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AUTHOR Luce, Carol J.
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ABSTRACT

Both faculty and students need guidance so that problems in the use of computer assisted instruction (CAI) are minimized and benefits are maximized. To introduce new or unfamiliar faculty to CAI, it would be beneficial to hold a seminar where the novices in computer use could learn from staff members who had already taught computer-assisted courses. Students could be effectively introduced to CAI facilities through the use of a slide/tape presentation. (EMH)

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ORIENTATION: THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE USE OF CAI

Carol J. Luce, Ed.D.

Coordinator for Computer Assisted Instruction
East Texas State University - Commerce, Texas

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Computer assisted instruction catches the attention of innovative educators who, after much study, numerous committee meetings, requests for funds, etc., often gain support for a CAI facility. Once the CAI lab is operational, complete with adequate course offerings, terminals, and staff, one should expect the following:

1. professors visiting the lab, previewing the courses, learning how to request student status reports, and making arrangements for student orientation;
2. students scheduling port time, logging on successfully, completing programs without a hitch, and departing singing the praises of CAI.

Right??? WRONG!!!

Most teachers and students are unsophisticated concerning CAI. Faculty members not directly related in the acquisition of the CAI facility and who have never before been exposed to this instructional tool must be introduced to the objectives

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of computer assisted instruction. A teacher who is convinced that CAI can help his students to learn will be more willing to design courses which incorporate CAI programs.

Also, teachers should use CAI effectively so that each student is directed to a learning situation which meets his specific need; a teacher who instructs an entire class to "go to the CAI lab and complete one program so you'll know how to use the machine" is unknowingly initiating a migration of unmotivated and confused students. At best, some of these misdirected students will learn how to use the lab by asking the staff, and then will find courses which are interesting and helpful. On the other hand, misfortune abounds when orientation is absent.

Student A slumps in a coffee shop booth, convinced that the teacher will never know (or care) whether he completes a CAI program.

Student B finds the lab, but adopts the attitude that he can figure out everything on his own; frustrated and fuming, he sits at the terminal until a staff member senses a problem and offers help.

Students C, D, and E enter the lab en masse, wide-eyed, clutching notebooks in hands with whitened knuckles. The spokesman finally summons the courage to stammer the old routine:

> "Our teacher sent us to take a test or something but we don't know how to run a computer because she's a home

> major and he's a math major and I still don't know what I am but we <u>have</u> to do this or our teacher will take off points and . . . "

The list goes on and on.

The key to effective use of computer assisted instruction is orientation. The faculty and the students need guidance so that problems are minimized and benefits are maximized. The methods of orientation are diverse: distribution of printed materials, guided tours, lectures, workshops, etc. However, indications reveal a problem common to ardent advocates of computer assisted instruction; there is apparently no single way to effectively apprise other teachers and students of CAI capabilities. Printed materials too often escape the attention of the intended audience, student or faculty, when other reinforcement is absent. Guided tours of facilities are most effective with small groups of teachers or students who need only a cursory view of the CAI program. Many people are still unfamiliar with CAI hardware, and often their concepts of programmed instruction are nebulous; therefore, even a well organized lecture will not clearly demonstrate CAI to these people. Workshops, which often cover too many topics, can be difficult to schedule and are unattractive to many overburdened instructors who receive little incentive to attend. To be effective, orientation sessions must be convenient.

Two forms of orientation which are concise and personalized are interest-group oriented faculty seminars and student orientation via a tape/slide presentation. The topic of each faculty

seminar should be specific, each seminar should be as brief as possible, and faculty members should have a schedule of seminars from which to choose. The topics of the seminars must, of course, be determined after the needs of the university have been assessed.

New faculty members or those who have never seen the CAI lab will benefit from the opportunity to have hands-on experience. A seminar held in the CAI lab at the beginning of each fall semester will encourage newcomers to investigate the potential usefulness of CAI.

It is likely that certain departments will need seminars which demonstrate the integration of CAI and specific courses. Some examples of seminar topics are "The Integration of CAI and Communications 101 (freshman composition)" and "The Integration of CAI and Mathematics 111 (college algebra)." These topics might be presented before or after a departmental meeting.

Some CAI programs, such as those dealing with statistics, can be utilized by several departments. A survey of the semester class schedule book will yield the names of professors who may be invited to attend a seminar which presents the goals and strategy of a particular program.

Faculty members who have experienced success with CAI may wish to investigate the possibility of their writing courses. Since a workshop for authors is lengthy and complex, it would be most effective if held at a time that the participants themselves have agreed upon.

The types of seminars offered can vary as the CAI facilities are modified and according to the ever-changing heeds of the faculty members. The meetings serve as a means of maintaining awareness of and interest in CAI.

Usually students depend upon their teachers for orientation to computer assisted instruction; it is essential to package adequate information in an attractive form. A tape/slide presentation can be housed in the media center, checked out upon request, and is therefore convenient for teachers to use. Color slides depicting the actual CAI facilities and familiar faces will allow the students to participate in an armchair tour. The slides can be easily replaced to keep the program up to date. The script of the tape/slide presentation to be demonstrated at this meeting incorporates narration, the brief story of one student who is assigned to complete a program in the CAI Lab, and the recreation of impromptu interviews with student, teachers, course authors and programmers.

Students who see this presentation enter the CAI Lab confidently since they know what to expect. They have few problems confronting a CRT for the first time. Generally, students are optimistic about participating in CAI because they have heard the overwhelmingly positive comments of their peers and their professors. Having been forewarned about the

negative aspects of CAI, such as down time, the students are more willing to accept such inconveniences.

Successful orientation is the result of careful analysis, selectivity, and promotion. Clearly, orientation is the key to effective use of CAI.