Guide to the Language Laboratories and Archives. Records 1952-2006
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Descriptive Summary

Identifier  ICU.SPCL.LANGUAGELABS
Title  Language Laboratories and Archives. Records
Date  1952-2006
Size  20 linear feet (24 boxes, 2 oversized folders)
Repository  Special Collections Research Center
            University of Chicago Library
            1100 East 57th Street
            Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract  The Language Laboratories and Archives at the University of Chicago, and its current iteration, the Center for the Study of Language, provide language learning services and facilities for both faculty and students. This collection contains records of the various iterations of the lab, from 1952 to 2006. The collection contains materials relating to the planning and construction of lab facilities, annual reports, and documentation of research projects. In addition it contains a selection of technical manuals, mostly from the 1980s and 1990s, and photographs of the lab and its equipment. The collection may be of interest to those interested in the development of language technologies, or in the history of language learning at the University of Chicago.

Information on Use

Access  The collection is open for research, with the exception of materials in Series VII. Materials in Box 23 are restricted for 30 years from date of record creation. Materials in Box 24 are restricted for 50 years from date of record creation.

Citation  When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Language Laboratories and Archives. Records, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Historical Note  Preparations for a dedicated language laboratory at the University of Chicago began in the early 1950s. Spearheaded by Norman McQuown, Professor of Linguistics and Anthropology, formal reports were filed in the spring of 1952, requesting a space that would serve not only as a traditional "sound room" but as a comprehensive linguistics laboratory. In 1954 an ad hoc space was set up in the Classics building, with permanent status established in 1955. The early years were somewhat inauspicious – understaffed and lacking equipment, they struggled in a space that
was not acoustically designed for use as a language lab. This lab, primarily used by undergraduate students, paved the way for the construction of a new, dedicated laboratory space for linguistics and language learning. Throughout the late 1950s McQuown continued seeking the resources for a more extensive facility.

In 1961 a Ford Foundation grant was awarded to the project, guaranteeing the necessary funding. A new facility was opened on October 22, 1962 in the Social Sciences Research Building. This new Language Lab, consisted of a dedicated suite of rooms; offices, a listening room, a recording studio, a seminar room, a technical laboratory, an archive, and a dedicated maintenance room. The technology was cutting edge and additional staffing allowed for better access for students and researchers. Eric Hamp served as director for the first year, with McQuown taking over in 1963, and continuing in the position until his retirement in 1979.

In 1985, in response to faculty complaints about a lack of facilities for their specialized needs, the Language Faculty Resource Center (LFRC) was set up in Cobb Hall. This two room space provided language instructors with computers and audio-visual equipment. It was remodeled in 1990, due to a Pew Charitable Trust grant and the renovation of Cobb Hall, and was directed by Carolyn Killean.

By 1985, under the directorship of Karen Landahl, the Language Lab change its name to the Language Laboratories and Archives. The pluralization of “laboratory” was intended to emphasize the broad range of research that was carried out in the space. When Carolyn Killean retired in 1996, the decision was made to merge the LLA and the LFRC into a single entity, due to their overlapping functions and constituencies. The name LLA remained in use as an umbrella term.

The Center for the Study of Language was launched in 2006, under academic director Steven Clancy, in Cobb Hall. This space consolidated many of the functions of the LFRC and LLA, and provided updated equipment and resources. In 2013 this space was rebranded as the Chicago Language Center, under academic director Catherine Baumann. The language laboratories at the University of Chicago, in all iterations, have held three core missions (1) to build and maintain an archive of printed and mechanically recorded materials pertaining to language, (2) to provide instrumentation for the pursuit of linguistic research, and (3) to foster the learning of language.

**Scope Note**


Series II (1985-1995) contains materials relating to the Language Laboratories and Archives in the Social Sciences Research Building, after its refurbishment in the early 1980s. This series is arranged in three subseries, and materials are chronologically within subseries:

Subseries I, Facilities and Administration, contains materials relating to the planning and construction of the new laboratory space, and forms from the daily activities of the lab. This subseries includes materials from the Language Faculty Resource Center and University of Chicago Computation Center.

Subseries II, Annual Reports, contains the annual reports for the Language Laboratories and Archives from 1986-1995.

Subseries III, Research, contains documentation of research projects connected to the lab. General folders contain equipment requests, documentation of equipment loans and use, and project proposals, organized by year. Individual folders exist where individuals have multiple requests – these folders generally contain dissertation proposals and multi project requests.

Series III (1996-2006), contains materials relating to the Language Laboratories and Archives in Cobb Hall. The series is arranged into three subseries, and materials are arranged chronologically within subseries:

Subseries I, Facilities and Administration, contains materials relating to the planning and renovation of the Cobb Hall location, as well as miscellaneous materials relating to the daily activities of the lab.

Subseries II, Annual Reports, contains the annual reports for the Language Laboratories and Archives from 1995-2002.

Subseries III, Research, contains documentation of research projects connected to the lab. General folders contain equipment requests, documentation of equipment loans and use, and project proposals, organized by year. Individual folders exist where individuals have multiple requests – these folders generally contain dissertation proposals and multi project requests.

Series IV contains Manuals and Equipment Guides for equipment used in the lab in the 1980s and 1990s. This series is arranged alphabetically by manufacturer, and then chronologically.
Series V, Photographs, contains photographs and negatives from language lab events and general use, as well as photographs of lab equipment, language labs at other academic institutions, some construction and repair photographs, and a small selection of photographs from summer EFL courses. Materials are arranged chronologically and span 1989-2000.

Series VI, Oversize, contains large planning documents from the construction of the various language laboratories at the University of Chicago. This series includes oversize floorplans, blueprints, and construction sketches.

Series VII, Restricted, contains College Council minutes, financial materials and budgets for research and laboratory activities. Materials in Box 23 are restricted for 30 years from date of record creation. Materials in Box 24 are restricted for 50 years from date of record creation.

Related Resources
The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html

Landahl, Karen. Papers

McQuown, Norman A., Papers

Subject Headings
- Landahl, Karen Louise, 1951-
- McQuown, Norman A.
- University of Chicago. Language Laboratories and Archives
- University of Chicago. Department of Linguistics
- Linguistics

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