

The Language Resource Centre handbook

Guidelines for setting up,
running and expanding
Language Resource Centres (LRCs)



Improving support for language learning through
Language Resource Centres



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**Guidelines for setting up, running and expanding
Language Resource Centres (LRCs)**

**written and edited
by
LRC project partners**



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General introduction

The LRC project

In 2001, sixteen organisations from thirteen European countries and the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe started working together in a European project¹ with the goal of *improving support for language learning through Language Resource Centres (LRCs)*. The idea behind the project is to raise the level of professional knowledge and dialogue among those responsible for LRCs by sharing expertise and experience from different geographical, linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds.

In recent years, there has been an increase in public and political awareness of the benefits of studying a foreign language, as well as a growing recognition of the need to support different learning styles and to encourage autonomy in language learning. These two factors have led to the creation of many new Language Resource Centres in all sectors of education and training, and to the expansion of many existing centres.

These days, LRCs can be found in many different settings:

- from schools to universities;
- on a regional, national and international level to support teachers and researchers;
- in companies and private language schools;
- in the education and training sector;
- even 'virtually', on-line on the Internet.

All the partners involved in the LRC project have at least one thing in common – they are all responsible for running or supporting some kind of Language Resource Centre. The LRCs represented in the project have a very varied range of 'missions' between them and they cater for different users, depending on the context in which they work:

- some partners' LRCs cater only for learners;
- some only for teachers, trainers, researchers, policy makers and other 'multipliers';
- some LRCs serve the whole of the education system of their region or country (promoting innovation, giving support, providing resources and training);
- some LRCs cater for all of these different user groups ... and more.

However, we were convinced that despite our diversity – or perhaps because of it – we could learn a lot from each other and from our different areas of expertise and experience.

Language Resource Centres are known by many different names depending on the geographical, linguistic and organisational context in which they are based. It is for this reason that we have decided to be as inclusive

¹ The LRC project (90050-CP-1-2001-UK-Lingua-L1) received support from the EU SOCRATES programme (Lingua 1 action) 2001-2003

as possible and interpret 'Language Resource Centre' in the broadest sense of the term in this publication. Therefore, we take 'Language Resource Centre' to include what may, in different institutions, be referred to as the: Language Centre; Self-Access Centre, Self-Access Library; Independent Study Centre; Resource Centre; Teachers' Centre; Resource Room; Language Library (...).

For us, the defining elements are that a Language Resource Centre (LRC) provides **services** (including resources) and **facilities** for **users** *in support of* a specific goal or 'mission' related to language learning, teaching, applied linguistics or research into any of these areas.

The centre may be a corner of a room or a whole building. The services provided may be a few listening posts and newspapers or everything listed in the 'Services' section of this publication. The users may be a few students a few hours a week, or thousands of users from different sectors and with different needs, but for the purpose of this publication, the unit providing this service is a Language Resource Centre, or for short 'LRC'.

The Language Resource Centre handbook

At the start of the LRC project we carried out various information-sharing exercises to discover partners' strengths and areas of expertise. We agreed to try and 'capture' the ideas, advice, examples of good practice – not to mention lessons learnt from past mistakes – in a publication to be shared with those outside the initial network of project partners. The result is this publication, *The Language Resource Centre handbook: guidelines for setting up, running and expanding Language Resource Centres (LRCs)*.

We were committed to making *The Language Resource Centre handbook* as practical and 'down-to-earth' as possible, as one partner put it 'like talking to a colleague'. We also decided to include brief case studies from our experiences in our own LRCs to illustrate sections with examples of real practice from a variety of institutions.

Our aim was to produce something useful for 'anyone involved in the setting up, running or expansion of an LRC'. Our potential readership is very wide. For example, we hope that *The Language Resource Centre handbook* would be helpful for a teacher planning to set up a small LRC in a secondary school, as well as for staff of a large, well-established centre wishing to reflect on their practice or looking for ideas to improve their working methods.

All the areas covered in *The Language Resource Centre handbook* will not be relevant to all LRCs, and we certainly do not believe that there is one 'good' way to run an LRC. For this reason, we decided to write the main 'checklist' in each section as a series of questions so that each reader can reflect on the issues and decide whether or not they are relevant or practical for their LRC. It may be helpful when using *The Language Resource Centre handbook* to imagine each question is preceded by 'If appropriate, (...)'.

The Language Resource Centre handbook has also been devised with professional development in mind. It may be photocopied providing the source is acknowledged, and we hope that the format and layout will lend itself to use in workshops and training events. In each section, as well as the *checklist questions* and *case studies*, we have included some practical *tips* provided by our partners and some *useful links* to help readers find out more about a particular topic using the World Wide Web.

Over the past twenty years many individuals and institutions have helped evolve the 'art' of running a successful LRC. We are indebted to those who have published and given workshops and presentations on Language

Resource Centres (or 'Self-Access Centres') in the past and hope that *The Language Resource Centre handbook* will contribute to the dialogue between practitioners. We have found the work of Edith Esch, David Ingram, David Little, Judy McCall, Nicole Poteaux, Philip Riley, Sue Sheerin, the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CERCLES) and the CIEL Project particularly useful in the preparation of this publication².

The Language Resource Centre handbook is available in the sixteen European languages³ of the different regions and countries where the project partners work: Bulgarian; Catalan; Czech; Dutch; English; Finnish; French; Galician; German; Greek; Hungarian; Icelandic; Luxembourgish; Maltese; Slovene and Spanish⁴.

We hope you find this publication useful and would be very happy to receive your feedback and suggestions (to: feedback@lrcnet.org). We also hope that you will be motivated to visit the LRCnet portal www.lrcnet.org which will be on-line until, at least, 2005. Through the LRCnet portal you can take part in on-line discussions on LRC-related issues, download all the different language versions of *The Language Resource Centre handbook*, as well as gaining access to further resources, information and support.

Philippa Wright,

LRC Project Co-ordinator

On behalf of all project partners, listed in full in the 'Contributors' section

² Full references in the bibliography at the end of this publication

³ Available for printing or download from the LRCnet portal: www.lrcnet.org

⁴ The LRC project would welcome offers to translate the *Language Resource Centre handbook* into other languages (from Europe or beyond)

Glossary and key to acronyms

CEF	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment
ECML	European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe
ELP	European Language Portfolio
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
LRC	Language Resource Centre
MARC	MAchine Readable Catalogue
Multiplier	Individual whose professional position enables them to disseminate information to others in the field
OPAC	Open Public Access Catalogue
Special needs	A learning difficulty or disability which requires different educational facilities than those generally provided
Standard setting	Set of procedures that need to be followed in order to grant reliable interpretation of learner performances

MANAGEMENT

The reason for the existence of any LRC is to respond to the needs of a specific group or groups of users. Who these users are and what services they are offered should, ideally, be based on a thorough needs analysis and clearly defined in the 'Mission statement'. The type of staffing, resources and facilities necessary should, ideally, be dictated by what is needed to ensure the successful delivery of the agreed services.

In order to do this, LRCs often bring together different combinations of staff, facilities and services than those found collaborating in traditional language departments or other institutions. These new combinations are demanding in terms of the management skills required. Consultation, decision making, planning and reporting mechanisms can be more complex than in other educational structures.

However, most LRC managers (directors, co-ordinators ...) are in the fortunate position of working in a stimulating, multicultural atmosphere where they can call on the expertise and dedication of a multi-skilled, professional team. As with any team-work, good collaboration, co-ordination, communication and effective management practices can go a long way towards ensuring the successful delivery of services and the smooth running of the LRC.

Mission and institutional aspects

Mission

- Why does your LRC exist – i.e. what is its purpose/role/brief?
- What is the educational philosophy/methodology under-pinning the operation of your LRC?
- Have you identified your users/user groups clearly?
- Was your LRC established and are plans for development/expansion based on a thorough needs analysis?
- Do you have a clear 'mission statement' for your LRC and are staff and users aware of it?

Case study

Centre de Recursos de Llengües Estrangeres (CRLE), Barcelona

CRLE's mission

Our Resource Centre for Foreign Languages (CRLE) was established as an educational service within the Ministry of Education of Catalonia with the mission to improve foreign language learning and teaching.

The CRLE was charged with the following responsibilities:

- to experiment and disseminate innovative approaches to foreign language teaching and new educational tools and technologies;
- to design new educational materials for primary and secondary education;
- to create a documentation centre to support

foreign language learning and teaching;

- to provide consultancy and advice to in-service programmes and activities carried out in schools;
- to disseminate information about good practice in the field;
- to provide teachers' centres with relevant materials;
- to develop centrally administered certificate exams for the Escoles Oficials d'Idiomes (official language schools).

To carry out this mission, different short-term and long-term projects have been designed, piloted, budgeted and implemented.

Case study

Where appropriate, good results in the evaluation phase of pilot projects lead to generalisation of the activities and policies.

The projects have changed throughout the life of the CRLE in the sense that they have moved with the times and evolving needs. Back in the eighties, the emphasis was on introducing and supporting the use of audio-visual resources in the classroom, organising school exchange programmes and summer language immersion programmes for

pupils. More recently we have been concentrating on projects such as ICT integration policies, the early introduction of foreign languages, fostering autonomous learning policies at school level or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

The need to assess foreign language programmes has led us to participate in large-scale national and international studies on the effectiveness of the teaching of English in our country at different educational levels.

Case study

Institute of Language and Specialist Training of Charles University, Prague

Why we set up our LRC, its role and the methodology underpinning it

There are two main stimuli that have led us to move part of the teaching and learning process into the Language Resource Centre.

The first stimulus comes from the students themselves, who are influenced by the changes in our highly technological societies and have to struggle to find their place in the competitive, global jobs market. Most of our students are young adults who join our language courses with specific aims in mind. They are willing to study outside the classroom but need guidance. To satisfy these 'clients' we have to offer a more individualised approach. Inspired by the ideas of several recent textbook authors, we started:

- providing students with more opportunities to choose what they wanted to do in regular lessons;
- encouraging them to create their own materials;
- providing extra time for consultation sessions.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to make the teaching and learning process more effective for everybody, we have been working on how to raise the motivation of less ambitious students and support teachers in the tricky task of supervising several groups working on different tasks at the same time.

The second stimulus comes from new theories in foreign language learning and teaching methodology. We took part in the 1999 ECML

Workshop "Language Resource Centres: shifting from the teacher's perspective to the learner's perspective" (see Poteaux in the general bibliography). This event promoted the idea of learning, not as a process in which the teacher decides how the student learns, but as a process guided by the student himself or herself. This helped convince us that autonomous learning would be strengthened if we provided a more suitable environment for it – in the form of a Language Resource Centre.

However, setting up a modest LRC proved less difficult than preparing students for their new role. Below is a summary of the tasks on which we are currently working to help our students to become more autonomous and thus more efficient language learners:

- developing curricula that take into account the experience of adult learners and respond to the needs of a particular group of learners;
- helping learners realise that they need to continue learning the language on their own once they leave the classroom;
- helping them gain the skills they need in order to do this successfully, i.e.:
 - diagnosing their learning needs and formulating learning goals;
 - defining the content and progression of their learning process;
 - selecting the learning strategies that work best for them as individuals;
 - monitoring the acquisition procedure;
 - evaluating what has been acquired.

Decision making, reporting and liaison

- What level of autonomy does your LRC have?
- Is your LRC part of a larger department/organisation?
- Do you provide services to several different departments/user groups (can you/should you)?
 - If so, is the level/extent of provision clearly defined?
 - Do you have to work in accordance with 'Service level agreements'?
 - How are these services financed (top-slicing departments or charging)?
- What level of managerial/financial decisions can you and your team make yourselves and which decisions need to be referred?

- Is this clear to all involved?
- Do you report to an individual or management committee/steering group?
- What are the consultation/reporting mechanisms?
 - Are they clear to all involved?
 - Can you renegotiate 'levels of consultation', if necessary, to allow your LRC to 'move with the times'?
- Does your LRC make use of central services (e.g. for technical support/personnel) – is the basis for these relationships clear?
- Are you aware of all services and facilities that already exist in your institution and are you confident that you are drawing on existing expertise?

Tip

➔ You may find help from your LRC neighbours, especially if you're running a small centre.

Planning

- Do you have a 'corporate plan' for your LRC (perhaps referred to as the 'annual' or 'development' plan) and if so, how far in advance can you, or are you obliged to, plan?
- What is the current situation – what are the immediate, short-, medium- and long-term strategic and operational objectives to be achieved?
 - What are the realistic development perspectives for your LRC?
 - Have you carried out a feasibility study to check the implications of any major developments?
- Who is involved in the planning process – all stakeholders, including staff and users?
 - Are you clear about who you need to consult (e.g. do you have student representatives) and the most appropriate consultation strategies to use?

Tip

➔ Don't forget to take into account all your 'stakeholders' from funders through to users.

Budget and finance

- What level of autonomy do you have for setting and spending your budget?
- Is your budget set annually/biennially/triennially?
- Do you have to bid for or negotiate funding levels – if so, on what basis?
- Do you need to earn a percentage of your income?
 - If so, how – through teaching/offering services and facilities, or through project work?
 - Do you know where to look to find out about project opportunities/calls for tender?
- Are any imposed budget headings/constraints/processes (for ordering or reporting) clear to all who have to use them?
- If your LRC is part of a larger organisation, who/which department can offer you support on financial issues?

Case study
Teacher Training and Educational Innovation Centre (CFIE), Guardo

How we organise the annual plan for the centre (within the given budget) based on a needs analysis system involving staff and users

The CFIE in Guardo is one of the three Teacher Training and Educational Innovation Centres in the province of Palencia, northern Spain. Our Annual Performance Plan follows a fixed timetable and clearly defined stages, in this way all involved in the process are aware of their responsibilities and duties in advance.

The first stage of the process begins in January with a meeting of the Provincial Teacher Training Committee which includes representatives of the three Teacher Training Centres, as well as decision makers from Palencia's Board of Education. This committee decides on exactly how the consultation

Case study

and planning process will be implemented over the coming year. We agree on:

- division of responsibilities;
- the schedule for each stage of the process;
- questionnaire models for training needs analysis;
- levels of service possible with the budgets and human resources available.

These agreements are reached in a collaborative and friendly way.

The annual budget for our activities is communicated to the Provincial Teacher Training Committee by our Ministry of Education. Its division is agreed on by the three CFIEs according to the number of users that each one has. In this way we know in advance, in May, the money we will have available for the following academic year.

Within our staff at the Teacher Training Centres, each 'adviser' acts as an intermediary between the CFIE and a defined number of schools. The adviser is the person responsible for holding the initial meeting with each school (represented by the management teams and the teacher with responsibility for

continuing professional development). At this meeting, the in-service training needs questionnaires are explained and dates agreed for the adviser to pick up the results. The adviser is responsible for summarising the teachers' training needs for each school in a report which is presented at a CFIE staff meeting.

Once our team has collated and discussed all the in-service training requests from the schools, we analyse these against our centre's budget. We are then in a position to prioritise and decide which activities and events can take place and which new resources we can acquire over the coming year. These decisions are presented to the Provincial Committee by the centre's director. The Provincial Committee, in turn, transmits them to the regional Ministry of Education, and the Annual Performance Plan is complete.

We have found that the key to the smooth running of this whole process is good communication, especially between the schools and the CFIE adviser and between the CFIE adviser and the rest of our team.

Tip

➔ Pay attention to 'Hidden costs' such as software licences and maintenance contracts when setting up an LRC from scratch.

Promotion, identity and marketing

- Do you have a 'communications policy' specifying objectives, strategies, action plans and evaluation methods for your LRC?
 - On what basis do you revise this policy?
- Do you have a clear 'house style' for LRC documents/displays/communications to help give your centre a visual 'identity'?
- Do you have a logo to promote your identity or are you allowed to use the logo of the 'parent' institution?
- How are you promoting your centre – are you using the appropriate means to reach your target users?
 - Do you work closely with the teachers/trainers of those using your centre (whether they are from within the same institution or outside) to ensure they promote the services offered by the LRC to their learners/trainees?
 - Do you organise (or contribute to) exhibitions, cultural events, book fairs, reading and literacy campaigns?
 - Do you hold 'open days' or 'open evenings' for potential users?
- What sort of Web/on-line presence do you have – information about location/opening times, or a full listing of your services, a catalogue of your resources, details about all your projects and activities?
 - How do you ensure that on-line information about your LRC is useful, usable and up-to-date?
- Do you publish an information leaflet/brochure for the users of your LRC with opening hours, services, contact details and information about access for people with disabilities?

(NB for 'Access' issues see 'Users' section)

Case study

Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum, ÖSpK (Austrian Centre of Competence in Modern Languages), Graz

How to create the identity of an LRC without professional help and without much money

In 1997 the Austrian Centre of Competence in Modern Languages (ÖSpK) was still a part of the Austrian Ministry of Education (BMBWK) but with the imminent prospect of being outsourced. At that time we were identified with the Ministry and didn't have strategies in place to promote the independent identity of our organisation – as 'ÖSpK' – in the awareness of our target groups.

We began the successful – but nevertheless difficult – process of 'creating our identity' within the Austrian education scene by discussing:

- *our aims;*
 - *the opportunities available;*
 - *the strategies we could use;*
- to be better 'recognised' by our target users.*

We reconsidered our visual identity, deciding to use identical visual symbols at every opportunity to raise and reinforce awareness of our existence. We found there was no need to employ an expensive PR agency – what really counted was people being able to identify the name of our institution and its logo in combination with various key messages about its purpose.

We had brainstorming sessions about our name, logos, style sheets, existing publications, etc. We realised that apparently small decisions such as:

- *where and when to place logos;*
- *which style sheets to use;*
- *whether we could change the appearance of publications (even if only slightly) so they were readily identified with our institution;*

were key to creating our new identity.

ÖSpK's logo, in combination with our full name, is now used on all our publications, letters, brochures and folders. If possible, we always place our logo in the same posi-

tion on the page and we have also made a point of streamlining our materials design so that publications, folders, CD-ROMs, etc belonging to the same project all have the same appearance.

Our next step was to plan a 'communications strategy' to ensure that all messages had the desired direction, focus and effect. We decided to promote ÖSpK on as many different occasions as possible and to have printed material available for visitors, even if budget constraints meant it sometimes had to be photocopied handouts. We targeted a range of media contacts, including the education, social affairs and feature correspondents from magazines and newspapers, and discovered that building up media relations requires mainly time, not money! We used these strategies during the European Year of Languages and now often find ourselves at the centre of attention as far as modern language learning in Austria is concerned.

We found that using a clearly structured and regularly updated homepage you can support the (sometimes tiring) process of positioning your institution efficiently. Developing the concept and content yourself and leaving the technical development to a webmaster can save time and money. Also, a good basic concept can easily be extended in accordance with your financial situation, e.g. through interactive databases, discussion fora, chat rooms, etc.

Last but not least, we would recommend finding key words for your work and keeping them short, clear and as simple as possible. In the case of ÖSpK, we use 'Development – Dissemination – Networking'. Such key words can turn into the pivotal points of your PR strategy, which should use every promotional opportunity that turns up!

Staffing

Who do you need?

- What is the profile and number of staff needed in your LRC: academic; advisory; information professionals, administrative; technical?
 - Are your staff full-time; part-time; on permanent contracts, seconded, hourly paid, student placements; volunteers; research fellows or a mixture of all of these?
 - Do all LRC staff have job descriptions specifying roles and responsibilities?
 - Do your staff have to work 'unsociable hours', e.g. evenings or weekends?

Recruitment

- Are you able to recruit your own staff? If so, are you familiar with the legal aspects and which salary scales should be used?
 - Have you considered equal opportunities?
- Do you know where to advertise to reach potential candidates for vacancies?
- Is there an induction/orientation programme in place for new colleagues?

Co-ordination and reporting

- Are reporting and management structures clear for all LRC staff (e.g. do you have an organigram)?
 - If you are part of a larger organisation, are procedures clear for working with steering groups, co-ordinating committees and colleagues from outside the LRC?
 - Are there mechanisms in place for staff to give feedback on all aspects of their work or on LRC operations?
- How are timetables organised (for reception, advisory, technical as well as teaching staff); holiday periods, substitutions – and by whom?

Professional development

- Do you have a plan and budget for professional development and skill-sharing?
 - Is professional development linked to staff appraisal?
 - How is it promoted and supported?
 - Are staff offered help with the cost of external training and work-related courses?
 - Are staff given study leave or time off to attend work-related courses?
 - How do staff find out about training opportunities?
- Do written guidelines (sometimes known as a 'desk manual') exist for the main operational aspects of running the LRC – to save existing staff time and prevent you having to explain every aspect of the centre when new staff arrive?

Staff representation and support

- Do staff have recourse to the appropriate unions or professional bodies?
 - Are staff given time off or financial support to attend meetings?
- Are you involved in the appropriate networks to support you in your professional activities and development?

Case study

APIGA, the Association of Galician English Language Teachers, Spain

Volunteers: students on work experience in the APIGA Language Resource Centre

One of the problems faced by many LRCs is needing more staff than their budget allows. A possible solution is to recruit volunteers. APIGA, the teachers' organisation in northern Spain, can offer some tips here. One idea is to recruit students who have just left university and who need work experience. Alternatively, one can approach academic institutions that offer work-experience placements within their programmes – they're often on the hunt for new organisations in which to place their students.

Before looking for volunteers, it is a good idea to define tasks clearly into reasonable workloads, so that new recruits are not overwhelmed or, conversely, bored. Moreover, by being specific about what you want the volunteers to do, it is easier to persuade new recruits that they are going to get the work experience they need or they might find re-

warding. For example, recent graduates would be more tempted by the chance to help set up a new database than to do only shelving or basic paperwork.

Another benefit of clearly defining the tasks that volunteers have to do from the start is that the LRC can recognise the work that has been done more easily in official letters of recommendation that the student volunteers will take away with them. In this way, future employers have a clear idea of exactly what the student volunteers achieved during their work placement at the LRC. It is also easier to monitor the volunteers' progress during their placement and takes the pressure off regular staff, who don't have to worry about what the volunteers are going to do next.

Larger organisations may consider having regular induction programmes so that new

Case study

volunteers receive basic training and get to know the institution at the same time. Former volunteers can train new ones and be recognised for this activity.

Finally, think of other ways you can reward your volunteers if you can't pay them. APIGA,

for instance, offers its volunteers free access to conferences and workshops, or simply lets them join the organisation free of charge. Of course, such privileges are related to performance; only volunteers who complete their tasks can enjoy them.

Tips

- Professional roles are evolving and new ones are emerging: a language adviser as opposed to a classroom teacher, a workshop resources manager in contrast with a traditional librarian ...
- Hold an in-service seminar on the use of ICT for your staff to help them to keep up to date and to fulfil duties properly.

Feedback and evaluation

- Are you putting time and resources into this – do you make time for you and your colleagues to reflect on what you are doing?
- Who contributes to the feedback and evaluation process – staff/users?
- What evaluation methods and tools do you use: surveys; statistics; interviews; questionnaires (...)?
- What 'key performance indicators' are you using to evaluate the effectiveness of your LRC?
- Are you collecting appropriate data for management purposes – e.g. numbers of users/use of resources/ peak- or low-use periods – and if so, how?
- Are you also collecting information on the 'quality' and 'usefulness' of specific resources/services/facilities/projects? If so, how?
- How do you use feedback data – to learn/improve/adapt services?
 - Are results published for all involved to see?
- Do you have a suggestion box – where is it?
- Are your feedback mechanisms as 'light' as possible?

Tip

- Use an anonymous questionnaire to get annual feedback on a volunteer basis from LRC users.

Intellectual property rights/copyright

- Are you clear about the legal situation regarding intellectual property rights/copyright?
- Are you displaying the appropriate notices/warnings for your users about copyright infringements?
- How do you ensure that your own staff do not infringe copyright legislation – by education/information/ not requesting 'illegal' copies?
- Are you aware of the mechanisms for obtaining copyright clearance within your institution?
- Are you aware of copyright as it applies to digitisation of materials existing in another format?
- Are you acknowledging authorship/ownership, as appropriate, for materials created in-house?
- Can you make some of your own resources copyright-free (providing the source is acknowledged)?
- Is there a possibility for a 'swap-shop' scheme to share resources with neighbouring centres/departments or through professional associations?

Health and safety, working environment

- Are you, LRC staff and users aware of the health and safety policy of your institution – is it part of the induction programme?
- Are you and your staff being informed of appropriate health and safety courses?

- Do you have a first aid kit available/trained first aiders among your staff (and/or do staff know where to go for help in an emergency)?
- Is the appropriate level of security in place to safeguard users, equipment and resources?
- Is the fire-safety drill posted in an appropriate place, are fire extinguishers serviced regularly, are your staff trained what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency?
- Have you made provision for, and are you encouraging safe working practices for staff and LRC users, e.g. by providing well organised (ergonomic) workstations, varied tasks for staff, including breaks from screen work?
- Are you encouraging 'green' use of resources, e.g. recycling paper; disposing of toxic substances such as toner cartridges appropriately?

Tip

➔ If you ask your users to bring their own headphones you can save on having to buy new ones and above all, it's healthier.

Insurance/liability

- Are you clear about the insurance situation/your responsibility for staff and users safety and belongings (have you communicated this appropriately)?
- Are you clear about the insurance situation for your stock and equipment (e.g. in the case of fire, flood or theft)?
- Have you taken the appropriate security measures to try and prevent theft of equipment/resources, while keeping the centre as 'open-access' as possible?
- Are all staff clear about security of personal information about users (i.e. data protection)?

Practical issues

- Do you have a policy on eating/drinking/use of mobile phones/laptops in your LRC, and what is the basis for this policy?
- How are you handling the routine, but crucial, task of re-shelving open access resources (is this the task of one or two members of staff or shared between the team)?
- What are the cleaning arrangements for the LRC – do you have the appropriate equipment and products for cleaning screens/keyboards/headphones/video or cassette player heads as well as the usual cleaning and tidying necessary for teaching or working spaces?

Useful links

- CERCLES**
Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues dans l'Enseignement Supérieur/
European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education.
A confederation of independent associations from 21 countries of Europe.
www.cercles.org
- CIEL Language Support Network:**
Promoting independent language learning.
Downloadable CIEL handbooks – practical guides to integrating independent language learning with the taught curriculum in an institutional context:
Handbook 2 – Managing independent language learning: management and policy considerations
<http://ciel.lang.soton.ac.uk>
- European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture Languages in education and training**
Socrates Programme – Call for Proposals and Application Forms
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/download.html>
Leonardo Programme – Languages in vocational training.
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/actions/leonardo2.html>
Regional and minority languages
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/langmin.html>
See also 'Supplementary resources' section of the LRC portal: www.lrcnet.org

U S E R S

Your users will define the activities of your LRC and the facilities, resources and equipment necessary to deliver the services they need. Therefore, it is crucial to know who your users are (or will be), what they need and expect from the LRC, as well as when and how they will (or would like to) access the services offered.

No LRC is likely to offer services to all the user groups listed below. However, there may well be new groups of users who could benefit from your services, or you may be able to improve access for your existing users without enormous expense or re-organisation.

Users access LRCs in many different ways. These days, not all users use LRCs 'in person' and technology offers the possibility of reaching many more users 'at a distance' than was possible ten or even five years ago. With careful planning and some imagination, this can open LRCs up to geographically isolated users or disabled users not able to access the LRC physically.

Good communication with all your users and regular opportunities for feedback will help you check you are offering the services they require and will contribute to a collaborative working atmosphere.

Target groups

Which of the following target groups uses (or could use) your LRC and what are their specific needs?

Learners

- pre-school learners
- school pupils (primary and secondary)
- language clubs
- university students (full- and part-time)
- adult learners
- University of the 3rd Age
- vocational language learners (business/industry/technical/service sector)

Educators

- teachers (pre-service and in-service, all sectors of education)
- teacher trainers
- adult education tutors
- trainers involved in vocational language learning

Decision makers in language education and multipliers

- educational advisers and inspectors
- policy makers
- representatives from the Ministry of Education or other ministries

- curriculum developers
- examination boards
- professional bodies/networks/associations

Institutions, companies and other individuals

- cultural institutes
- publishing companies
- broadcasters
- researchers
- coursebook and materials writers
- other LRCs (or teachers' centres)
- journalists
- the general public

Case study

CILT, the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, London

Serving a wide range of users

One group of 'users' which CILT does not serve directly, at least not within its main brief, is 'learners'. However, among the several thousands of individuals who visit the CILT resources library and the tens of thousands who use the CILT on-line resources every year, we do serve every other group listed under the main headings:

- educators;
- decision makers in language education;
- multipliers;
- institutions, companies and other individuals.

We support all sectors of education from primary (or even pre-school) to higher and adult education, including vocational and professional language training.

Each of these groups has specific needs and uses CILT for a variety of reasons, they:

- access CILT's services in different ways (in person, by phone, letter, on-line, at a training course or via a publication);
- need CILT's support at different times (of the day, the academic year, or of their career);
- require different sorts of services (information, advice, resources, training, publications).

This, of course, has implications for how we plan and deliver our services.

For example, we:

- open late one evening a week and on Saturday mornings during term-time so teachers can visit the resource centre outside working hours;
- have a network of 'Comenius Centres' throughout the UK for those who live too far away to travel to London;
- make our 'Information Sheets' (of which we distribute more than 20,000 per year) available on-line;
- collaborate in many regional, national and international projects which help us reach a wider audience as well as sharing expertise and skills.

Several key approaches help us respond to such a wide spectrum of users:

- good communication between colleagues and different sections within CILT;
- collaboration and partnerships with external organisations and projects;
- networking – in all its forms;
- use of ICT and exploitation of the fantastic potential of the Internet to reach remote users and cut down on postal costs and delays.

Access and communication

- How do you communicate with your target users – in person/via teaching colleagues/advisors/leaflets/noticeboards/e-mail/newsletters ...?
- What kind of induction do you provide for new users?
 - Are induction sessions at scheduled times or do you provide a flexible service as necessary?
- How do you facilitate/encourage communication between users and LRC staff?
- How do you handle the different demands of individual/group access?
- Have you taken into account group access and pressure on numbers of resources when timetabling teaching/advising/self-access sessions?

- Do you cater for less technologically literate users?

Users with special needs

- What facilities do you have for users with special needs and disabled users?
- Has your LRC's 'level of accessibility' (e.g. wheelchair access/availability of induction loops) for users with special needs/disabled users been audited and publicised to users and potential users?
 - Can you make any improvements in the accessibility of your LRC?
 - Can you draw on existing staff skills, e.g. Sign Language users?
 - Do you know where to look, or who to go to, for advice on improving accessibility to your LRC?

Case study

Institute for Language and Speech Processing, Athens

The different ways ILSP communicates with its users

The Institute for Language and Speech Processing offers language resources to a wide variety of audiences.

Our main user group is the Greek and international scientific and research community. However, within this constituency we also identify specific user groups and the sort of information and resources in which they are likely to be interested. We have developed 'special interest databases' to store this information about our users, in which scientists, researchers, students, decision-makers, as well as other groups are included under several categories. In this way, we are able to select which group, or combination of groups we should communicate with on a particular issue or topic, as well as being able to communicate regularly with all our users through various means.

The main means of communication that has been adopted by ILSP is through our Internet homepage (www.ilsp.gr). Apart from being a practical and economic communication tool, the Internet is also fast and reaches the widest audience possible. It is particularly suited to our users as most of them are computer literate, have access to the Internet and are used to handling it for research and work. Of course, it is advisable for a homepage to be updated as frequently as possible and to include all current news of interest to your target public. The ILSP homepage is updated daily and includes – among other things – past, current and future ILSP events and activities. It is also bilingual (Greek and English) as many of our users are from outside Greece, and most of these scientists and re-

searchers who may not understand Greek do understand English. The number of languages in which you make your LRC homepage available and the frequency with which it is updated will, doubtless, depend on your budget and the needs of your users.

As useful and effective as using the Internet may be, like many LRCs, we also distribute some information which is only of interest to a more restricted group of users. For this purpose, we produce specialised 'newsletters' which include more 'sophisticated' versions of material generally available on the Internet, as well as things such as scientific and research articles or reviews. Within this framework, ILSP produces Logonavigation, a newsletter for human language technologies, which is distributed free of charge to special scientific interest groups.

As in any LRC, we sometimes need to contact users at a more personal level, especially when these users need to be informed urgently about specific events, activities or publications. Therefore, occasionally, ILSP chooses to contact some of its users through e-mail or telephone, although, once again, it is crucial that these users have been carefully selected to ensure that they are really likely to be interested in the information we want to communicate.

Finally, we have found it very useful to take part in events such as conferences and exhibitions, where our target interest groups are likely to be found. ILSP takes part in several such events throughout the year in an attempt to reach out to as wide an audience as possible.

Tips

- Remember that some users (especially mature students or those returning to study) may not have had the opportunity to use computers or digital technology in the past.
- Don't forget to use all ways to reach your users – be as comprehensive as possible.

Opening up to new users

- Are you making the most of the facilities and services offered by your LRC?
- Is it a priority for your LRC to attract new users?
 - If so, is this reflected in your promotional activities?
- Have you considered how your existing services and facilities could be opened up for use by new target groups?
 - Can you extend your opening hours?
 - Can you offer some of your current facilities and services at a distance to users (by phone, post, Internet)?
- Can you invite use by new groups during 'quieter periods' (perhaps first on a trial basis)?
 - Could this be a source of income generation, fulfilling your LRC's mission or enriching the activities of your LRC?
- Have you consulted all involved (especially other LRC staff) about any planned development or expansion?

Case study

European Centre for Education and Training (ECET), Sofia

'Happy Puppy' and 'Linguapeace': setting up networks of Language Resource Centres for specific groups (young learners and peacekeepers)

Over the past three years the European Centre for Education and Training, which has a network of language and training centres throughout Bulgaria, has opened up its premises, expertise and services to two very different new user groups: young children and peacekeepers.

The young children (aged 6-12) are catered for in 'Happy Puppy Language Resource Centres' where they learn English in their 'free time' after school and in the holidays, using modern methods such as:

- *play and learn activities;*
- *self-study and discovery;*
- *interactive, tutor-supported courses;*
- *use of multimedia resources and the internet.*

The 'Language Resource Centres for Peacekeepers' initiative came out of collaboration in the European project 'Linguapeace' with colleagues from the UK, the Netherlands and Slovakia. The aim of the centres is to help introduce advanced technologies as well as up-to-date and effective methodology into the foreign language learning process for prospective peacekeepers. We have also developed and help students find relevant resources to support their language learning for this very specific purpose.

Although both these new user groups – young children and peacekeepers – would appear to have very different needs, there are several aspects in common in the services we offer them:







- *interactive materials and the use of multimedia (particularly video);*
- *a combination of tutor-based and self-access study modes;*
- *helping them learn to use materials and reference resources appropriate to their needs;*
- *introduction of the target culture into the classroom.*

We have been able to open up to these very different new users through adapting existing expertise and methodologies used in the ECET Language Resource Centres and adding or developing new elements (e.g. military wordlists, tailor-made assessment materials), as necessary.

We have had to be open, adaptable and willing to learn. We have found that building on our strengths and taking a 'gradual approach' – starting on a modest scale and expanding once the concept is working – has paid off. In the case of 'Happy Puppy' we have set up eight new regional centres over the past two years, and there are plans for seven further 'Linguapeace Language Resource Centres' to be established by 2006 (www.linguapeace.net).

The experience of working with these very diverse groups has taught us a lot. It has also given us confidence to use our creativity and imagination when considering which new user groups could benefit from the services and facilities of our Language Resource Centres.

Useful links

-  **AbilityNet**
The UK-based provider of expertise on computing and disability.
www.abilitynet.org.uk/content/home.htm
 -  **The Centre for Accessible Environments**
This is a UK charity, and is the information and training body on the accessibility of the built environment for disabled people.
www.cae.org.uk
 -  **CIEL Language Support Network**
Promoting independent language learning.
Downloadable CIEL Handbooks:
Handbook 6 – Making independent language learning accessible
<http://ciel.lang.soton.ac.uk>
 -  **European Disability Forum**
www.edf-feeph.org
 -  **Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)**
WAI pursues accessibility of the Web through technology, guidelines, tools, education and outreach, and research and development
www.w3.org/WAI
 -  **Web usability: Jakob Nielsen's website**
Many resources on web page usability
www.useit.com
- See also 'Supplementary resources' section of the LRC portal: www.lrcnet.org*

S E R V I C E S A N D R E S O U R C E S

The services and resources provided by your LRC should respond to the needs of your users and be in harmony with the mission statement of the LRC as a whole. It is unlikely that any one LRC will offer all the services or all types of resources listed below. Depending on the size, location and mission of the LRC, the range of services offered and the number of languages supported will vary.

Induction, user training and advisory services will support more autonomous use of your LRC, while opening hours to suit your users and efficient cataloguing and presentation of resources will help users make the most of your services.

Feedback from users and LRC staff can help you improve and adapt existing services, as well as suggesting new ways in which your LRC can develop. Wherever possible, the introduction of new services should be preceded by consultation with all involved and a feasibility study – if it is a major development.

Services

Which of the following services does your LRC offer?

Pedagogical support

- teaching/tutoring
- language-learning advisory service
- teacher training (pre- and in-service)
- professional development courses
- implementing changes designed to improve language learning and teaching
- publishing examples of good practice
- promotion of innovative practice
- spearheading initiatives
- production of in-house resources and assessment materials
- evaluation
- assessment
- certification
- support for distance learning/self-study
- lending service for resources (stand-alone or networked – union catalogue)
- induction for new users

Information and enquiry services

- enquiry service (in person, by telephone, in writing or by e-mail)
- reference services (including on-line access?)
- supporting research (e.g. tailor-made bibliographies)
- group visits

- information dissemination on behalf of other organisations (e.g. as an EU information point or for cultural institutes)

Additional services

- dissemination and promotion of language learning and multicultural awareness
- research and development
- networking (helping to build partnerships and facilitate collaboration between different organisations and individuals working in the field)
- on-demand services (made-to-measure services, e.g. training sessions or project management)
- sales of publications (in-house publications or others of interest to users?)
- a programme of social or cultural activities
- conference facilities/meeting rooms
- off-air recording
- photocopying (for staff/users ... free/costed?)

Technical services

- on-going maintenance and repair of all equipment (on-site, off-site, renewal of maintenance contracts)
- maintenance of computer networks and servers (storage of digital material)
- satellite (or cable) TV, reception and maintenance
- digitisation of audio and visual material
- Web/Internet support for materials creation
- upgrading of equipment
- advice on the technical implications and specifications for new developments in services offered or project work

Case study

National Board of Education, Finland

How to adapt the Common European Framework (CEF) for Language Learning and Teaching to national framework curricula (NBE-FI)

The current Finnish curriculum reform for languages takes place in a context with the following characteristics:

- *The present framework curricula are fairly open to local applications and therefore written in open terms.*
- *As the result of national surveys of learning results in foreign languages, growing concern for educational equality has been voiced.*
- *There is a need for coherence of curricular outcomes between different schools and educational institutions.*
- *More connections between teaching, learning and assessment are needed to help to foster learner autonomy.*
- *The need for clear progression of language proficiency from one stage of education to another.*
- *The need to provide support for teachers to give justified grades at the end of the comprehensive school within the present framework curriculum.*

In order to meet these challenges, the language curriculum groups set up by the National Board of Education agreed to develop

a proficiency level scale for lower and upper secondary schools in Finland following the CEF levels and descriptors.

Developing the scale was the most difficult and largest task because the CEF levels are too broad to register small progress in language proficiency. Therefore, it was necessary to split the original levels to suit the needs of our school system. It was also recognised that the highest levels of mastery as described in the CEF are seldom reached in mainstream education.

Three sublevels were formed within CEF level A1 Breakthrough. They are called:

- *A1.1. First stage of elementary proficiency;*
- *A1.2. Developing elementary proficiency;*
- *A1.3. Functional elementary proficiency.*

The level A2 Waystage was divided into two sublevels called:

- *A 2.1. First stage of basic proficiency;*
- *A 2.2. Developing basic proficiency.*

The level B1 Threshold was divided into two categories called:

Case study

- B1.1. Functional basic proficiency;
- B1.2. Fluent basic proficiency.

The level B2 was also divided into two sub-levels called:

- B2.1. First stage of independent proficiency;
- B2.2. Functional independent proficiency.

The first problem we faced when validating the levels and the descriptors we had developed, was that teachers understand different

levels differently. A number of activities were designed in order to involve teachers in the process and to build a common understanding. These activities included studying the descriptors, sorting them in order of difficulty and comparing different sortings in pairs, etc. The result was a proposal for the definition of the standard levels of 'good' command of languages at the end of the comprehensive school and the upper secondary school, based on empirical data.

Case study

Centre for Innovation and Training (CINOP), the Netherlands

The use of the Dutch Vocational Language Portfolio in the Language Resource Centres of Dutch vocational community colleges

Language Resource Centres in Dutch vocational community colleges have a dual purpose: to provide resources and materials used in learning a language and to provide a language learning service to other vocational departments in the college. We, at CINOP, together with the SLO (Dutch curriculum development) have developed a Dutch Language Portfolio for Vocational Education related to the Common European Framework (CEF) for languages as part of the larger European Language Portfolio (ELP) project.

The implementation of the portfolio implies developing awareness of needs and progress on the part of the learner and a different way of reporting progress achieved in and outside educational contexts.

Like the European Language Portfolio on which it is based, the Dutch Vocational Language Portfolio (DVLVP) enables the learner to monitor progress and assess his or her own language competence in the five language skills. The portfolio belongs to the learner who states his or her own needs, records progress and checks fulfillment of his or her stated needs. The DVLVP includes a series of descriptors, based on the Common European Framework, giving examples of practical language situations in which the learner may find himself or herself which serve as a self-assessment guide for learners. At CINOP, when we are supporting Dutch vocational community colleges, the DVLVP is used to encourage the learners to make their own assessment assumptions and then take objective tests at the appropriate levels to check them. He or she is then able to compare his or her competency with the level expected at the end of the vocational course. The discrepancy between the two enables the student to design his or her own learning path in the 'Language Learning Monitor' (a tool for students developed

by CINOP) with the help of a mentor. This allows concentration on different skills as necessary and, at intervals during the course, progress can be re-assessed and the path adapted accordingly.

At present, the DVLVP is in full use in three vocational community colleges in Holland and is currently being introduced in eight more. As a result of this ongoing implementation of the DVLVP we hope that, before long, most language teaching in vocational community colleges will take place in the Language (Resource) Centre. Therefore, the organisation of materials and resources in LRCs will also be related to the levels in the Portfolio and the CEF. Generally speaking, it is quite easy to code material according to language, vocational course, skill, level, even including descriptors in the form of 'can do' statements. In order to make this task easier for teachers, CINOP has designed a framework for vocational language learning (Het Raamwerk Vreemde Talen voor het secundair beroepsonderwijs) which is an adaptation of the CEF.

For small independent language resource centres working with the CEF, it could be interesting to examine the possibility of indexing the material according to the way suggested above. Centres could also consider introducing use of the European Language Portfolio to help students focus on their individual needs, monitor and reflect on their progress.

The Dutch Vocational Language Portfolio, which was accredited by the Council of Europe in September 2001 can be viewed on-line (in EN and NL) at www.trefpunttalen.nl (click on 'taalportfolio BVE' then 'downloads' then 'European Language Portfolio for Vocational Education – English translation of the Dutch version').

Case study

CDI Univerzum, Center for Distance Education, Ljubljana

Innovative practice: implementing changes to promote a learner-centred approach to reading and speaking skills in the Language Resource Centre

Over the past four years, we have implemented some major changes in our Language Resource Centre related to how our students develop and practise reading and speaking skills. We have done this by introducing a more learner-centred approach, particularly in relation to choice of resources and topics.

Our students are adults, most of them in full-time work, taking continuing education or re-training courses. In many cases they have to pass a foreign language exam in order to qualify for a diploma in a different specialist subject (e.g. electronics or mechanical engineering). Therefore, our learners are often under stress from the conflicting demands on their time and this can lead them into patterns of poor attendance, lack of progress, bad marks and the ensuing lack of motivation.

We decided to shift from a 'teacher's perspective' to a 'learner's perspective' in order to enhance students' autonomy and hence their motivation. To do this, we first had to change our own role as teachers, moving from taking all the decisions on materials, activities, media, timetables and working methods to concentrating on selecting, producing and organising the various resources while helping our students to become more autonomous learners.

There are many ways to promote a learner-centred approach in an LRC. We found the changes we introduced related to Reading and Speaking skills particularly successful:

- **Reading skills:** 'compulsory reading' is a component of our courses. However,

rather than imposing the material to be read, we now offer our students a wide range of reading material from which they can choose. We offer a list of around 40 titles, including stories on which well-known films are based or books they may have read previously in Slovene. The materials can be read in the LRC or borrowed. The students take responsibility for choosing the appropriate level and content they will find interesting or challenging. We support them in this, help them to set objectives as part of the learning process and advise them on the different methods they can use to prepare themselves for the reading comprehension part of the exams. We also encourage them to use the Internet where they can find reading comprehension exercises and plenty of reading practice.

- **Speaking skills:** the oral exams used to consist of fixed themes which were often too general to stimulate students and led to poor performance. Often, the student's speaking competence was not at fault, but they were unable to talk about the topic due to lack of interest in it. We tackled this problem by allowing and actively encouraging students to choose their own discussion topics. We built up resources on many different topics in the LRC (often from resources found on the Internet) and, as with reading, put our energy into helping students take responsibility for their own learning. In classes, each student gets a chance to give and support his or her opinion and share ideas and views with others.

Tips

- How to relate national curricula to the CEF levels. A standard setting model (a Finnish tip):
 - ▶ choose a group of experienced teachers and familiarise them with the CEF levels and descriptors;
 - ▶ prepare descriptions of performance categories relevant for the national context ;
 - ▶ enforce/reach a consensus in category ratings through group work and discussion;
 - ▶ compile individual and group ratings;
 - ▶ prepare, revise and finalise performance standards;
 - ▶ compile validity evidence and technical documentation.
- Information and enquiry services – if you have lot of enquiries on the same topic, consider producing *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)* or *Information Sheets* to save time and ensure a consistent quality of response.

Resources

Format

- Which of the following types of resources are on offer in your LRC?
 - **Human:** in the form of teachers, language advisors, reception and information staff?
 - **Print:** books, including learning materials; reference resources; journals; newspapers/magazines; other realia; information sheets; worksheets; posters; flashcards; instruction sheets for using equipment and facilities?
 - **Video (or DVD):** teaching/learning materials; educational videos; films (perhaps with target language subtitle options); off-air recordings?
 - **Live satellite/digital broadcasts;** TV or radio (often for current affairs)?
 - **Audio (cassette; CD-ROM):** teaching/learning materials; audio-active comparative resources for pronunciation practice, off-air radio recordings?
 - **Software:** learning resources (with print/graphic/audio and video elements)?
 - **On-line:** Web-based resources (electronic journals; on-line databases; own site; lists of links; the WWW)?

Content

- What 'content' do your different user groups need?:
 - **Learners (all sectors):** learning resources; worksheets offering methodological aids/guidance on learning strategies; reference material, textbooks and supplementary material; authentic materials (e.g. newspapers); language-learning games and software; dossiers/files on specific topics?
 - **Educators and other users:** teaching materials/textbooks; reference resources; authentic materials; applied linguistics; core methodology texts for language teaching and learning, material to support cross-curricular activities, examinations; legislation; academic journals and other periodicals, off-air recordings in the target language?

Case study

Centre de Recursos de Llengües Estrangeres (CRLE), Barcelona

Providing resources in different formats and how teachers make use of them

The main users of our centre are foreign language teachers in mainstream and post-compulsory education. We have a staff policy which consists of giving secondment to foreign language teachers who have experience as practitioners, as well as proven expertise and a strong commitment to innovation in the field (e.g. through participation in European projects or local pilot projects; teacher-training activities or writing textbooks).

CRLE staff offer advice and support to professionals in the different foreign languages present in the core and optional curriculum, including:

- *advice and support on grants, teaching materials, innovation projects, etc offered face-to-face on request (by appointment), or through phone or e-mail enquiries;*
- *a lending service for audiovisual material, which can be accessed through an on-line catalogue (www.xtec.es/cgi/mediateca_crle);*
- *an updated, institutional site (www.xtec.es/crle) which teachers can access for:*
 - *downloadable support material designed and published by CRLE to promote new practices or to illustrate new educational policies such as sample*

units and guidelines for primary and secondary education in English, French and German;

- *descriptions and deadlines for participation in different innovation programmes;*
- *a catalogue of general Web links that may be useful for the three foreign languages mainly taught in mainstream education;*
- *the Internet in the classroom project (e-learning provision of professional, on-line educational content – www.xtec.es/aulanet) consisting of two course materials in English for secondary education and one for late primary/early secondary education;*
- *e-learning support material developed by teachers or by professional materials designers, on demand.*

We also offer:

- *provision of equipment (hardware and software) for the foreign language classroom to all state schools;*
- *provision of relevant educational material to the 80 teacher centres in Catalonia (i.e. decentralised access);*
- *provision of ear-marked budgets to help schools carry out innovation projects;*

Case study

- provision of tailor-made teacher-training and resource materials and publications to schools taking part in innovation projects.
 - a lending service of official exam past papers in Catalan, English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish at two different levels, B1 and B2 of the CEF;
 - provision of examples of official certificate exams (in Basque, Catalan, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish) at two different levels, B1 and B2 of the CEF.
- Through our certification unit, we also provide the following resources to adult students of foreign languages and their teachers:
- on-line, interactive past papers from official exams for self-study in English, French and German (www.xtec.es/crle/eoi), including video clips for level B1 of the Council of Europe Common European Framework (CEF);
- Diverse ways to access resources and their availability in different formats allows us to reach a wide audience.

Case study

Language Centre of the University of Iceland, Reykjavik

Creating Internet resources by publishing learners' work on the Web

At the Language Centre of the University of Iceland, five foreign languages are taught through guided self-study: Danish, English, French, Spanish and German. The guided self-study programme includes a one-hour meeting every week with the tutor in small groups of four to six students. Otherwise, the students study the languages on their own, under the supervision of the tutors.

The academic year is divided into two terms, each thirteen weeks long. Autumn term courses are based on a wide range of themes, whereas the spring term courses concentrate on two or three main subject areas, from which the students choose two topics that correspond with their own interests.

The first lesson of the term is aimed at orientation and the setting of individual goals. Two topics are selected from the two subject areas, in collaboration with the tutor and fellow students. The courses, therefore, cover some ten specialised topics and each student spends around seven weeks working on a specific topic. The topics should preferably relate to the students' home country. We feel that it is practical for them to be able to communicate with native speakers in the foreign language, for example, when guiding tourists, conducting international business, or attending conferences.

Critical discussions and informal presentations on the selected topics take place during the next two lessons. These are aimed at enhancing communicative competence and developing the topics to the extent that students will be able to create outlines, become aware of the various resources that can be used and plan the content in more detail.

The fourth, fifth and sixth lessons are mainly aimed at developing the topics in written

form through process writing: peers evaluate the first draft, amendments are made, then handed in to the tutor for further evaluation. Formal presentations on the topics take place. During this phase, it is optional to record the activities on video or invite native speakers of the target language to participate. Students complete a final document for publication on the Internet via the Language Centre's website Forum Islandiae.

Publishing the texts creates an authentic forum that motivates the students to apply some important tools relating to publishing texts on the Web, e.g. grammatical correctness, organisational coherence, applying advanced vocabulary and connectives, the use of links and creating visually stimulating documents. They receive input from native speakers of the target language who are requested to write a short review of the article, which is also published on the same website. In this way, the students are encouraged to browse the website using peer-evaluation as part of their learning process.

During the seventh week, a written self-evaluation report is submitted. In addition, critical discussions take place during which students reflect on their learning process and progress. New language goals are discussed and set. The second topic is confirmed or new topics selected. This process is repeated during the second half of the course.

- At the end of the course, the students have:
- experienced a varied range of language activities and processes that develop autonomous learning skills and self-reflective thought;
 - created an awareness of the benefits of self- and peer-evaluation;
 - demonstrated the importance of setting short- and long-term language goals.

Tips

- Encourage users to produce their own material. After being proofread, you can add it to your list of internal material.
- Think of your users as a resource as well, through peer teaching or tandem learning and exchanges.
- A lending system of authentic story books to parents may contribute to increasing young children's exposure to the language and raising parents' confidence in their oral command of the foreign language.
- Think about freeware programs available on the Internet to design and develop interactive material.
- When purchasing software, check licenses to make sure that packages can be networked, upgraded, etc.
- It is a good idea to have a look at publishers' Web pages, as some offer free sample resources. They can often provide you with free copies, especially if your users are teachers.
- Don't forget to track material lent to allow for a fast flow of resources from user to user.

Acquisitions policy

- Do you have an acquisitions policy – who writes it/how often is it revised?
- Is it linked to the mission statement for the LRC, the needs of the users and the facilities on offer?
 - Does it set out the scope and scale of the collection?
 - What range of languages do you need to support and at which levels?
 - How many copies (or software licenses) are needed for each resource?
 - Is there a good channel of communication with teaching staff to ensure you are holding sufficient stocks of resources they are recommending to their students?
- Is the acquisitions policy available to users – if so, how/where?
 - Can they comment on it/make suggestions for acquisitions?
- How do you ensure you are aware of what is on the market?
 - Are you in regular contact with publishers/materials producers – are you on their mailing lists for information about new resources?
 - How do you find suitable resources for less widely used learnt and taught (LWULT) languages or community languages – have you considered eliciting the help of embassies and other cultural organisations, and looking for resources on the Internet?

Tip

- Use a questionnaire to collect your users' suggestions for new acquisitions.

Cataloguing

- Can you catalogue and classify your resources efficiently using your present cataloguing and classification systems?
- To whom is your catalogue available: to staff; current users; potential users?
- How do you make your catalogue available?
 - Is it available in print/on-line (publicly or with password access)?
 - Have you made user-friendly, but sufficiently detailed, instructions for using your catalogue available for users and staff?
- Is your catalogue and your cataloguing system in line with your acquisitions policy?
- If you are considering changing, have you looked at existing systems and thesauri?
- Do your records need to be MARC compatible (for Union catalogue use) or are they purely for the use of your staff and users?

- Does your catalogue allow you to track the number of copies available, their location, whether they are on loan, etc?

Case study

European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe, Graz, Austria

Steps towards the acquisition of a new library-management system for the ECML Documentation and Resource Centre, enabling the provision of an on-line catalogue

The current library collection of ECML comprises some 3,800 documents. Since 1995, the Documentation and Resource Centre has used a database which does not allow on-line access to its catalogue. In 2001, ECML decided to replace the current system with a modern and effective tool to:

- allow 24-hour access and delivery of traditional and electronic ECML resources to specialist and other interested users;
- respond to all the elementary needs for library automation – (acquisition, cataloguing, searching, circulation, archives management, reporting and statistics, WebOPAC ...).

As a first step, the Documentation and Resource Centre studied the current and possible future needs of the ECML and defined the stakeholders involved in the project.

The needs analysis took into account: the general organisation and activities of the institution (the ECML being a remote site of the Council of Europe); existing infrastructure; resources available, difficulties encountered at different levels; and expectations.

The current situation was analysed by:

- interviewing relevant members of staff at ECML and the Council of Europe;
- visiting an annual exhibition of the Austrian Library Association;
- attending an information meeting on the latest developments in library software organised by a local provider;
- gathering relevant information on library systems and providers.

These steps allowed us to acquire a more in-depth knowledge of what current and potential software had to offer.

Functional, technical (multi-tasking, multi-processing and multiscript, multi-location, multilingual environment, technology, hardware, security ...) and standardisation requirements were defined and translated into 'obligatory' or 'optional' features in the call for tender.

- The call for tender was sent to fourteen providers Europe-wide (mainly in the UK, Germany and France), eight of them submitted a more-or-less detailed proposal.
- Comparative tables enabled the centre to evaluate the compliance with/understanding of the tender requirements and the first estimates.
- Prices were, on the whole, based on the size of the collection and different levels and numbers of user licences.

The system selected provides the best and most economical software we could find. It has a large number of users (including the Council of Europe) and meets all our requirements. It also offers appropriate flexibility without the need for a large amount of customisation which could create problems for upgrading. It provides support for all necessary standards and their updates. The company has a very clear vision of what is required for successful implementation. Furthermore, the ECML can also benefit from the expertise and support from the Council of Europe main library.

The next steps (2002-2003) foresee data conversion, re-indexing according to the Council of Europe European Education Thesaurus (although the new system can recover the ECML in-house indexing terms), customisation of the user interface, catalogue promotion and usability tests.

Case study

CILT, the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, London

Putting the CILT catalogue on-line

When CILT's catalogue was converted from cards to computer in 1996, it was already envisaged that the next step would be to make the catalogue available on-line. This, we hoped, would provide users throughout the United Kingdom – and beyond – with a useful bibliographic tool that they could use to identify resources and materials, whether or not they were able to visit the library in person.

The conversion of our records, sometimes of quite obscure publications and of materials in

a wide variety of formats, where the standard process of tying records to ISBNs was not possible, proved difficult. We had neither the staffing nor the facilities for this to be done in house, nor did the company to whom the work of converting the records was contracted have the specialist staff to correctly input information in a wide variety of languages. A further problem for us was the inputting of data into fixed-length fields, leading in a number of cases to truncated information. To some extent, the impact of any inaccuracies in the

Case study

catalogue can be mitigated when there are staff on hand to help the user. This help is not available in the same way to the remote user of an on-line catalogue.

The decision with regard to which OPAC to use for the catalogue on-line was actually quite a straightforward one. We quickly found that cataloguing systems and OPACs were generally integrated with one another and that to try to use a different brand of OPAC from one designed for use with our cataloguing system would be both cumbersome and expensive. As the cataloguing system which we were using did not initially have a Web OPAC, we even considered whether we should start again with a different cataloguing system. Fortunately, in the event this was not necessary.

Once we knew the Web OPAC we were going to use and what its capabilities were, we were able to start on the necessary preparatory work before going on-line.

These were:

- general upgrading of data, including in-

serting locations and moving dates of publication, which had often been input in the wrong field:

- for the reasons already mentioned, this was a major task, but essential if remote users were to make full use of the catalogue;
- writing notes on how to use the catalogue:
 - before this could be done we had to have a thorough knowledge of the capabilities of the catalogue in practice. To best help our users we wanted not just clear instructions, but examples which related to our users, rather than those provided by the software company;
 - creating a page to integrate the catalogue into the CILT website:
 - this was an important issue for us and something worth asking about from the outset if your LRC is part of a larger organisation. This was done in conjunction with CILT's webmaster.

From the positive feedback we have received, we are sure that the effort was well worthwhile.

Tips

- Look for the following features when choosing a Web OPAC:
 - ▶ ability to customise text;
 - ▶ an attractive and easy-to-follow interface;
 - ▶ searching in any field which contains significant information, i.e. not just author, title, subject;
 - ▶ simultaneous searching in more than one field;
 - ▶ ability to select and print records.
- Draw upon existing systems already in place and experts in the field rather than 'reinventing the wheel'.
- Renewing the resources catalogue is an excellent opportunity to review all related systems and working methods (what can be automated, which tasks can be dropped ...).

Presentation of resources

- How are your resources made available to your users?
 - Have you weighed up carefully closed- versus open-access options, i.e. can your users help themselves or do (some) resources need to be issued by staff for security reasons?
- Are resources displayed and shelved by theme, language, level or another system?
- Are resources presented, as far as possible, in a way which encourages user autonomy (open-access, easy to understand, appealing displays)?

Case study

Centre des Langues Luxembourg, Luxembourg

Managing resources in different languages: organisation and display of materials in eight languages in a self-access resource centre

Luxembourg is a multilingual country where more than 100 nationalities are represented; the Luxembourgers usually have a good command

of the three official languages (Luxembourgish, German and French) and a basic knowledge of another foreign language such as English,

Case study

Spanish, Italian or Portuguese.

Our school reflects the linguistic variety of the country at large: the learners have extremely different backgrounds and come from all over the world. Learning materials and resources therefore have to be very varied and suit sophisticated learners or false beginners, as well as complete beginners, some of whom have low levels of literacy.

In our médiathèque students can find learning resources in eight languages: French, German, English, Luxembourgish, Dutch, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

General information, instructions and basic rules are written and displayed in three languages. Not wanting to rely only on the written word for orientation, we have illustrated the classification of our materials by means of colours and icons.

- *Each language is identified by a colour. Pink, for example, is the colour for English application forms, worksheets, cas-*

sette and CD covers, etc.

- *Within each language all the materials are classified:*
 - *by level (elementary = red dot; intermediate = yellow dot; advanced = blue dot);*
 - *by skills (each skill has a corresponding icon).*

A large picture representing the general classification is on display in front of the entrance.

List of materials available in the resource centre:

- *authentic materials:*
 - *magazines, newspapers, novels, comic strips, games, songs, films and documentaries;*
- *published language-learning materials:*
 - *coursebooks, dictionaries, audio and video cassettes, CDs, CD-ROMs, books and tapes for specific learning goals;*
- *specially produced materials:*
 - *worksheets for autonomous study;*
 - *tests.*

Dissemination/promotion of language learning and multicultural awareness

What role can your LRC play in dissemination and promotion, and to whom?

- As a regular part of your work, can you help promote multicultural awareness and the activities and outcomes of projects, associations and cultural bodies working in the field of language teaching and learning?
- Can you use your position as the 'hub' of a network (however modest) to inform interested parties about each other's activities and opportunities for involvement, to help build synergies and partnerships?

Case study

University of Malta Language Centre, Malta

Promoting multicultural awareness through language learning

Since culture is everywhere, unless the language educator has sufficient awareness, knowledge and skills to assimilate various cultures successfully into the fabric of the language-learning context, then the language learner is short-changed. Therefore, our LRC seeks to encourage work on:

- *the attitudes of teachers and students towards various languages and the cultures they represent;*
- *language difficulties of non-native speakers;*
- *training needs identified by trainee and established teachers;*
- *qualities which teachers feel they lack but consider to be essential to promote multicultural awareness;*
- *promoting diversity in the language classroom.*

The influence of culture in the languages

classroom can be negative or positive. If negative, it can be a source of conflict and be divisive. If positive, it can act as a resource to promote language learning. Our LRC seeks to provide language teachers with adequate facilities, resources and source material to be able to promote an open climate in the classroom where different cultures are recognised and respected. In this way, students are allowed and encouraged to select their own methods of communicating their learning outcomes. This is achieved through oral projects which involve discussions on a variety of topics and written assignments where students are encouraged to write about their aspirations in an open manner. Different language resource packs made available by the centre promote co-operative learning, work in small groups and engaging with source material from a variety of cultures.

Case study

In-service Teacher Training Centre for Methodology and Information (PTMIK), Veszprem, Hungary*Raising intercultural awareness through cross-cultural themed events in the Language Resource Centre*

We have found holding cross-cultural events on a specific theme to be one of the best ways to raise students' interest in intercultural issues and to motivate them to learn languages. Apart from school-based work, competitions on different cross-cultural themes have proved particularly successful in our Centre. Our favourite theme is 'festivals', as they are part of everyday life and every culture has celebrations, feasts and holidays on various occasions. This allows students to compare different cultures, raising their intercultural awareness instinctively. Competitions are a positive way of involving not only the children, but also their teachers and often their parents as well, which is a good way of enlarging the circle of the LRC users.

We believe that it is important that students are lead into the 'world of competitions' in a playful and motivating way. Therefore, the most suitable sort of contest for lower- and upper-primary students is often an arts and crafts competition. We usually call for drawings or posters, e.g. asking students to depict a custom or tradition of a festival in the target-language culture. This not only ensures creative and enjoyable work, but also requires some minimal research work on the part of the student. For upper-primary and secondary school pupils the tasks are gradually made more demanding, such as translating, reading, composition writing, project work or quizzes.

When organising the event, we have to take many things into account. If we decide on a drawing competition, we need to ensure we have an appropriate place for exhibiting the drawings where most visitors to the Resource Centre will see them. This also offers a convenient way to choose the best entries, as visitors are invited to vote for their favourites.

We have found the most effective way of announcing events for children is through schools. We have to ensure that after announcing the competition, we provide enough time for:

- sending in submissions (allowing time for postal delay);
- selecting the best entries;
- inviting the competitors to a prize-giving ceremony.

In our case, these steps usually take four to five weeks which means, for example, that a Christmas competition has to be announced in mid-November.

In our experience, the most enjoyable way of holding a prize-giving ceremony is to organise a 'party' for the best competitors where

they can meet the organisers and each other, play games and learn more about the chosen theme by participating and competing in activities. How we entertain students during the party depends on the number and age group of the competitors. Taking the Christmas competition as an example:

- if we invite lower-primary pupils we usually have them listen to and sing Christmas songs, draw pictures, play Christmas games or do some handcraft. As this age group learns only one language at school, we use the target language and the teachers who accompany their pupils often give invaluable help.
- if we invite upper-primary or secondary school pupils, they are given more complex (but nevertheless enjoyable) tasks. During these tasks, pupils use both languages they learn at school (for example, English and German) and they are also 'challenged' with other new ones. The tasks are based on cross-cultural knowledge and experiences. Pupils may compare their own and the target languages' traditions, reflect on recent events, discuss pupils' life and interests, recall holiday discoveries, etc through activities such as drama, quizzes, reading comprehension or writing tasks, surfing the Net, setting up instant exhibitions using LRC resources or ...

The optimum number of participants seems to be about 30–35 students, depending on the size of the room where the party is held, as well as the number of organisers and helpers available. The party does not have to be very long. We have found that a 90–120 minute party including the prize-giving ceremony and refreshments seems the most suitable length.

Prizes can vary, depending on resources available – we have offered free membership, books, posters, cards, stationery, etc. Book publishers usually very generously offer small prizes, such as books, graded readers, posters, stickers or badges. A sponsor can sometimes afford more valuable prizes, thus CDs, short study visits or language courses may be a possibility, especially for older pupils and in appreciation of an outstanding performance after many years of participating.

Finally, these events offer a good chance for self-promotion, so don't forget to invite the local press, explaining your aims and plans in your invitation letter, and also giving brief background information on the theme and your Language Resource Centre.

Introducing new services

- Are there any of the above 'services' which you are not currently offering, which you have the facilities to provide and from which your users (or potential new users) could benefit?
- Can you expand any of your existing services by, for example:
 - including new languages;
 - introducing distance-learning modules or Web-based resources;
 - opening your LRC to new user groups for training events building on partnerships with publishers/broadcasters/associations or other institutions;
 - networking and setting up 'reciprocal arrangements' with nearby LRCs or other LRCs with specialisation in certain areas?

Tip

➔ Reconsider present services and resources before investing more to expand your LRC.

Useful links

- American Library Association**
Comparative studies of different library softwares.
www.ala.org
 - CIEL Language Support Network**
Promoting independent language learning
Downloadable CIEL Handbooks – practical guides to integrating independent language learning with the taught curriculum in an institutional context:
Handbook 3 – Resources for independent language learning: design and use
Handbook 5 – Supporting independent language learning: development for learners and teachers
<http://ciel.lang.soton.ac.uk>
 - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment**
The Framework is a document which describes in a comprehensive manner:
 - ▶ the competences necessary for communication;
 - ▶ the related knowledge and skills;
 - ▶ the situations and domains of communication.
 It facilitates a clear definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods and provides the necessary tools for assessment of proficiency.
www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/Common_Framework_of_Reference/default.asp#TopOfPage
 - EBLUL – European Bureau for lesser used languages**
www.eblul.org
 - European Language Portfolio**
The European Language Portfolio is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language – whether at school or outside school – can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences.
<http://culture.coe.int/portfolio>
 - Lingua catalogue**
On-line catalogue of language-learning materials produced with the support of the Socrates-Lingua action.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/lingua/catalogue/home_en.htm
 - Lingu@net Europa**
A multilingual resources centre to support language teaching and training. It provides information about and links to quality-assured on-line resources from Europe and around the world relating to the teaching and learning of any modern foreign language.
www.linguanet-europa.org
 - MARC cataloguing**
Understanding MARC Bibliographic Machine Readable Cataloguing.
<http://lcweb.loc.gov/marc/umb/umbhome.html>
 - TESOL Arabia Learner Independence Special Interest Group**
Baseline criteria for the selection of IL/ILC materials.
<http://ilearn.20m.com>
- See also 'Supplementary resources' section of the LRC portal: www.lrcnet.org*

FACILITIES

Careful planning can help you make the most of the premises, furniture and equipment available to you when setting up or running an LRC. These issues also have to be taken into account when preparing for expansion in terms of new users or services. Careful planning in this area will also help you keep up with the latest developments in educational technology which can be a big challenge for LRCs.

'Facilities' is an area where a lot can be learned from established centres and their experience – or even mistakes – in the past. McCall and Gardner, Miller and Riley offer diagrams of different physical layouts and lots of practical hints and tips. The CERCLES newsletter profiles a different LRC in each issue complete with floorplan and description of services. Most writers on the subject recommend talking to LRC co-ordinators and visiting as many centres as possible before setting up your centre or introducing major new services or equipment.

The choice and location of furniture and equipment within the LRC should be planned with comfort, practicality and security in mind. If possible, planning for equipment and furniture should be done together as the design and position of one will influence the other.

Premises

Location/use of space

- Where is your LRC located – geographically (in the centre or the outskirts of town) and/or within your institution (within a department or self-standing)?
 - How much can be changed/how much input do you have into (re)defining the space (shape/layout/colour schemes, etc)?
 - Is there room for expansion if necessary/possible?
- Do you have a floorplan of your LRC (with exact measurements)?
- Does the layout, design and atmosphere of your LRC encourage communication but also allow for quiet, private study?
- Have you considered how you can support and promote autonomous learning through use of space?
- Have you taken into account the social aspect/users' need for interaction?
- Is the atmosphere friendly/welcoming?
- Which of the following 'spaces' are necessary/desirable in your LRC:
 - open plan self-access, quiet study or reading areas;
 - space for using audio/video/computer equipment;
 - 'noisy' area;
 - comfortable seating for informal interaction;
 - reception/information/lending or issue desks;
 - enquiry/advisory desk;
 - space for displaying resources/library;
 - leaflet stands/notice boards/display corners;

- plenary rooms;
 - small teaching/tutoring/meeting rooms;
 - language laboratories;
 - translation booths;
 - staff offices;
 - space for storing archives;
 - photocopy area;
 - materials production area;
 - sound studio;
 - refreshment area (for users and/or staff);
 - space for users' personal belongings (coats/bags/umbrellas);
 - toilets.
- Have you considered the following aspects (in terms of practicality, comfort and safety):
- space necessary per student;
 - space to allow movement between furniture;
 - design to meet the needs of disabled users;
 - lighting (including reflections off screens, positions of windows);
 - colour schemes;
 - temperature (including the heat given off by equipment);
 - noise disturbance;
 - position of powerpoints (including for users' laptops)/telephone points/wiring;
 - position and space for servers and cabling;
 - position of aerial/satellite dish for off-air recording (and access to these for maintenance purposes);
 - position of telephone/computer network points;
 - storage space (resources/equipment/personal effects of students);
 - space for shelving/display.

Case study

Centre des Langues Luxembourg (CLL), Luxembourg

From a library to a self-access centre: turning a traditional school library into a modern multimedia learning centre

The Centre des Langues Luxembourg (CLL) is a state language school for adults funded by the Luxembourg Ministry of Education.

The 'embryo' of what has become the present CLL resource centre was a smallish library located (one could almost say hidden away) on the second floor of the building where we were based until February 2000. The facility which, at that time, was used mainly by teachers, was run as a self-contained unit by a librarian who had little contact with the pedagogical evolution of the institution and was unaware of the changing needs of learners.

The increasing number and variety of language courses on offer and the progressive differentiation of students' needs, made both teachers and management aware of the inadequacies of the old library: an innovation was clearly called for. The new resource centre needed to be a more welcoming and user-friendly place where materials could be available to both students and teachers, and where

learners who had missed out on input could catch up with the course or do some revision.

To achieve these aims, what was to become the médiathèque was moved to a more central position – a large room on the first floor – and it was reorganised according to plans worked out by a group of teachers who had previously analysed learners' needs and the socio-cultural context. A computer room with software for computer-assisted language learning was also made available nearby.

The materials were categorised according to the four skills and different 'examinations' and 'coursebooks'. Each item was also colour-coded according to the students' level (beginners, intermediate, advanced). A group of teachers was made responsible for developing worksheets with keys designed to help students to work on their own on a particular language area. By the same token, courses aimed at encouraging self-study were organised, including a weekly session in the learning centre.

Case study

Nevertheless, the whole system allowed for little or no autonomy on the part of the students. No time had been invested, in fact, in defining the pedagogical philosophy underpinning the new facility and writing a 'mission statement'. Therefore, a phase of stagnation followed during which most teachers involved in the 'weekly session in the learning centre' module dropped the pattern and went back to the traditional class system, leaving the use of the médiathèque to the initiative of the students. The cataloguing system also proved an obstacle, as it was not in line with learners' needs.

In the meantime, however, some positive changes had taken place:

- a computer programme for managing the learning resources had been adopted;
- more multimedia material had been bought;
- three computers (connected to the Web) had been installed;
- more and more students were using the learning centre.

The event which determined the final step towards the transformation was the move of the CLL to a new, larger building in the year 2000. A group of teachers representing all the school departments was set up in order to reflect on the pedagogical philosophy underpinning the organisation of the learning

centre and assist the newly appointed librarian in its management.

On the new premises, the learning centre occupies a central position (ground floor, in front of the main entrance) reflecting the strategic role a multimedia resource centre plays for today's language learners. Owing to the institution's more explicit focus on the promotion of learner autonomy, the médiathèque has been structured in a particularly user-friendly way:

- students have easy access to the materials on display;
- in front of the entrance a large picture illustrates the correspondence between the icons on the shelves and the categories according to which materials are arranged;
- the different areas (aural comprehension, video, reading sections) are marked with clearly visible signs;
- introductory sessions have been organised for the students and worksheets, allowing them to practise finding the location of materials or understanding the rules of the médiathèque, are available at the central desk;
- a general manager, a pedagogical manager and an assistant run the centre in close collaboration with the teachers and the administration;
- an on-line catalogue will be available shortly.

Tip

- If you have to 'security tag' resources, think about the location of issue desk(s) / 'de-' and 're-sensitisers', as well as taking into account exits from the building and security systems.

Furniture and equipment

Furniture

- What furniture is necessary to help users make the most of the services and resources available: tables/desks/seating/displays/coat racks or lockers/bins?
- Have you considered how the furniture fits into the LRC as a whole: i.e. in terms of layout; use of space; height of equipment; width of passageways; lighting; heating; ventilation; use of colour?

Tip

- Think of furniture in terms of flexibility – triangular tables can be used in all sorts of combinations and shapes.

Equipment

- Which of the following equipment do you need in your LRC to be able to offer an efficient service to users and make the most of the resources available?:
 - computers;
 - printers;
 - scanners;

- satellite (or cable) TV + reception dish;
- listening posts;
- portable cassette or CD players;
- viewing posts (video/DVD);
- headphones;
- recording facilities (possibly a sound studio);
- language laboratories;
- photocopier;
- bulk copier (for audiocassettes);
- laminator;
- guillotine;
- binder;
- trolley;
- label printer;
- stamps (for marking materials).

(NB this list of equipment would need to be updated as technology evolves)

- Have you made the appropriate instructions and training on how to use equipment available to staff and users?
- Is equipment adjustable to suit different-sized users, where appropriate, e.g. chairs for computer use?
- Have you identified potential equipment providers and do you work with them in a collaborative way?
- When considering purchase of equipment and costs involved, as well as installation, have the costs of on-going maintenance or maintenance contracts; cleaning; upgrading; and possible damage been taken into account?

Tips

- It is worth distributing a 'call for tender' to suppliers when undertaking a major or expensive development in the LRC.
- Secure your headphones down as they easily 'walk'.
- It is better to start with one computer than none at all. Remember that there might be companies trying to get rid of 'old' hardware.
- Labelling equipment with basic instructions for usage will save staff lots of time.

Displays and signage

- What is the key information users need (inside and outside the LRC): opening times; services on offer; orientation?
- Do your displays have a recognisable 'house' style?
- Are they welcoming and is their message clear?
- Are they up to date, do you change displays regularly?
- Are displays/signs colour coded by language/course/level/topic?
- If possible, are you using access-friendly colours and type faces (e.g. non-confusing colours for colour-blind users, sans serif fonts or icons for dyslexic users)?

Tips

- The timetable often changes at an LRC. Industrial Design students at the University of A Coruña created an attractive wooden timetable made of moveable blocks with pegs. Symbols representing the various classes were photocopied onto plastic sticky labels that were later fixed onto the blocks. Instructions on how to make this timetable are available on the APIGA website (www.apiga.org).
- Don't clutter walls with notices as they will eventually be ignored.

Access and atmosphere

Accessibility

- Have you sought advice about making your premises/furniture and equipment as user-friendly as possible for disabled users or those with special needs? (See also 'Access' in the section on 'Users'.)

Atmosphere

- Are you making the most of natural light and ventilation?
 - Can you include 'refreshing' features such as plants or (where possible) access to a conservatory or balcony?



Other facilities for users

- Do you provide refreshment facilities/space for users' personal belongings (coats/bags/umbrellas)/facilities for use of portable PCs?

Promotion and expansion of facilities available

- Are all your potential target users aware of the facilities and services you offer?
- When setting up a new centre, have you planned for future expansion?
- If working in an existing centre, have you considered how you could expand to accommodate new users/services?
 - Would you need more space, or better use of existing facilities?

Useful links

-  Language centre profiles in the *CERCLES bulletin*.
www.cercles.org
 -  *Information and communications technology for language teachers*
ICT4LT Module 3.1 'Managing a multimedia language centre'
www.ict4lt.org/en/en_mod3-1.htm
- See also 'Supplementary resources' section of the LRC portal: www.lrcnet.org*

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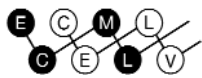
UK – CILT: the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research has as its brief to 'promote Britain's foreign language capacity in every stage and sector of education and training'. It is at the centre of a national network of resource centres and is the co-ordinator of Lingu@net Europa, the virtual Languages Resource Centre on the Internet.

www.cilt.org.uk

www.linguanet-europa.org

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Core partners



ECML: the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe with its seat in Austria promotes innovation in the field of language learning and teaching. Its objective is to make best use of examples of good practice, promote dialogue and exchange between experts from all parts of Europe and support research projects through a four-year medium-term programme of activities. All resources are available on its website:

www.ecml.at

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ES – CRLE: Centre de Recursos de Llengües Estrangeres (the Resources Centre for Foreign Languages) has as its brief to improve foreign language learning and teaching and to promote innovative practice linked to curriculum implementation in the Catalan education sector. It is based in the Catalan Ministry of Education and services foreign language teachers and the network of teachers' centres in Catalonia.

www.xtec.es/crle

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Publishing partner



GR – KE: Kastaniotis Editions was founded in 1968. KE's catalogue today comprises over 3,000 titles and for over ten years it has been the publishing house with the biggest annual production of new titles in Greece.

www.kastaniotis.com

Zoobidon+Communications has co-operated with KE for the design and construction of LRC portal.

www.zoobidon.com

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Network partners



AT – ÖSpK: Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum (ACCML: Austrian Centre of Competence in Modern Languages) is a centre for innovations in language teaching and learning and has its focus on international co-operation, running projects on language learning innovations, as well as networking and dissemination of project results throughout Austria.

www.sprachen.ac.at

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BG – ECET: the European Centre for Education and Training (Evropeiski centar za obuchenie i kvalifikacia) has as its brief to 'promote language learning, develop and implement language training programmes and teaching methods in accordance with international standards'. It is the biggest extra-curricular training provider in Bulgaria and the centre of a national network of European Schools for Languages and Management.

www.europeschools.net

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CZ – CU: Univerzita Karlova, Ústav jazykové a odborné přípravy (Charles University, The Institute for Language and Specialist Training) is a scientific and teaching institute specialising in teaching Czech to foreigners and in training both Czechs and foreigners for study at Czech universities.

www.ujop.cuni.cz

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ES – APIGA: the Association of English Teachers of Galicia is a voluntary organisation that provides professional development for new and experienced teachers of the English language, from infant to university level, at both state and private institutions. Apart from organising an annual conference and short, intensive courses, it also runs an LRC, publishes a magazine and other materials, participates in European projects and serves as a lobbying group.

www.apiga.org

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ES – CFIE: Centro de Formación del Profesorado e Innovación Educativa (Centre for In-service teacher training and educational innovation) is in charge of providing in-service training and support on educational innovation to teachers in the area of Guardo and Saldaña (Palencia). It is integrated in a regional network of 32 CFIEs.

<http://centros5.pntic.mec.es/cpr.de.guardo>

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FI – NBE: the National Board of Education (Opetushallitus/Utbildningsstyrelsen) supplies development, evaluation and information services regarding education to owners and managers of schools, teachers, policy makers and working life. The three main areas of operation are development of education, evaluation of education and support services.

www.oph.fi/english

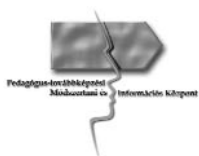
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GR – ILSP: the Institute for Language and Speech Processing (Ινστιτούτο Επεξεργασίας του Λόγου, IEA) has as its aim to support the development of language technology in Greece. Specifically, it has developed research activities in the fields of theoretical, applied and computational linguistics, natural language processing and engineering, computer assisted language learning, speech processing, synthesis and recognition.

www.ilsp.gr

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HU – PTMIK: Pedagógus-továbbképzési Módszertani és Információs Központ (Methodology and Information Centre for In-service Teacher Training) is the centre for accreditation in the state-financed in-service training system. On behalf of the Ministry of Education it also co-ordinates major national projects such as implementation of quality assurance models; enhancing the educational provision for the Roma population as well as development and dissemination of alternative pedagogy. Besides running an LRC, PTMIK's Modern Language Department (situated in Veszprém) promotes innovation in language teaching and is in charge of in-service teacher trainers' training.

www.ptmik.hu

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IS – UoIS: Tungumámiöstöð Háskóla Íslands (the Language Centre of the University of Iceland) is a service institution of the University of Iceland for students and staff who want to improve their language proficiency. The centre offers primarily facilities for guided self-study in languages. It promotes the latest developments in language learning and teaching.

www.hi.is/stofn/tungumala

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LU – CLL: Centre de Langues Luxembourg is a state institution for the teaching of languages to adults. Students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds are extremely varied. As the official seat of Luxembourgish language examinations, the CLL is a member of ALTE.

www.cll.lu

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Malta – UOM: the University of Malta (L-Universita' ta' Malta) is the state university of the Maltese Islands in the Mediterranean Sea. It has ten faculties and a number of research institutes. Its mission statement states that the University of Malta seeks to pursue academic excellence and to meet national needs.

www.um.edu.mt

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NL – CINOP: Centrum voor Innovatie van Opleidingen (Centre for Innovation in Education and Training) Cinop's expertise lies in supporting teachers and organisations in developing innovative ideas. Its strength lies in integrating a theoretical concept into practical classroom situations and into the (foreign or second) language curriculum.

www.cinop.nl

www.trefpuntalen.nl

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SI – CDIUNIVERZUM: Center za dopisno izobraževanje – UNIVERZUM (the Centre for Distance Education) is an organisation which provides education. Our students are adults, most of them in full-time work, taking continuing education or retraining courses.

www.cdi-univerzum.si

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The European public is increasingly interested in learning languages, for personal development, mobility and mutual understanding. In response to this growth in demand among all sectors of society, there has been a massive expansion in the provision of Language Resource Centres (LRCs). These Centres are diverse in both their settings and their target audiences, but they share a commitment to the value of languages and to the potential for enabling learners to take responsibility for their own learning.

The LRC project – of which this Guide is the outcome – has brought together a multinational group of people experienced in running all kinds of Centres. Through discussion and detailed analysis of their practice they have produced this very practical instrument, which can be used in all kinds of contexts. It is both a reflection on practice and a guide to future action, which should be of interest both to experienced practitioners and to newcomers to the field.

Lid King, Director
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT)



Improving support for language learning through
Language Resource Centres



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