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# *Fidelman on Trometer: At the Nexus of Athena*

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At *J.E.T.T.*, we firmly believe that The International Association for Learning Laboratories (IALL) and its journal, *The Journal of Educational Techniques and Technologies* (*J.E.T.T.*), belong to its national and international members; the organization and the journal exist for the members and because of them.

We, at *J.E.T.T.*, cordially invite *all* IALL members from Moscow, Idaho U.S.A. to Moscow, U.S.S.R., to become involved in the activities of IALL and to contribute to *J.E.T.T.* Use IALL and *J.E.T.T.*; they belong to you.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome the contributions of IALL member, Carolyn G. Fidelman. A member since 1986, Carolyn Fidelman—teacher, free-lance educational media consultant, and student in interactive technology at the Harvard Graduate School—has actively participated in IALL and in *J.E.T.T.* as Reader/Reviewer. Located in the Boston area, Carolyn Fidelman is at the nexus of innovation in practices and products for today's language learning. She begins her series of occasional interviews in this issue with "Fidelman on Trometer: At the Nexus of Athena." Future issues of *J.E.T.T.* will bring us Fidelman on other *J.E.T.T.* setters, practices and products for today's language learning.

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**A**s newly installed President-Elect of IALL, Ruth Trometer is percolating with new ideas and plans to continue the recent trend towards the revitalization and success of the international organization.

After receiving her B.A. in German from Westmar College in Iowa, Ruth "thought" she would become a high school teacher but "somehow" ended up as a language laboratory

director, first at Harvard and, since 1979, at MIT. (How many lab directors identify with this story?) Fortunately for Ruth and MIT, today Ruth Trometer finds herself at the nexus of one of the most exciting projects for the development of educational technologies currently underway, Project Athena.

Many readers may already be familiar with Ruth's work as the President of NERALLD (New England Regional Association of Learning Laboratory Directors) where she can count among her successes a solid membership and a highly regarded newsletter.

To the wider IALL community, she brings not only her experience as lab director but also teaching experience, a keen interest in issues of learning environment design, and a firm knowledge of and involvement in the latest courseware projects—such as Project Athena—and their impact on the learning laboratory.

**Agenda as IALL President.** Speaking of her agenda as President for the 1990-91 term, Ruth focuses on several areas. In accordance with her duties, she is committed to bringing about a dramatic increase in IALL's membership. How can one make this happen? Through higher visibility of the organization and responsiveness to the needs of its members. In the past, visibility has been achieved through IALL-sponsored sessions at the big-name educational conferences and through IALL's journal, *J.E.T.T.* As the organization enters a new phase in its development—fostered in part by the growth of learning technologies—IALL needs to expand upon these approaches.

In her past work, Ruth has found a newsletter to be a fast, informal way to get news out: It is particularly useful as a vehicle for questionnaires

that could give the organization information to attune it to its members' needs, and thereby insure its continued vitality and growth.

**Meeting the Needs of IALL Constituency.** In meeting the needs of its constituency, the IALL has the potential to go out on its own and create a conference geared directly and exclusively to the learning lab professional. As Ruth points out, many lab professionals simply don't have the time or money to attend the myriad of conferences that may offer only one or two sessions on lab issues. Why not a summer conference (takes care of the time issue) on a college or university campus (informal student housing arrangements can cut hotel costs) devoted to the sort of topics we see in *J.E.T.T.*? Among possible topics: management training for lab directors, copyright problems, equipment reviews and demonstrations, getting funded, budget planning, getting the best deal from media suppliers, as well as new pedagogical applications.

By supporting all of these activities, IALL can become a clearinghouse of information for directors of language learning centers nationwide: IALL can further establish itself as a useful, relevant, and authoritative resource for the profession.

We welcome Ruth Trometer to her post as President-Elect of The International Association for Learning Laboratories. We have much confidence in her and know she will complement and expand upon the devoted work of current IALL President, Sue Otto.

Ruth Trometer welcomes correspondence from readers of *J.E.T.T.* about the ideas mentioned in this interview. Readers may write to her at the following address: MIT Language Lab, 14N-220, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139.