	53	0	53
Totals	8,539	7,421	15,960

Time	Fall	Spring	Totals
08-09 am	445	410	855
09-10 am	1,137	1,034	2,171
10-11 am	1,188	1,167	2,355
11-12 pm	1,074	769	1,843
12-01 pm	985	1,141	2,126
01-02 pm	919	670	1,589
02-03 pm	838	663	1,501
03-04 pm	861	626	1,487
04-05 pm	582	474	1,056
05-06 pm	278	190	468
06-07 pm	165	190	355
07-08 pm	67	87	154
Totals	8,539	7,421	15,960

Attendance Figures by Activity

Activity	Fall	Spring	Total
Audio Listening	5,441	3,637	9,078
Computer Usage	2,115	2,586	4,701
General Homework	38	39	77
Satellite Viewing	3	91	94
Tape Duplication	672	681	1,353
Testing	62	13	75
Video Viewing	208	374	582
Totals	8,539	7,421	19,960

Attendance figures and its resulting data are the results of raw numbers of students working in the ILRC. The time that students worked in the ILRC ranged widely, from an average of 20 minutes for students checking their E-mail to several hours for students working on term papers or students listening to the audio component of their assigned homework. No attempt was made to justify students on an hourly scale (for example, one student working in the lab for three hours would equal three visits).

During the course of the semesters, several classes had reserved the computer classroom. Attendance figures under “computer usage” incorporate students present for these classes. While the classes were in progress, a student assistant made a head count of participants in that particular class and logged them in under the appropriate language and activity. Likewise, several classes had reserved the audio laboratory. Attendance figures under “audio usage” incorporate these students in like manner.

Attendance figures for satellite conferences and for faculty and staff using the ILRC facilities were not incorporated into these figures. For reference purposes, however, these figures are given by the activity requested:

Activity	Fall	Spring	Totals
Video Duplication	70	92	162
Audio Cassette Duplication	107	17	124
SCOLA Taping Request	3	18	21
Miscellaneous Equipment Checkout	11	11	22
Materials on Reserve Request	41	31	72
Attendance at Satellite Teleconferences	26	22	48
Totals	258	191	449

Services Provided

The ILRC provides many different services to students, faculty, and staff throughout the academic year, some of which have already been mentioned. The most common services performed are:

- audiocassette and video tape duplication and distribution
- video translation from PAL or SECAM into NTSC format
- provision of foreign language materials, dictionaries and reference resources
- archival of weekly SCOLA broadcasts in foreign languages
- camcorder, tripod, and video editing services
- scanning, printing, digital video conversion, and server maintenance services
- computer classroom upkeep and maintenance
- various workshops on aspects of technology related to foreign language learning
- technical support services to students in the ILRC
- basic technical support services to faculty and staff in language departments
- promotion of various satellite teleconferences and guest lectures
- assistance to language classes utilizing ILRC resources
- procurement of funding opportunities when available

Projects and Events Held This Academic Year

Electronic Attendance Tracking System

During the academic year, the director modified and redesigned an electronic tracking system developed by the previous ILRC director, Charlotte Wharton. The new tracking system used in the ILRC is still based on FileMaker Pro protocols and still automates attendance tracking and reporting features. The new system, however, greatly reduces the amount of programming involved in the previous system and allows for a more flexible modification of future activities and languages. Now called Miami Tracker 1.0, the system was also promoted through various foreign language listserves and associations. Interest in Miami Tracker has come from points such as the University of Hawaii and from Harvard. The core database scripting language was made available on the World Wide Web as a public domain program.

Media Inventory Tracking System

In the Spring Semester the director created a new electronic media inventory tracking system known as Miami Media. This database is based on FileMaker Pro protocols and automates in inventory and registration process of materials in the ILRC. A barcode is generated for each item catalogued. Though extensive testing has not yet been completed on this software program, it is expected that this database will greatly decrease the management time involved in maintaining the extensive collection of materials in the ILRC. Future features to be incorporated into this database will include web-searching capabilities for faculty and staff in the foreign language departments.

CALICO Conference - June 1999

As of this writing, preparations are almost complete for the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium's (CALICO) annual conference, which will be held on the Miami University campus this year. During the five days of this conference, thirteen pre-conference sessions will be held, over 100 hour-long presentations and lectures will be given, and an estimation of about 500 people from six continents will be attending. This conference is truly an international event and will bring much recognition to Miami University. Three nationally famous keynote speakers will be addressing the conference participants.

In addition to the lab director and Paula Fogt (Arts and Sciences), who are coordinating the conference, several other people and organizations have been assisting in preparations: John Skillings and Reed Anderson (Arts and Sciences), technical support from the CTSG group in Arts and Sciences, MCIS, the Office of Conference Planning, and the staff of Shriver Center.

Pre-Conference workshops will be taking place in Havighurst Lab, the ILRC, 40 Irvin Hall, the College of Arts and Sciences computer lab, 213 Kreger, and 10 Laws Hall. Main conference presentations and lectures will be held in Bachelor Hall and in Shriver Center. A reception sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences is being planned in the Shriver Center in conjunction with a software showcase seminar to be held in Havighurst Lab.

Final preparations are also underway in the procurement of student assistants and volunteers for this conference. Several lab assistants in the ILRC have agreed to work for the conference as well as technical support to be supplied from the College of Arts and Sciences. Volunteers are being sought through foreign language students and the College of Arts and Sciences, who will be able to attend the conference either for free or for a greatly reduced fee, depending on their level of help.

Satellite Teleconferences and Workshops

The ILRC hosted several satellite teleconferences this past year. The fifth annual McGraw-Hill teleconference, which featured Dr. Robert DiDonato in GREAL, was broadcast to about 15 participants in October 1998. In November 1998 the keynote speech to a MacWorld convention based in San Francisco was broadcast to the ILRC. Eight faculty and staff from MCIS, Applied Technologies and from the Technical Support Representative pool participated. The third conference broadcast to the ILRC was a Spanish Advanced Placement Learning colloquium in January 1999. Several faculty and staff from the Spanish department made periodic visits during this teleconference.

Workshops hosted by the ILRC included a "Funding Opportunities for Foreign Languages" session by Helen Kiss from the Office for the Advancement of Scholarship and Teaching in April 1999. The ILRC director also hosted a number of individualized workshops entitled "Working the WWW," "Using Meeting Maker 5.03," and "Web Authoring in a Day." These workshops were mostly held on a one-on-one basis in the ILRC or in a faculty/staff person's office.

Issues pertaining to the ILRC

Though day to day operations of the ILRC have been quite smooth, nothing functions perfectly all the time.

Over a four-month period, the Telecommunications Office had charged \$119.00 per month for Internet connections in the audio laboratory. These connections were not to have been activated and the Telecommunications Office had never officially informed the ILRC of the activation of these ports. The director discovered the locations of these activated ports with the help of Guy Moore in Arts and Sciences and informed the Telecommunications Office to disconnect these ports at once. However, Telecommunications could not refund monies already transferred from the ILRC.

A related issue of network wiring was also suggested by Guy Moore. Currently the network wiring of the ports that the Telecommunication Office had been charging the ILRC feed directly to a communications closet. With a suggested redirection of the network wiring, all the feeds could be fed to a junction box already established in the ILRC's computer classroom, thereby gaining control of network activation ports and reducing the cost of internet connection to the entire lab to about \$21.00 a month. All equipment is already in place and the only cost involved in the redirection is labor from MCIS. This option will be investigated further in the next academic year.

Several unanticipated expenditures came up this academic year which affected the ILRC's budget planning. In the fall semester, new audiocassette tapes were needed to replace badly worn cassettes in use in the lab. The cost of replacing these cassettes was an estimated \$1200. During the winter break, the audio lab went through routine maintenance. Excessive wear and tear on the Tandberg language learning system was discovered this year, and repair and replacement of audio booth components, headsets, microchip boards, etc. came to about \$1500. Since the Tandberg IS-10 system in the ILRC was one of the first systems implemented in the country (over 14 years ago), the system is beginning to show its age. The director estimated that this system needs to be replaced within the next five or six years.

Since the incorporation of the computer classroom in the ILRC, a "good" problem has arisen in its popularity among students; there are not enough computers and seats in the computer classroom to accommodate language students and instructors in the current classroom. A potential solution would be to find a larger classroom space. However, as Irvin Hall is limited in where things may be located, a viable solution would be to convert the audio listening area into two computer classrooms. In addition to the current classroom, one area would remain open for student use at all times while

two classes could be operating concurrently. This configuration would allow more space for students to work while actively incorporating further technologies into the ILRC. Another suggestion is the incorporation of iMac computers into the existing audio booths. Half of the current audio lab facilities would remain unchanged while the other half of existing audio lab facilities would be modified to replace VCRs and monitors with iMac computers. A central server would control both the existing computer lab and this new mini-lab, reducing the need for constant requests for additional service space on the College of Arts and Sciences servers. All four language departments would have access to this new server via the Ethernet and could potentially share costs associated with its upkeep and maintenance.

Several minor problems have surfaced throughout the ILRC, namely older computer monitors becoming blurry and distorted and the need for more RAM memory in computers. These items may easily be resolved by next year with the purchase of appropriate components and repair work.

Acknowledgements

The smooth operation of the ILRC would not be possible were it not for several people who have helped and assisted at various times. The director wishes to acknowledge Paula Fogt from Arts and Sciences for her insight and generous help with complicated technical support issues, John Skillings for his guidance with budget and funding issues, and to Guy Moore for showing the director possible network solutions to potentially complicated projects. The director also acknowledges the work performed by the various student assistants and graduate assistants in the ILRC. Were it not for their assistance, the director would not be able to work on a personal and serviceable basis.

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