



Alverno's Center for Instructional Communication (CIC) includes a complete color television studio for use by students and faculty.

Alverno's media conglomerate

C I C

“In modern life, our unaided senses are not half enough to get us about in the modern world.”

—S.I. Hayakawa

Hayakawa's pronouncement on perception, technology and modern times isn't inscribed above the door to Alverno's Center for Instructional Communications, but it should be. Crammed inside the center are enough communication aids to meet Hayakawa's highest hopes: video cameras, cassette recorders, television studios, audio mixers, slide projectors and dozens of other gizmos and gadgets that help get the message across. Perhaps the only thing more plentiful than technology in the center is the uses to which it is put; there isn't a person at Alverno whose communication efforts have not been aided by the center.

Students, faculty and staff who take full advantage of the CIC (as the center is popularly known) come away with such multi-media abilities as television graphics display, copystand photography, and dual-camera videotaping skills. Even the intimidated few who avoid contact with the center's electronic and communication technology benefit from it every day. The center produces hundreds of slide tape and videotape shows used throughout Alverno, delivers audio-visual equipment to classrooms, serves as the college's equipment maintenance center, and makes the videotapes used in Alverno's assessment program. In addition, the center is classroom to professional communication students involved in the production of visual and audio class productions.

With all that going on, it is not surprising that the center today is more than it was originally intended to be. According to David Haertel, Alverno's media technician for the past ten years, “The CIC was the result of the new learning process created 12 years ago at Alverno . . . part of that process was taping assess-

ment.” Originally the CIC was just that—a center for taping assessments. Using hand threaded reel-to-reels, much like old fashioned movie cameras, the center, under the management of librarian Mary Georgia Matlock, produced assessment tapes. Equipment distribution was then the responsibility of the library. In 1976, the CIC produced its first black and white videotape entitled, “Speaking on Your Feet,” still used to introduce speaking skills to new students.

A portion of a \$426,000 Kellogg Foundation grant received in 1976 offered new possibilities to the CIC. Funding from the grant was used to renovate and expand the increasingly popular center. A color studio, complete with lighting, cameras, and audio equipment, was created from a classroom area. New video cassette players were made available to faculty and staff. A large workroom and copystand were also added. The copystand allows students, faculty and staff to photograph from magazines or newspapers and produce graphics and kodalith slides (animated or illustrated slides).

How busy is the CIC? In April alone, staffers handled over 900 requests for equipment, helped Alverno's computer lab produce a video entitled "The ABCs of Word Processing," scheduled and planned many assessment taping sessions and handled the twenty or thirty students trying to finish semester projects.

The CIC, loaded with practical communication technology, became the ever-present adjunct to Alverno educators' communication process. Assessments, group discussions, guest speakers and theatrical productions were now being taped through the CIC.

It was inevitable that students, always exposed to hands-on learning at Alverno, would come into the CIC's picture. The 1976 renovation created for them an opportunity to learn all about the world of communication technology. As part of the professional communication major, students use the CIC to develop media skills in photography and television. Needless to say, they are also expected to ably combine narrative techniques, background music and visual messages by the

time they graduate. Initial reaction is generally, "You've got to be kidding. This stuff is too complicated." But as students complete projects, the attitude changes from pessimism to pride. End results include educational slide-tape presentations, mini-video documentaries, theme and mood pieces and much more.

According to Joyce Lange, Manager of the CIC for the past four years and recent graduate of Alverno's professional communication program, students are also the working force behind the CIC. "Students distribute equipment, set it up, and do some taping under the direction of Carol (Burant)."

Carol Burant, Audio-visual Coordinator, is responsible for staffing weekday and weekend col-

lege equipment needs. "We're continually training students," said Burant. "They are involved in all aspects of the CIC's operation."

The CIC staff includes at least nine students on a year-round basis. Most of these are students who walked in because of special interest in the technology; the CIC has never needed to advertise for employees. The CIC crew is rounded out by part-time production assistant Lois Schilz, who helps supervise students, bill various departments for videotape (the CIC staff loads its own cassettes), and distribute equipment.

How busy is the CIC? In April alone, staffers handled over 900 requests for equipment, helped Alverno's computer lab produce a videotape entitled, "The ABC's of Word Processing," scheduled and planned many assessment taping sessions, and handled the twenty or thirty students trying to finish semester projects for their communication classes.

It appears the CIC and representatives are everywhere on campus. "Wherever there are microphones or media, we're there," said Lange. David Haertel, who used to teach at Milwaukee School of Engineering, takes over tricky or complicated setups. This includes rear screen projection and audio setup for Pitman Theatre. Haertel, also called the voice of Alverno, often narrates in-house and student productions.

CIC staff: (left to right) Joyce Lange, David Haertel and Carol Burant



In their spare time, staff members edit assessment tapes and copy them onto individual student tapes.

With an eye to the future, Lange described recently purchased equipment. "Now that we have a 1/2 inch compact (video camera), we're encouraging off-campus production. We're encouraging creative student participation."

"With the color portable, we're getting a little more feel for the environment," added Burant. "The tapes give the impression of something live and unrehearsed."

"But that creates other limitations," said Lange. "You can't stop and retape if an instructor doesn't like the way something is going."

The staff, always available to help equipment users, sees as one of its goals "to get across that TV is more than a stationary thing. It's meant to be mobile, even if it means that camera operators are, initially, a little intrusive." Finesse, as this staff is well aware, comes from experience.

Recently, Lange and Joyce Fey, chair of the professional communication department, gave a visual technology workshop for Alverno faculty. "They responded very positively," said Lange. She added there is a real joy to hearing an inexperienced equipment user discover that technology is "nonthreatening."

"Our faculty makes use of audio-visual equipment much more than at other colleges," she said. "As the faculty and students



Production Assistant Lois Schilz delivers a C I C "video cart" for use in a classroom.

become proficient in using videotaping, we can begin talking about (teaching) editing," she said. Alverno College has been allotted time on the higher education network in Milwaukee's cable system. It is, possibly, these faculty and students who will be involved in creating productions for the network.

In the not too distant future is talk of another CIC renovation. Increased technology makes much of the equipment outdated almost as quickly as it's installed. For example, a switcher, a piece of equipment which makes it possible to project from one camera to

another without a pause, was state-of-the-art in the seventies. Now, it is cumbersome and overly complicated compared to the newer computerized models. And, although Haertel's expert maintenance keeps equipment running efficiently, age shows on camera projection quality.

In addition to an updated color studio, there is talk of sound-proofed rooms to upgrade audio taping abilities. Lange, Haertel, and Burant envision "an active learning center" — even more active than it is now. Future plans include layout and graphics equipment for instructional purposes.

"Our biggest wish," said Lange, "is to make faculty, students, and staff comfortable and unthreatened with the equipment. We want them to feel this is their place, but we're here to help."

"We're service," added Haertel. "We're here to give them service." ■

Student worker Jill Walli loads videotape cartridges

