A New Era in Language Learning

One of the latest innovations in language learning is importing the newest technology available into the classroom to make learning more natural and, frankly, more fun. With today’s student being so tech savvy--using cell phones for instant messaging, web surfing or watching videos, and iPods to download classes from other universities--instructors need to keep up and that’s where the Center for Language and International Communication (CLIC) comes in.

Training faculty, TAs and students in new technologies, CLIC immediately introduces these methods into classrooms. For example, faculty now provide viewing materials online for students to watch when it’s convenient for them (and as often as they like), resulting in more time for class discussion. Class assignments are given and turned in online. Students can stream the evening news or television programs from other countries to practice their listening skills. Classes in the first wireless building on campus (Humanities!) listen to current weather broadcasts from native speakers in the country they’re studying. Students even request

LLC Emeritus & Alumni, Relationships that Make a Difference

 Surprise turned to delight this summer when LLC learned Emeritus Professor of German Studies, Willard E. Skidmore, lives nearby and recently celebrated his 96th birthday. It all started when Martin Selig (BA-German, 1962, and longtime UAlbany supporter) gave a directed donation in honor of his German professor and received a letter from UAlbany indicating that his professor had been informed of the gift. This led to a reunion between the two. Upon receiving word of this donation, Willard shared this news with Arthur Young (BA-German, 1963). Arthur, who has lived in Germany since 1966, ran into

Evelyn Woestelandt, Professor of English and a representative from the Université de Haute-Alsace in France, came to LLC this past July to meet with Robert Summers, CLIC coordinator and LLC’s Eloise Brière, Associate Professor in French Studies, to review the success of the teleconferencing between UAlbany and Université de Haute-Alsace students last year.
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Such budget cuts impact what LLC can offer our faculty and students. Thankfully, alumni and friends who remember us with contributions throughout the year will make it possible for us to continue to meet some of these needs. If you are able to make a contribution to LLC, it will be greatly appreciated.

This fall our department is home to 71 faculty and staff: 45 faculty and instructors, 23 teaching assistants and 3 office personnel, all of whom speak some of the ten languages currently taught in LLC: Spanish, French, Russian, Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, German, Dutch, Latin and even ancient Greek, new this semester. This excellent mix of dedicated professionals gives our department an unusual, refreshing flavor and leads to a wonderful variety of extracurricular offerings.

Following are some of the many events and activities planned for this semester. Visit our website (www.albany.edu/llc/NewsandEvents.htm) any time for updates and new events.

- The Center for Language and International Communication (CLIC) continues its second year of a telecollaborative venture with the Université de Haute-Alsace in France where students at both institutions reinforce language skills through directed online chats via the CLIC’s webcams. In addition, podcasts of social vignettes in various languages are now available to help students improve their language skills. This semester the CLIC staff speak Chinese, French, German, and/or Spanish.
- Also in its second year, Francophone House in Van Rensselaer Hall offers a dorm environment with a language immersion experience. Students speak French in the house and participate in a variety of events throughout the year such as a trip to Montreal this fall and a language immersion weekend full of games, excursions, and meals—all in French—at the Dippikill Wilderness Retreat located in the Adirondacks.
- Several foreign film festivals (over 20 films) are being offered free and open to the public, including an international series focusing on globalization and its impact on our world (thanks to grad students Elise Bouhet, Alice Krause, and Alejandra Olarte), a German film festival exploring Jewish-German lives in post-Wende German cinema (thanks to Karin Krause, and Alejandra Olarte), and an international series focusing on globalization and its impact on our world (thanks to grad students Elise Bouhet, Alice Krause, and Alejandra Olarte), and an international series focusing on globalization and its impact on our world (thanks to grad students Elise Bouhet, Alice Krause, and Alejandra Olarte).

LLC Alumni

After graduating from UAlbany (BA-Russian, 1991), Andrew Nygard attended the Owen Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN completing his MBA in 1993. He then joined Deloitte Consulting as a Senior Consultant in their Cleveland office where he worked in the utilities practice in re-engineering, enterprise systems deployment, supply chain management and e-business strategy. He authored several components of the core re-engineering methodology as well as led development of a fast-track systems deployment methodology for utilities, subsequently selling over $82 million in professional services. He transferred to the San Francisco office in 1997 and left the firm in 2000 as head of the Utilities e-Business Practice on the West Coast. In 2000, he joined a startup product development software company as Vice President of Business Development. The company folded in 2001 during the fall out of the dotcom era. For the next six years he ran his own consulting firm, specializing predominantly in health care and media / entertainment companies on their business performance management before joining Blue Shield of California as a Director in the Product Development Department. He now lives in San Francisco with his wife and two teenage daughters.

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to participate in telecollaborative classes with French universities. UAlbany and native French students interact half the time in French, half in English where structured assignments include reacting to current news stories or constructing presentations on the other culture. This virtual immersion makes learning more interactive with contemporary formats and real situations.

CLIC services can be class-specific, such as helping Professor Timothy Sergay’s advanced Russian class use Audacity software to record speaking assignments which are submitted via Blackboard, an interactive web medium used at UAlbany to facilitate student/instructor communication. In reviewing these assignments, Sergay was able to “clearly identify systemic pronunciation problems, such as deficient vowel reduction and palatalization,” which in the noisier and more rushed classroom setting could be overlooked. Students reported surprising clarity of their vocalization in Audacity, making it easier to produce correct Russian sounds and intonations.

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Skidmore (Continued from page 1)

an old classmate a couple of years ago and in the course of their conversation discovered that Willard was living in upstate New York. He decided to give him a call and they now speak to each other every Saturday for an hour, 
auf Deutsch, natürlich!

When Willard mentioned Martin’s name, Arthur immediately recognized it to be that of his former roommate from UAlbany. Arthur recalls that, “Years ago, it was standard to come to town a few days before the start of classes and search for an apartment” which is how he and Martin met and roomed together for two years. They lost touch with one another after graduation.

Willard grew up as the youngest of 9 children who were raised by a devoted mother after a 1914 marital dispute on whether the eldest

I have always had fond memories of Professor Skidmore!
— Martin Selig

two daughters should attend college. She ensured that each child received a college education, especially all 5 girls, at a time when women were discouraged from pursuing higher educa-

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Sergay shared that longer spoken samples than are possible in the classroom more readily reveal progress and problems in assimilating the language’s intonation and rhythms. Instantaneous transfers of recordings and critiques, a convenient, durable record of student progress throughout the course and examples from native speakers available to students in a Blackboard “library” make learning the language more interactive and more enjoyable. Student Sarah LaMountain’s enthusiasm is clear, “I had a very good first experience in the CLIC with Prof. Sergay. The innovative approach to learning really reinforced my interest in studying Russian. … it was simple. We read our texts and I could listen to it a couple of times and re-do it to get it better. It makes it more exciting.” Even with all the resources on the web, it can be difficult for instructors to find highly specific material, but CLIC is making every effort to change this. As Fred Meni, a graduate student from France and one of CLIC’s staff points out, the French taught in classrooms is not what students encounter in other parts of the Francophone world like Haiti, Montreal, or Senegal, so why not capture and share it with students before they study abroad? Faculty traveling overseas can easily film authentic cultural experiences and conversations in dialects to edit and use in class. Meni recognizes that often people are afraid of technology or don’t know what it can do for them. He shared, “What we want to show [in CLIC] is that the computer is just like a book or any other [teaching] tool.” And speaking of tools, CLIC has now even created its own educational podcasts (www.albany.edu/cas/CLIC/podcasts.html) with authentic dialects and cultural situations for French, Russian and Spanish learners. More languages are on the way.

If there’s one thing that e-learning and podcasting gives language instruction, it’s flexibility. “Tomorrow it will be inconceivable to teach languages without the computer. It’s never possible to replace a teacher, but [now] the teacher could be in China.” explains Fred Meni. We’ve gone from the tinfoil and wax cylinders that first captured the human voice in the late 1800’s to the virtual, intangible cyberspace essential to and connecting us all—just imagine what the next era promises! 

A Little LLC History

In 1962, Catherine Wolkonsky was invited to establish the new Department of Russian at UAlbany. When she started at the old downtown campus, there were hardly any Russian books in the library, so Wolkonsky implored Russian-American friends for donations. By the time she left UAlbany in 1971, there were 3,000 Russian-language volumes

—See the next issue of the LLC Newsletter for the full story.
Treats from Around the World
Côte d’Or Lait
Amandes Caramélisées
(Milk Chocolate with Caramelized Almonds)

Many LLC faculty travel during the summer months and they graciously share tasty treats from around the world. If you’re ever in Belgium, this is a must try treat.

German teacher for 28 years. “Back then, as a teacher, you were paid to further your education as an instructor. From the time I started teaching to the early 1980’s, German had a dominant place in high school education and I was able to travel to Germany because of this. Both trips were the result of federal government programs designed to enhance the knowledge of math, science and foreign language teachers and provide them with graduate credits in the process. During the mid to late 80’s, most high schools in the New York State area required students to complete three years of foreign language study. The most prevalent languages at this time were German and French. As colleges began dropping their foreign language admission requirements, enrollment numbers sharply decreased. In the last 6 to 7 years of his career, Martin taught Social Studies because of this. Martin is now retired and living in Nassau County, NY. When asked if he’s ever visited UAlbany after he graduated, he said his daughter had also been a student here and when he came to campus to drop her off, he remembered being thrown off at the sight of East campus which had housed the Shaker Heights Country Club.

I’ll always remember him as a very dapper little man in a 3 piece suit with a great sense of humor!
—Arthur Young

Making Language Learning Fun!
As part of an exercise in class, Economics major Hal Mayes gave his Beginning Latin classmates Alabu Goat’s Milk Soap (his family’s company) with labels he’d translated into Latin. What a great way to incorporate language into everyday life.

OOPS!
Ruth Scipione is a PhD candidate and is currently ABD in Spanish Linguistics. She was listed as being in pursuit of her MA in the last newsletter.
Since 2000 I have been working with Spanish speaking migrant farm families to help them get accustomed to English. Though many of them eventually move out of the area, I will always remember the little ones, who so lovingly learned words like apple, horse, farm and milk. My most profound moment working with migrant families had to have been after accompanying a woman to all of her prenatal appointments as her interpreter. At the time of her labor and delivery I was actually with her when her baby girl was born. She was given the name Citlaly, the name of an Aztec princess. Her parents wanted her to always remember her Mexican heritage. It was very moving to be a part of such a special moment. One of my most notable days on the farm involves a farm owner, who I had been giving agricultural Spanish lessons to, at a very basic beginner level. After five months he was able to run an entire meeting with his Hispanic workers in Spanish. As I began to move from direct work with migrant farm workers to more traditional classroom teaching, I founded Saratoga Linguistics. I wanted to continue helping both the Spanish and English speaking communities in my local area. Instead of leaving a gap where I had been interpreting and teaching, I wanted to be able to offer language classes in specific areas for agricultural medical and social workers, so that they would be able to work, not just with English speaking clients, but also with the large population of Spanish speaking community members without the need of an interpreter. Additionally, I translate documents for legal offices so that they can extend their services to Spanish speaking clients. I believe language should be a bridge for communities to extend themselves, not a blockade that separates people.

La Historia Oficial (The Official Story), a Spanish video (570 loans)
Un Monde sans Pitié (A World without Pity) a French video (533 loans)
Carmen, a Spanish video (506 loans)

— Thanks to Jesús Alonso-Regalado, UAlbany Bibliographer specializing in Latin American, Caribbean and US Latino Studies, Romance Languages, Literatures and Cultures.

...there are four official languages spoken in Spain? They are Catalan, Basque, Galician and Spanish. Of the four, Basque is most unique in that it is not a Romance language and its origin is still being debated at the linguistic level. As in many other countries, bilingualism is the everyday experience of a large majority of Spaniards.
Faculty News

Susan Blood’s essay, “The Sonnet as Snapshot: Seizing the Instant in Baudelaire’s ‘A une passante,’” appeared in the Spring-Summer issue of Nineteenth–Century French Studies. The essay is part of a larger project examining the impact of new technologies on literary forms in the late 19th century.

Eloise Brière has been a member of the steering committee at Laval University in Quebec City for the Encyclopedia of North American French Cultural heritage since fall 2006. The website was launched in June and is available for viewing at www.ameriquefrancaise.org. Graduate students Kirsten Neel (MA-French, 2005) and Kimberly Lamay (currently working on a PhD with UAlbany’s Department of History) have been researching New York State’s French history for the Encyclopedia. Jean-François Brière is contributing an article on the memory of the French presence in Newfoundland in today’s France and Cynthia Fox is writing on contemporary French spoken by Franco-Americans in New England.

Jean-François Brière’s new book Haiti et la France 1804-1848, le rêve brisé (Haiti and France 1804-1848, the Broken Dream) was published by Editions Karthala (Paris) in May 2008. He presented a paper on Gaspard Mollien’s writings on Haiti (1825-1831) at the annual conference of the International Council for Francophone Studies (CIEF) in Limoges, France on June 30, 2008.


Herman Prins Salomon presented “Who Were the Jude-conversos Persecuted by the Spanish Inquisition?” in Madrid, Spain in June 2008. It focused on the persecution of Judaizers, those who chose not to convert to Christianity during the Spanish Inquisition.

Timothy Sergay’s article in Russian on the translation of a Pasternak lyric poem was accepted for publication in Moscow’s scholarly journal Voprosy literatury (Questions of Literature) in early 2009. On August 25 he was invited to speak at the Graduate Student Symposium of the Summer Russian School of Middlebury College on the notion of the “self-sufficient” word as a theme central to both the literary studies and memoiristic prose of Aleksandr Chudakov. Chudakov’s widow, literary historian Marietta Chudakova, appeared on the same panel. Timothy remained at the Russian School for a week-long teacher-training program, observing Russian language classes in session, at various levels.

Aida Torres-Horwitt recently embarked on a new teaching adventure donating her Spanish teaching skills by giving Spanish lessons on Monday nights at the Honest Weight Food Co-op in Albany.


Mary Beth Winn was awarded two prestigious fellowships from the Newberry Library in Chicago and the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. The NeMLA-Newberry Library fellowship, co-sponsored by the Northeast Modern Language Association, provides for a month-long residency at the Newberry Library, one of the country’s foremost collections of rare books. The two-month residency in Wolfenbüttel will enable her to benefit from the extraordinary collections of the Herzog August Bibliothek, one of the world’s leading independent research libraries. Founded in 1572, it was considered in the 17th century to be the eighth wonder of the world. Leibniz and Lessing were among its celebrated librarians. During her residencies in spring 2009, she will pursue research on the Census of Editions by the Parisian publisher, Anthoine Vérard (1485-1512) and on French books of hours published ca. 1480-1530.
This Year in LLC — A Pictorial Review of 2008 LLC sponsored events:

Newly inducted French Honor Society members Christina Dupré, Humberto Salgado and LLC French instructor Veronique Martin at the 2008 Pi Delta Phi Induction Ceremony.

French and English editions of Babar on display during La fête de la Francophonie.

Olimpiada judges along with Professor Charles Rouge of Slavic and Eurasian Studies at the 2008 Russian Olimpiada.

Professor Hilde Hoogenboom assisting an Olimpiada student with Russian text.

German Club Oktoberfest-Barbecue, Thatcher Park, October 7th, 2008.

2008 Commencement Ceremony.

Dress rehearsal for Manon Lastcall, presented by UAlbany’s Francophone House Living and Learning Community.

Francophone House trip to Québec.
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THANK YOU! GRACIAS! MERCI! GRAZIE! DANKE! SPASIBO! SHUKRAN! OBRIGADO! GRATUS!