

DRAFT POSITION PAPER OF THE AATF TELEMATICS AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES COMMISSION ON THE USE OF THE INTERNET/ WORLD WIDE WEB IN THE FRENCH CLASSROOM

The use of computer technology in foreign language instruction is becoming not only more prevalent but constitutes a vital tool for creating a communicative environment that extends beyond the classroom. Schools are equipping learning laboratories and individual classrooms with multimedia technology linking students via the Internet to the world at large. No technology can be a substitute for a well-trained enthusiastic teacher in the classroom, but these new technologies offer opportunities for expanding and personalizing the educational experience that were unheard of just a few years ago. French teachers should not be caught unaware and should be trained to use these resources in the most effective way possible to enhance their students' language learning and communicative opportunities. Furthermore, some familiarity with the Internet/World Wide Web will become a necessity for all citizens in the 21st century.

The possibilities for research and communication offered by the Internet, electronic mail, and especially the World Wide Web (WWW) create new opportunities for using French in a practical and enriching way to communicate with others and to consult a myriad of French textual and audio-visual resources. In particular, as states implement standards for foreign language instruction, the Internet offers many of the resources required to translate these standards into actual learning in the classroom. The goals elaborated in the national foreign language standards document, *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*, include (1) communicating in languages other than English; (2) gaining knowledge and understanding of other cultures; (3) connecting with other disciplines and acquiring information; (4) developing insight into the nature of language and culture; and (5) participating in multilingual communities at home and around the world. Internet/WWW technology is exceptionally well suited to achieving these goals, especially those which reach beyond the classroom itself into other disciplines, cultures, and communities.

The Internet and the World Wide Web allow students to use their linguistic skills to communicate with others in French, to learn about many different Francophone

cultures, to explore other disciplines and acquire a wide range of information in French or related to the Francophone world, to observe linguistic variations and usage found in Internet resources or by communicating with French speakers from a variety of countries, and to participate in various French-speaking communities. In more remote geographic areas and smaller schools, some of these goals would be very difficult to achieve without the Internet/WWW. Both teachers and students can benefit from Internet/WWW use in French. Teachers can gain instantaneous access to resources which would otherwise be unavailable to them—textual documents from authentic sources, including literary selections, informational texts, and current press articles; visual images of places and cultures they are not able to visit and other realia such as maps, tickets, paintings, schedules, and photographs; and up-to-date audio, and, more recently, video documents. Administrators and teachers should keep the following guidelines in mind when considering how to allocate compute resources, in promoting classroom use of such technologies, and in developing programs for professional development.

1. Protection: All schools should have in place an Internet/WWW use policy, approved by the school administration and signed by teachers, students, and parents. There is a significant amount of material on the Internet/WWW that is inappropriate for students. However, this should not prevent teachers and students from using the vast quantity of valuable information that is available, and often only available, on the Internet/WWW. Appropriate use policies protect all involved, and well-designed lessons and activities minimize the risk that students will venture beyond the limits established by the teacher.

2. Access: The French teacher should have easy access to adequate facilities for connecting to the Internet/WWW, using electronic mail, and posting on the Web pages created by students or by the teacher. All students should be able to use electronic mail to correspond with French-speaking "keypals," thus allowing them to practice their language skills in a real situation. In addition, all students should have the opportunity to become familiar with using Web resources in French, both finding and consulting them, either in the classroom itself or in a lab facility. These

two capabilities, electronic mail and Web access, provide an excellent forum for allowing students to communicate with native speakers from the many Francophone regions of the world, to collaborate with other students of French both in the U.S. and in other countries, and to present themselves and their school to the public.

3. Hardware and software: Several types of hardware and software are available for connecting to the Internet/WWW. Minimum requirements are (a) a computer of sufficient power, memory (RAM), and connection speed for Web use to be feasible, preferably by direct link or, at least, by high-speed modem connection, (b) the ability to download and store information, and (c) printers and projection equipment for using Internet/WWW resources in the French classroom. Any classroom modem connection must be made via a dedicated telephone line. Rapid access is particularly necessary in the case of group work by students. Slow computers or poor connections waste too much valuable learning time and cause needless frustration.

4. Technical training: Generic technical training should be required for all teachers. Furthermore, specialized training is recommended for French teachers who plan to use the Internet/WWW in the French classroom. Training seminars and workshops for French teachers can help them develop the pedagogical tools to design lessons and activities that make effective, appropriate use of French Internet/WWW resources. Questions pertaining to use of accents, correct terminology, location of French-related resources, site evaluation, and specialized foreign language pedagogical applications can best be answered by experts trained in the subject area.

5. Support services: While use of the Web itself is easy, obstacles often arise regarding means of connection and other hardware or software problems. Teachers should have, in addition to adequate technical training in connecting to the Internet/WWW from their school and in solving common problems, ongoing support available in the school.

6. Integrating technology in the classroom: Internet/WWW activities should be part of every French curriculum. Actual applications may depend on the

facilities available in a particular setting, but, at the very least, teachers should have access to the necessary equipment to project or replay computer sessions in the classroom. If a computer lab is not available for use by a whole class, there should be a set-up in the classroom itself where students can send electronic mail, consult the Internet/WWW under the teacher's supervision, and use material that the teacher has located on the Internet/WWW. Furthermore, the Internet/WWW is a tool, not a methodology; the technology must always remain subordinate to the content and language use. Effective Internet/WWW pedagogy should not involve merely transposing traditional activities to the technology but should take full advantage of the unique capabilities of the Internet/WWW for communicating rapidly and consulting resources not easily available in the classroom.

7. **Recognition:** The potential benefits

of Internet/WWW resources are tremendous. However, the rapid pace of change in the technology and the evolution in available resources mean that teachers will have difficulty keeping abreast of the latest developments. They must maintain their personal level of competence, often in the face of students who are more technologically knowledgeable than they, as well as create many Internet/WWW pedagogical materials and activities themselves. Therefore, Internet/WWW projects should be recognized as legitimate professional activities, and teachers should be given professional development support to participate in training workshops and seminars, credit for innovative implementations of Internet/WWW technology in the classroom, and financial support for disseminating their ideas in appropriate professional forums.

In order to prepare students for the 21st century, teachers need to demonstrate to

their students the possibilities offered by the Internet/WWW for communication, research, and personal enrichment in all disciplines, not just in the sciences or technical fields. The quantity and quality of French resources on the Internet/WWW and the possibility for nearly instantaneous access and communication in French and with French speakers, make the foreign language classroom an ideal place for taking advantage of this ever expanding tool.

The AATF Executive Council has approved dissemination of this position paper for members' reactions. Please send your comments to **AATF, Mailcode 4510, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4510; FAX: 618-453-5731; e-mail: abrate@siu.edu**. We need to know if this document reflects your concerns and if and how it would be helpful or could be made more so.