

Learning Link



Exclusive Licensor of Sony Language Learning Software

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Utilizing the power of technology to empower language instructors.

Computer technology is one of the most powerful inventions of our time – if used effectively. If not used effectively, even the most advanced technology can be of no practical use. That's why SANS provides many ways to help language instructors master the technology of the Sony Virtuoso™ and Soloist® digital language learning software. Better yet, SANS helps instructors learn how to use the features in the software to most effectively integrate with their curriculum. By doing so, instructors often discover more creative ways of teaching, which can enhance their students' learning experiences.

There are many great solutions for getting language instructors on board with the technology. SANS provides new customers with "getting started" guides and training materials to familiarize faculty with the basic technology features and hosts webinars and hands-on workshops to



Kim Smith and Ilona Lantos, ISD trainers at the Foreign Services Institute.

further develop technology application and integration into the curriculum. Sandy Hayward, a former lab coordinator, developed a business around the application of the Sony instructional technology. Her business, Language Lab Training and Resource, provides schools around the country with on-site training sessions.

Many schools using the Sony language learning software have developed different, successful ways of supporting it. Vernon Hills HS and Libertyville HS in Illinois employ language lab coordinators to assist teachers in implementing the technology and coordinating lab scheduling; Overland HS in Colorado has a media technology specialist who oversees the lab; and Lone Star College Cy-Fair in Texas has a language faculty member who plays a dual role as lab coordinator and language instructor.

Lab work for five or five thousand.

Now, imagine the activity of a high school or small college's language lab – magnified many times over. The Foreign Services Institute (FSI) at the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center in Arlington, Virginia is

an ideal example of a large institution that successfully uses the Sony language learning system on a dramatically larger scale. The FSI is the Federal Government's primary training institution for officers and support personnel of the U.S. foreign affairs community, preparing diplomats and other government officials to advance U.S. foreign affairs interests overseas. With over 400 instructors teaching over 70 languages and with approximately 5,000 user sessions logging in per month, the multi-media lab at FSI is testament to the power of utilizing technology to empower teaching and learning.

Teaching the language of technology to language teachers.

FSI's labs consist of three classrooms housing 125 computer work stations on a shared network. The multimedia labs integrate the Sony Virtuoso and Sony Soloist software as well as audio and video files from broadcasts in native languages, including BBC and SCOLA broadcasts and Insta-class materials. Other applications such as the Rapid Rote flash-card are utilized as well. The Sony suite includes multi-teacher capability to accommodate multiple instructor-led classes. In addition to the multi-teacher software plug-in, FSI has a custom software configuration with the capability to launch either the Sony Virtuoso (instructor) software or the Sony Soloist (student) software at any of the 125 lab positions so that a number of mini-classes can be taking place at any given time providing flexibility and maximizing the technology use. As a result, the lab can hold more classes at once, smaller classes can be easily accommodated, and there are more openings for walk-ins to work independently.

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"We give language teachers a lot of ideas and tools, but they're not specific to one language. You can use the same Sony Soloist tool for every application and language. It's easy to create the supplemental material...and once teachers try it, they're usually hooked."

– Kim Smith, ISD trainer, Foreign Services Institute.



The FSI labs house 125 computer work stations.

In addition to the Sony software and the lab setup, what truly makes this facility successful is the IT support team, who train the instructors on how to most effectively use the technology. Thanks to the FSI Instructional Support Division (ISD), the language lab runs at virtually full capacity, because instructors are given every opportunity to master the technology and tailor it to their specific needs.

ISD provides an on-going training program to teach FSI language instructors how to best use the multimedia labs to conduct instructor-led classes and create classroom activities at multiple levels of language study and for all language modalities. This program includes mini-classes, practice sessions, and more intensive staff development sessions. Some topics include:

- Exploring Lab Resources – Understanding what tools and resources are available within the labs
- Creating Interactive Exercises Using Audio and Video Clips with the Sony Soloist Software Composer Tool
- Managing Audio and Video Files using the Sony Virtuoso Software
- Creating Rehearsal and Response Exercises using the Auto-Comparative Recorder (ACR) tool in the Sony Soloist Software
- Using Video for Listening Comprehension
- Practicing Vocabulary, Grammar and Pronunciation in the Multimedia Labs

In addition, the ISD team develops instructional training guides to give instructors a "quick start" in using the available technology tools and offers classes in beginner, intermediate and advanced levels.

Taking the fear factor out of the lab.

The ISD trainers help the language instructors become proficient with all the available technologies. By using the Sony software and multimedia resources in the lab, instructors discover more creative and interactive ways of teaching. For example, they can download an Insta-class lesson from the SCOLA website, use the Sony Soloist authoring tools to edit it and

create supplemental materials for pronunciation, grammar and writing. With audio, multimedia materials and internet downloads to work with, the material with which to create lessons and supplemental teaching tools is virtually unlimited.

"We try to take the scare factor out of the technology and make them comfortable," explained Ilona Lantos, ISD trainer. "We have an open door policy. Instructors take our lab workshops because they want to do it; it's not mandatory." From the attendance level and positive feedback from language instructors, the classes and workshops are immensely successful. One teacher's feedback form read, "Class teaching alone will not be enough for students who want to learn languages. The lab has enough resources to enhance communication. I recommend this training to all teachers."

Finding the common denominator in foreign languages.

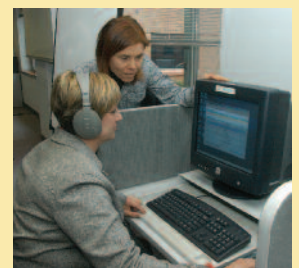
While each language comes with its own set of challenges, every language being taught can benefit from the Sony Virtuoso and Soloist software. It's the means to an end, whether a school's curriculum includes seven languages or 70. The key is for each language teacher to learn how to use the basic technology, so they can take existing material, expand and build on it and tailor it to their students' needs.

According to Kim Smith, an ISD trainer, "We give language teachers a lot of ideas and tools, but they're not specific to one language. You can use the same Sony Soloist tool for every application and language. It's the same tool for different applications, whether grammar or pronunciation, etc." She added, "It's easy to create the supplemental material...and once teachers try it, they're usually hooked."

Of course few schools' language programs are of the size and scope of FSI's. But every school with a language program, regardless of size, can benefit from a well-outfitted, technology-driven language lab.

To achieve the utmost from a language lab, language instructors must embrace the technology – not fear it. As Ilona Lantos explained, "Technology changes the way we live and the way we learn, in general. Does technology improve our life and learning? Yes, if you use it right. That's what we've tried to achieve—to show the different techniques and approaches to technology – to make it meaningful and enrich their students' learning experiences."

And isn't that the essence of what every language instructor strives to achieve?



The ISD trainers at FSI provide support for instructors and students.

"We believe that our students' listening and speaking skills will be greatly enhanced."

– Barbara Foster, North Hills world language teacher and curriculum leader

SANS Inc. Awards 2008 SANSSpace™ Technology Grant To North Hills Senior High School in Pittsburgh, PA

SANS Inc. is pleased to award North Hills Senior High School in Pittsburgh, PA., the SANS 2008 SANSSpace™ Technology Grant.

The grant award consists of SANSSpace Virtual Learning Environment software licenses and SANS headsets to accommodate the needs of students and teachers in the language program. The SANSSpace VLE is an innovative, web based application, designed to manage and share multimedia course material, track student activity, and provide synchronous and asynchronous communication. The SANSSpace VLE extends the language learning environment beyond the physical classroom. With design specific for language learning applications it features a built-in, digital comparative recorder. Students can listen, record, compare, and save their work anytime, anywhere that they have access to an internet connection.

"After carefully reviewing all of the grant applications, North Hills Senior High School most clearly defined how they would utilize the SANSSpace technology to help build core language skills at all levels — from the novice to the student enrolled in an AP® college level language class," Ron Remschel, SANS president, said. "With a focus on being able to increase students' language learning time beyond the standard 40-minute class period and giving students a framework for more interactive and engaged learning, North Hills has a vision for success."

North Hills Senior High School is a public school with more than 1,200 students. Over half of its student population is enrolled in the World Language Program, which includes Spanish, French, German, Latin, and American Sign Language. With limited access to native speakers of languages other than English the SANSSpace Virtual Learning Environment will bring that world to students and engage them in an interactive process that is difficult to simulate in a traditional classroom. North Hills is adept in using technology to share information with students and parents so the SANSSpace VLE will take them a step further with the possibility of 24/7 language learning.

"Our school district is thrilled to have this unprecedented opportunity to assist our students in authentic language development. The SANSSpace VLE is going to provide independent, individualized learning experiences that will truly enhance student learning," Barbara Foster, North Hills world language teacher and curriculum leader, said. "We are especially excited about the virtual comparative recorder that will allow the student to listen to an audio passage, speak and record their voice simultaneously. We believe that our students' listening and speaking skills will be greatly enhanced."



1997

Sony Corporation applies for and subsequently receives seven U.S. Patents relating to Language Learning Technology

1999

Sony Soloist Digital Comparative Recorder and Media Player is introduced and incorporated into the Sony Symphony® Language Learning System (a hybrid hardware/software combination)

2001

Sony Virtuoso Instructional Control Software is introduced to work in tandem with the Sony Soloist Software providing a fully-digital language learning platform

2003

SANS Inc. becomes the exclusive worldwide licensor and developer for the Sony Language Learning Technology

2005

New visual technology becomes part of the Sony Virtuoso and Sony Soloist software suite for American Sign Language and Interpreter Studies

2006

SANS introduces SANSSpace Virtual Learning Environment broadening their applications to include new possibilities for "anytime, anywhere" language learning

2008

SANS Inc. announces Version 8.0 of Sony Soloist Software and Sony Virtuoso Software indicative of over a hundred feature upgrades and enhancements since introduction

Today SANS Inc. continues its business relationship with Sony Electronics Inc.

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SANS Inc. Marks 5th Anniversary Providing Digital Technology for Language Programs!

We at SANS Inc. are proud to be celebrating our 5th anniversary. Our company continues to provide language educators and students with more advanced instructional tools based on Sony and SANS technology. With hundreds of Sony Virtuoso digital language systems in use at educational institutions and government language programs, and over 10,000 Sony Soloist Digital Comparative Recorder and Media Players installed in the United States and abroad, this interactive technology has proven to be a definitive choice for language programs seeking to provide a competitive edge for their students.

"Beginning with the Sony Soloist Digital Comparative Recorder Software in 1999 and followed by the Sony Virtuoso Instructional Control Software in 2001, this technology has grown and advanced with focus on features that address the key language learning proficiencies – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Our design is based on a modular feature set so that the user purchases the software segments that best align with their language program and their budget; there is always room to upgrade or change as needs change. We strive to provide the most robust instructional technology to parallel today's flexible teaching and learning styles where the interaction between the instructor and students is so important," explains Ron Remschel, SANS president.

According to John Scarcella, president of Sony Electronics' Broadcast and Business Solutions Company, "SANS has done an excellent job of developing and marketing the digital language learning technology suite. We look forward to continuing a mutually beneficial business relationship."

In addition to our dedicated reseller sales network in the United States, over the past five years we have extended our scope with new global affiliates providing language learning solutions in places including the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and Libya for educational, government, and corporate language learning programs.

Our plans for the future include developments to expand the language education classroom with options to share teaching and content resources using the Sony Virtuoso and Sony Soloist software and the SANS SANSSpace Virtual Learning Environment.



SOFTWARE AND NETWORK SOLUTIONS

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