Vive la louisiane
Un État pas comme tous les autres

A rich media project prepared in collaboration with the Center for the Advancement of Teaching Funded by the Mellon Foundation

Xavier University of Louisiana

Final Report
Submitted on October 1, 2006
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The following sections comprise this final report. Each is included to provide a sequence of the
development and assessment of the project, to restate the intentions of the project developer, and to
describe the difficulties in carrying out the assessment phase.

A. Section Headings
B. Overview of the Assessment Phase
C. Assessment Protocol, Including Evaluation Form and Tabulated Responses
D. Summary of Difficulties in Carrying Out Assessment and Individual Responses to Request
   for Assistance with Assessment
E. Presentation of Vive at Academic Conferences
F. Summary of Modifications to Original Proposal

A. Section Headings

1. La Louisiane, Qui êtes-vous? (ethnicity and diversity)
2. La Louisiane étudiante (French at school)
3. La Louisiane travailleuse (at work)
4. La Louisiane fait la ronde (state police)
5. La Louisiane historique
6. La Louisiane créatrice (creative)
7. La Louisiane croyante (religious)
8. La Louisiane francophone (language acquisition in childhood, suppression of French, recovery of
   language through interest and desire to preserve the culture).

B. Overview of the Assessment Phase

1. Standards of Evaluation as Stated in Original Proposal

Assessment of the validity, academic rigor, and usefulness for language study of Vive la Louisiane will be
carried out in several phases. The first, and perhaps the most challenging, will be a systematic
presentation of the program to language professionals and members of the French-speaking community in
order to assess the accuracy of language use and transcription for the subtitles. All the statements
presented on video may not contain "standard" grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary; because one of
the most significant objectives of the entire program is the situating of French as it is spoken in Louisiana
into the larger context of international Francophonie, these variants are not corrected or omitted from any of the programs.

When assessment is carried out, copies of the CD-ROM will be provided to members of the French
Cultural Services of the Consulate-General of France, colleagues in universities throughout the state as
well as in high schools and middle schools, and students at different levels of language study. Because
the video clips vary in difficulty, language learners will be able to use some of them after one semester or
less of study. A questionnaire will be included with the CD, asking all who preview it to rate its
effectiveness in the teaching of modern Louisiana culture, the variety and interest of the exercises, and the
possible pedagogical applications. They will be able to respond either on paper or with an on-line evaluation. Since the
exercises will be included in a folder on the CD, assessment will be convenient.

2. Summary of Evaluation Plan

a. Phase I

1. Press CD, 30 copies.

2. Distribute to students in upper level French classes. Assign drill and practice exercises to students,
based upon materials assigned on syllabus.

3. Schedule observation of students working with CD; carry out approximately ten observations with
discussion afterwards, involving four or five students per group. Focus upon ease of use, clarity of
instructions, student enjoyment of programs, clarity and value of interactive exercises, appropriateness of
written exercises to the individual video activities, and comprehension of audio. Program author will
take notes throughout the observation and discussion
sessions.

4. Send one copy to each member of the CODOFIL Academic Advisory Board. Include faculty questionnaire.

5. Distribute student questionnaire to students.

   b. Phase II—Evaluation of feedback

   1. Read all written narratives; read and discuss with students results of written assessments from other sources.

   2. Compile notes from observation and discussion sessions.

   3. Based upon results of assessment, revisit design of entire CD, redesign exercises, redo any subtitles which are not appropriate, make other corrections.

C. ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

   1. ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

   THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED UPON THE 1-5 RATING MODEL, WITH 1 = POOR AND 5 = SUPERIOR.

   There will be questions concerning clarity of video clips, ease of use, appropriateness of exercises, variety of exercises, clarity of subtitles, appropriateness of choice of interview subjects, usefulness for the study of French within Louisiana, relevance to the study of French outside Louisiana, appropriateness and interest of links, overall effectiveness (breadth, sufficiently varied levels of difficulty, integration of sub-sections, etc.)
Evaluation
Vive la Louisiane, un état pas comme tous les autres

Ease of use

Please circle the correct answer:
I evaluated this CD on a Macintosh / PC.

Operating system specifications and written instructions.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. The minimum specifications for the computer are explained clearly and adequately in the written material accompanying the CD.
2. The description of the program provided on the written material accompanying the CD adequately and accurately describes the program.
3. The written instructions for use are clear and free of jargon.
4. The CD programs launch without difficulty on my computer.
5. The "Read me" file gives clear directions for usage of the CD as an instructional tool.
6. The "Read me" file gives clear explanations of technological considerations for using the CD.
7. The home screen launches rapidly and is clear.
8. All seven individual sub-programs are easy to open.
9. I got lost in the program.
This project has as its organizing principle the integration of French as spoken in Louisiana into the larger context of international Francophonie and a demonstration of the vitality of French in Louisiana today. Do you think that the project is successful in achieving implementation of this? Why or why not?

What are the strengths of this project?

What needs to be revised in order to improve the project?
E. Summary of Difficulties in Carrying out Assessment and Individual Responses to Request for Assistance

The project director experienced an excessive delay in carrying out the evaluation of the project. This was caused primarily by the failure of two assessment strategies:

As outlined in the original document, Dr. Spillman distributed copies and evaluation forms to all members of the Council of the Development of French in Louisiana Academic Advisory Board in December 2002 at the semi-annual meeting of the group. Each member received a self-addressed stamped envelope to facilitate return of the questionnaire to the project director. After distributing thirty-two copies, the project director received only two completed evaluation forms. Both were from members of the staff of the French Consulate General. Since each respondent has considerable experience with instructional media (one works as the media specialist at the Consulate) their comments were particularly appreciated. Both respondents indicated “Strongly Agreed” with all statements on the second page of the questionnaire. On the first page, neither indicated that he got lost in the program. On questions 1,3,4, 6 and 7, one respondent indicated “Strongly Agree” and one indicated “Agree”. Both selected “Strongly Agree” for question 2; both respondents marked “Agree” for questions 4 and 5. In answering the request for more complete feedback, their comments were as follows:

“The mere idea of materializing such an idea means people in Louisiana are interested in their language and culture”; the strengths of the project include “…the diversity of sources used and the visual aspect of the layout.” Recommended for revision of the project was “…perhaps a link to a website where new examples of Louisiana’s French culture are shown.” The section concluded with a “Bravo!”

Although the project director was very gratified by such positive feedback, the limited response, only two out of thirty-two, caused a reassessment of the evaluation strategy. A second attempt at obtaining adequate feedback for assessment purposes began with the project director’s presentation, “Un État présent d’un projet multiculturel et multimédia: Vive la Louisiane, un état pas comme tous les autres.” Southern Conference on Language Teaching, Baton Rouge, La. March 16, 2002. At that time, most of the first version of the project had been completed. Dr. Spillman requested assistance in the assessment process from colleagues who attended her presentation. Twenty-one people indicated that they would be willing to evaluate the first “final” version of the project. When Dr. Spillman contacted each person by e-mail in November of the same year, many of them were no longer using the address or phone number listed. Only eight of the twenty-one could be contacted; only two responded positively to a request for assistance. Only one colleague, Dr. Robert Perry of the University of Richmond, completed the evaluation and provided responses to the questions for instructors. Many of his comments about the program resulted from incompatibility between his computer and the version of the CD he received. Among other criticisms of a technical nature, he noted that the accented letter E in the title, ...un État pas comme tous les autres, appeared as a Z. He also questioned the use of the feminine forms of adjectives in the titles of the various sections; he specifically asked, “Is it la Louisiane”? (This use of the feminine is correct, as the name of the state is feminine.)

Dr. Perry stated, “I think that this project is quite effective in showing the wide range of French use in Louisiana. You are limiting yourself a bit with the same cast of characters talking about a variety of topics.” Among the program’s strengths, he mentioned the authentic language, the availability of the transcriptions that were easy to access and hide, good comprehension exercises, and an attractive screen template. His recommended revisions, all of which were stylistic, included enlarging the font used in the transcriptions, reviewing the punctuation, adding back and forward buttons, and incorporating controls similar to those on Windows screens, making it possible to maximize, minimize, and exit. He found that the lighting was too dark in a number of the videos, and added that he saw two small white rectangles on the screen before the program launched. Dr. Perry noted that the transparent background on the transcriptions, allowing the grain of the wood to remain visible, made reading some of the texts difficult.

Dr. Robin White, assistant professor of French at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, furnished a second detailed narrative evaluation. After participating in the viewing assessment described below, she requested a copy of the CD for her own use in her classes. Upon the project director’s request, she viewed the program along with a young Cajun man from the Thibodaux area. Noting that it is
admirable to undertake a project in local French, she indicated the following difficulties with her viewing experience and listed corrections that should be made.

Both she and her student noted that there is nothing that specifically states “Go” or something comparable in order to open the program. In her experience, “The last speaker got stuck every time. So, I would go from one section to the next and there would be the last speaker stuck on the new section. There is a "bug" in the system.” She also experienced difficulties with the matching sentence exercises and could not get them to work at all. In assessing the photo gallery, she expressed a preference for an interactive display, in which each individual photo could be selected by clicking it, rather than a slide show. Apparently, her version of the CD contained errors that were corrected later; this could explain her difficulties in navigating as outlined above. She also questioned the use of the spelling “Cajun” and not “Cadjin” which is now preferred.

In addition, she noted the following errors of transcription:

The serveuse says "qualité" and not 'quantité"; she says "dedans le restaurant" and not "dans". Serveuse no 2 says appréciaient and not apprécie. In the section Noir et blanc, the term used is “des classes moyennes “and not “la classe moyenne.” The cute couple where the husband is a musician says, a gone...it is transcribed I gone. This means elle is gone. A'gone= Alle gone= elle gone. She would leave if he sings.

Joe Mouton says in the music section, "joliment fa"", as in faible, not "joliment fait". In addition, Cajun French uses attend for entendre--as does Joe Mouton.

In the section ASTEUR, the musician's wife says “Eusse restaien”, but it is transcribed “ ça restaien.” In Asteur no. 3, the statement is “Il faudra and not il faut”. In Asteur no. 5, Zydeco Joe Mouton states, “Pas bien comme mon.. not moi “…je peut-être cause pas (no ne)”.

Professor White states at the conclusion of her critique, “As we are located in the Bayou region, we could not help but to notice the prevalence of Lafayette Cajuns.”

After experiencing these difficulties with the assessment process and receiving comprehensive feedback from only two colleagues, the project director carried out another strategy, involving two more phases: (1) taping of students and a colleague as they used the CD, and (2) distributing copies of the CD and the assessment questionnaire to students enrolled in French classes, with a request that they carry out the evaluation. In the second case, Dr. Spillman promised extra credit for the assessment and received nine out of twelve of the requested responses. Eight students completed their viewing on a PC; only one used a Macintosh, and she did so because she came to the Department of Languages and utilized the computer in the faculty workroom. Six of the students indicated “Agree” when answering the statement concerning whether or not they watched the entire CD; three of them responded “Disagree” to that statement. No student answered “Strongly agree”; this should be taken into consideration when assessing the validity of their responses. The three students who indicated “Disagree” also had the least favorable responses to all the statements. The student responses are averaged below.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5 Strongly Agree</th>
<th>4 Agree</th>
<th>3 No opinion</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>1 Strongly disagree</th>
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1. The minimum specifications for the computer are explained clearly in the “Read Me” file. Four responses = 2; three responses = 4; one response = 1; one response = 3. Average of responses 2.67
2. The description of the program provided on the “Read Me” file
accurately describes the program. One response = 1; two responses = 2; two responses = 3; three responses = 4; one student omitted question.  Average 2.555

3. The written instructions for use are clear and free of jargon. Three responses = 2; one response = 3; four responses = 4; one response = 5. Average 3.333

4. The CD programs launch without difficulty on my computer. Four responses = 5; one response = 4; two responses = 2; 2 responses = 1. Average 3.00

5. The "Read me" file gives clear directions for usage of the CD as an instructional tool. Five responses = 4; three responses = 2; one response = 1. Average = 3.00

6. The "Read me" file gives clear explanations of technological considerations for using the CD. Five responses = 4; three responses = 2; one response = 1. Average = 3.00

7. The home screen launches rapidly and is clear. Two responses = 5; five responses = 4; two responses = 2. Average 3.555

8. All seven individual sub-programs are easy to open. Four responses = 5; three responses = 4; two responses = 1. Average 3.667

9. I got lost in the program. Two responses = 4; one response = 5. Four responses = 2 (Agree); two responses = 1 (Strongly agree). Average = 2.556
Please choose the number which best indicates your response:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Strongly agree</th>
<th>2 Agree</th>
<th>3 No opinion</th>
<th>4 Disagree</th>
<th>5 Strongly disagree--this should be considerably revised or omitted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The entire CD is easy to use. Three responses =1; five responses =2; one response =4. Average = 1.888</td>
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<td>2. The video clips are clear and easy to understand. Two responses =1; four responses =2; three responses =4. Average = 2.333</td>
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<td>3. The interviews are varied in subject matter. One response =4; one response =1; seven responses =2. Average = 2.1</td>
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<td>4. The interactive exercises are appropriate to videos. One response =1; one response =3; seven responses =2. Average = 2.00</td>
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<td>5. The exercises are of appropriate length. All responses =2. Average = 2.00</td>
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<td>6. The program avoids stereotypes. One response = 1; three responses =2; five responses =3. Average = 2.444</td>
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<td>7. The interview subjects come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Four responses =1; four responses =2; one response =4. Average = 1.777</td>
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<td>8. The theme music is appropriately used. One response =1; five responses =2; two responses =3; one response =4. Average = 2.333</td>
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<td>9. The settings are attractive and varied. Three responses =1; four responses =2; one response =3; one response =4. Average = 2.000</td>
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<td>10. Topics discussed are diverse and interesting. Two responses =1; five responses =2; one response =4; one response not given. Average = 1.778</td>
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<td>11. The hyperlinks are varied and sites are significant. Five responses =2; one response =3; two responses =4; one response not given. Average = 2.333</td>
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<td>12. Images in the photo gallery are of high quality. Two responses =1; five responses =2; two responses =4. Average = 2222</td>
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<td>13. The written exercises are appropriate in length and topic. Two responses =1; four responses =2; two responses =3; one response not given. Average = 1.778</td>
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<td>14. This program has potential as an instructional tool. Three responses =1; six responses =2. Average = 1.667</td>
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<td>15. This program is well produced and designed. Three responses =1; four responses =2; two responses =3. Average = 1.889</td>
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16. This program demonstrates the vitality of French in Louisiana. Two responses =1; five responses =2; two responses =3. Average=2.000

17. I viewed the entire CD. Six responses =2; three responses =4. Average= 2.667

A comparison of the averages indicates that the students had a more satisfactory experience with the content than with the ease of use.

F. Presentation of Vive at Academic Conferences

During the preparation of the project, the director presented two papers concerning its development at regional and national conferences:


G. Summary of Proposed Changes to Project

Taking into consideration the critiques made by colleagues and students as well as her own experience with the CD *Vive la Louisiane, un état pas comme tous les autres*, the project director will make the following changes before any further diffusion of the program is carried out:

1. All editing of text to correct transcriptions, including changing the term Cajun to Cadjin.
2. Elimination of the link to written exercises, since there are none on the CD.
3. Revision of the photo gallery, changing from the slideshow format to an interactive display.
4. Elimination of the theme music now associated with the photo gallery, since the musician has insisted on being paid $300.00 if the program is made public in any way. If possible, another musician will be found who might allow usage of a recording of Cajun music.
5. Possible incorporation of several videos with bayou Cajuns, since there is a disproportionate representation of prairie and Lafayette Cajuns and Creoles in the program.
6. Possible incorporation of interviews with members of the Houma Indian nation, a French-speaking population living in SW Louisiana (and displaced by Katrina and Rita.)
7. Addition of a more effective means of indicating to users that they must click on the Louisiana icon in order to open the program. This is obvious to some people but apparently not to all users.
8. Possible addition of forward and back buttons that resemble those used on Windows. This might make the user more comfortable with navigation.
9. POSSIBLE, but not probable, modification of the background behind the transcriptions. The project director does not agree that the transcriptions are difficult to read.
10. Review of all Websites linked to the project. Some of them no longer work.
11. Eventual implementation of a Web-based version, available through the XU website and accessed through the Department of Languages Webpage.

In conclusion, implementation of the project was delayed by the terminal illness and death of the project director’s mother during a fourteen-month period from August 1999 to
October, 2000. During this time, the project director did not work on *Vive* because of her responsibility for her mother’s care. However, the greater impediment to conclusion was the difficulty of finding a workable assessment strategy, especially one that would engage a number of language professionals in the process. Ultimately, this had to be abandoned and a modified strategy based upon one of the sections of the original design document was carried out successfully.

The input furnished by the two language teacher colleagues and the two members of the French Consulate staff proved to be very useful in determining what revisions should be made. Since Prof. Perry’s critique was primarily of a technical nature, and Prof. White’s included specific comments concerning revisions which need to be made in the transcriptions, their statements have proven to be complementary in the assessment of the effectiveness of the project. The project director will work to make the corrections, taking into account the fact that the technical difficulties experienced by both colleagues may have been the result of incompatibilities between their computers and the version of *Vive* which they received. Implementation of a Web-based version of the project will make possible a greater diffusion of the programs and increase their availability to teachers and students of French, not only in Louisiana but throughout the world. This will help to achieve the project goal of helping to situate Louisiana French in the worldwide *francophone* community and create opportunities for language students to incorporate the language and culture of our state into their studies of their target language.