

## WLC Annual Report 2007/08

Submitted by Renata Debska-McWilliams, WLC director

The WLC activities in the Academic Year 2007/08 have been summarized under seven main categories: Wimba, Lab, Editing, Recording, Helpdesk and Resource Room, Student Training and Interdisciplinary activities. These categories represent the main workflows in the WLC.

### 1. Wimba

In September 2007 the WLC offered new recording software for the use of foreign language professors and students. After numerous consultations with the department chairs, analysis of several available programs and tryouts, a consensus was reached to proceed with Wimba. The WLC director took the leading role in the implementation, coordination and training for Wimba.

The long preparation and implementation process began in the spring of 2007 and continued through the summer of 2008. WLC, faculty members and IIT tested Wimba. Several faculty workshops were held in the summer of 2007, fall of 2007 and in the January term of 2008. Numerous one-on-one help sessions for faculty were also offered during the entire 2007/08 Academic year.

Training for student users took place on several different levels. Some faculty members introduced Wimba during their language classes, but the majority of them arranged WLC training in the WLC lab. WLC student training during the Fall Semester of 2007 consisted of two phases:

- a. Observation period- students went to classes with the WLC director and learned the basics of Wimba on hand.
- b. Interactive period- after several observation sessions in classes and with individual recordings, WLC students were asked on many occasions to make Wimba adjustments with direct supervision of the WLC director. Students were eventually able to perform the tasks independently. The most intensive training period occurred during the Fall Semester of 2007/08

The first semester of Wimba implementation required a lot of proactive administrative intervention. The lack of compatibility with the current version of St.Olaf's CMS system Moodle created several unexpected glitches:

- Student lists were supposed to have been created manually by each faculty member. This would have been a very time consuming process.
- Access to Wimba for students and faculty would require memorization of a very long link that was hard to remember.

WLC and IIT took the following steps to facilitate the use of Wimba on the St. Olaf campus:

- New links via St.Olaf access were created to simplify individual Wimba access outside of classroom use.
- New user, enrollment and member's group lists for Wimba were created using the registrar's class lists. This step eliminated the time consuming process of inserting each student's name manually.
- New direct Wimba icons were placed on the WLC computer desktops. These lead the user directly to Wimba.
- New simplified links were created to direct people to Wimba via the St Olaf system. These are much easier to remember.
- New ports were opened for Wimba classes to help make smoother voice connections when many users were connected to Wimba at the same time.

In the spring of 2008, the Wimba-CMS system Moodle integration took place. It eliminated many of the previous problems, but the connection was limited and not every voice tool was included in Moodle. Several minor adjustments had to be made.

In March 2008, a team consisting of representatives from IIT (John Champion), WLC (Renata Debska-McWilliams) and Faculty (Margaret O'Leary) was invited to give a presentation at the first Wimba conference. The presentation demonstrated the "Hoops and Loops" we had to overcome to make Wimba use as simple as possible. We received a lot of personal attention from the highest Wimba representatives, Moodle-Wimba specialists, main product managers, Wimba innovation representative, etc. Our suggestions were included in the list of future Wimba modifications. By the end of the Academic Year 2007/08 Wimba use increased immensely and we observed that more and more foreign language faculty were incorporating Wimba voice tools in their teaching.

## 2. Lab updates

Wimba brought more students to the WLC lab. Even though Wimba is a web-based program, which enables students to use it virtually, immediate help offered by the WLC prompted many students to complete their assignments in our facilities. The WLC opening hours were extended. Increased Wimba use contributed to the purchase of higher quality headsets for the lab.

Other updates in the lab included the installation of mini video cameras at each computer station.

Several new software acquisitions were also installed in the lab or the resource room, depending on the required platforms, PC or Mac. These included Comic Life Deluxe- 2 copies, Pulp motion- 2 copies, Rosetta stone for Polish- 1copy, Dialang- European Foreign Language Standardized free testing system.

Several shortcuts were created and placed on the lab desktops to facilitate access to programs - Wimba, Dialang, Wenlin

Wireless microphones for teaching personnel were purchased for use in the lab.

### 3. Video Editing

The video-editing studio continued to support faculty by creating or modifying video material for use in the classroom. WLC served several foreign languages departments as well as St.Olaf's International Students Organization.

### 4. Video recording

Studio recordings – use of the WLC video recording studio decreased dramatically last year. Two general reasons were identified:

- a. the introduction of Wimba - Wimba allows students to easily produce their own audio recordings. It gives students a chance to listen to their recordings an unlimited number of times before sending it to the professor. Wimba also enables students to complete their assignments at their own pace, without making any appointments. The simple access to numerous web sites via Wimba created additional possibilities for students to use available online video materials in simplified form.
- b. the size of the video recording studio – the current studio does not accommodate big groups – it has a maximum capacity of 5 people. The WLC staff performed more in-classroom recordings for larger groups this year. The WLC is looking for alternative video recording solutions. Several meetings and consultations with IIT video specialist took place to help determine the best video recording options.

### 5. WLC Helpdesk and Resource Room updates:

File Maker Pro – the WLC uses the program File Maker Pro as its main database system. In the Fall 07 we moved to a newer version. With the cooperation of IIT, all WLC records were transferred.

Several modifications were performed to simplify the use of File Maker Pro and to use its capabilities more effectively. For example, a new one-way communication window was created and placed on the desktop to simplify the information flow from the help desk supervisor to students.

WLC web site - many efforts were made to create a more informative WLC website. The website was enriched by the following additions:

- WLC Lab and Resource Room Scheduling Calendars
- Wimba instructions and basic troubleshooting
- WLC rental equipment for students and faculty

-Foreign language resources for faculty and students are still a work in progress.

A new video editing station was created in the Resource Room in order to give students access to basic editing facilities during evenings and weekends. The station is equipped with the newest version of iMovie, Sony GVH-700 Walkman and basic iMovie instructions.

A newly updated and simplified Basic Instruction Binder was created as a main resource for student workers. The accumulation of all basic instructions in an accessible and organized form helped students to gain more competence and independence in solving basic technological issues even when the WLC staff was not present.

## 6. Student training

With many new hires, a lot of time was dedicated to training student workers in the areas of video editing and recording as well as maintaining the helpdesk, International viewing and resource room.

The WLC continued with the new training model that was implemented last year. This includes training all WLC students in basic editing and recording. The introduction of this modified training plan had two main goals:

- a. to create an independent and competent student team, which is able to help users with basic technological tasks in the evenings and on the weekend
- b. to enable the student supervisor to be able to shift students from the help desk duties to recording/editing duties and vice versa if needed. This policy has helped to alleviate stress caused by student worker absences and by the rush leading up to due dates for recording/editing assignments.

## 7. Interdisciplinary activities:

Fall and Spring Semester 07/08

The Dean of Interdisciplinary and General Studies, Solveig Zempel approached the WLC director to create and mentor a pilot project of Self Instructional Language Performance, Polish 111 grew out of this need. The project included development of a syllabus and curriculum, research into available Polish teaching resources and creation of tests and exams. Renata served as the conversation partner for the student of this course. Wimba was used extensively in this course.

Interim 07/08

The WLC Technical coordinator together with IIT video specialists were invited by Prof. Phyllis Larson to assist with three 1 hour sessions of Asian Studies Film Classes to help with the introduction of iMovie techniques.