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Producing a Multilingual Audiotape Walking Tour of the Parks Library

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Producing a Multilingual Audiotape Walking Tour of the Parks Library

Abstract
Each year thousands of international students enter U.S. colleges and universities for the first time. Typically, these students will tour the library as part of their orientation. Tours, however, are almost always in English, and many of these students have not yet developed the English comprehension skills necessary to fully benefit from the tour. To address this problem the Iowa State University Library developed a multilingual audiotape tour of the Library. The 45 minute tour was first developed and tested in English, then translated into Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Malay, and Spanish. A booklet, in English, accompanies the tour and provides maps and basic library information. While many of the problems of producing the English tape were anticipated, problems unique to the translated version were not. Keeping translations down to 45 minutes, knowing if the translations were correct, and recording and editing the tape when the sound technician doesn’t understand the language were among the many problems encountered. Evaluations of the English tape were consistently positive. Feedback on the non-English tapes is not yet sufficient to draw conclusions.

Disciplines
Library and Information Science

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PRODUCING A MULTILINGUAL AUDIOTAPE WALKING TOUR
OF THE PARKS LIBRARY

Mary Ellen Huls, Kathy A. Parsons, Lorna Peterson, Mary Jane Vakili
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Each year thousands of international students enter U.S. colleges and universities for the first time. Typically, these students will tour the library as part of their orientation. Tours, however, are almost always in English, and many of these students have not yet developed the English comprehension skills necessary to fully benefit from the tour. To address this problem the Iowa State University Library developed a multilingual audiotape tour of the Library. The 45 minute tour was first developed and tested in English, then translated into Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Malay, and Spanish. A booklet, in English, accompanies the tour and provides maps and basic library information. While many of the problems of producing the English tape were anticipated, problems unique to the translated version were not. Keeping translations down to 45 minutes, knowing if the translations were correct, and recording and editing the tape when the sound technician doesn’t understand the language were among the many problems encountered. Evaluations of the English tape were consistently positive. Feedback on the non-English tapes is not yet sufficient to draw conclusions.
PLANNING

STEPS

1. Decide on the purpose of the tour -- Orientation or instruction
2. Select number of languages to be produced
3. Prepare a budget
4. Secure funding
5. Determine tour checkout point and equipment security
PLANNING

POINTS TO CONSIDER

* How stable is your library environment? Updating audiotape tours is time consuming, particularly when more than one language is involved.

* Be aware of the time commitment. Developing a quality tour can take a year or more.

* Is the purpose of the tour to ease staff loads? Audiotape tours are a nice service, but rarely reduce the need for staff-lead tours.

* Will the library absorb ongoing costs of handouts and battery, equipment and tape replacement?

* You will need several people fluent in the languages chosen to translate, check the translation, read the script and listen during recording and advise the sound technician.

* Translating and recording are time consuming. Will translators, readers and recording assistants be paid by the hour, given an honorarium, or volunteer their services?

* Borrow other tours from LOEX to get a sense of what others have done

* Is there a local office or agency which can help you identify the need for foreign language tours?

* How fancy will the tour packet be? Will you use two-color printing? Will tour takers be allowed to keep the packet?

* Does the library have someone who can clean and repair the equipment?
PRODUCTION

STEPS

1. Identify places and information to be covered
2. Determine the tour route
3. Write the script
4. Revise the script
5. Prepare maps and handouts
6. Revise the script
7. Select music
8. Purchase cassette players and batteries
9. Make a trial English tape
10. Have people take and evaluate the tour
11. Revise the *@#%! script AGAIN
12. Make the final English tape
13. Hire translators, readers and listeners
14. Record foreign language tapes
PRODUCTION

POINTS TO CONSIDER

* What will be the tone of the tour? Strive for a conversational style.

* Avoid long lectures. Put information in the handout to keep the tour moving.

* Put information in the handout that is likely to change. It is easier to reprint a handout than to re-edit the tape in any language.

* Are the maps uncluttered with the route clearly marked? Consider using two color printing for maps.

* Walk the route reading the script before committing it to tape.

* If you are planning on a maximum tour length remember that it takes longer to say the same thing in different languages.

* No matter what music you choose some people will like it and others will hate it.

* Make a demo tape and have as many people as possible evaluate the demo. (New library employees make good tour guinea pigs.) Are they able to follow the directions? Are they standing in a busy traffic area at a stop? Are they standing in one place too long? Are the musical segments long enough to move to the next stop? Are they too long and the person is left waiting for the music to end?

* Check with the personnel office for information on work regulations before hiring non-U.S. citizens.

* Should the narrator be male or female? Take into account cultural differences.
IMPLEMENTATION

STEPS

1. Establish checkout procedures
2. Tell library staff about the tour
3. Advertise
4. Evaluate the tour
5. Designate a person to keep the tour revised and up-to-date
IMPLEMENTATION

POINTS TO CONSIDER

* How will tour statistics be kept?
* How and where will evaluations be returned?
* Even rechargeable batteries require replacement eventually, buy a few extra.
* Make sure library staff are aware of the tour and coach them to be friendly and approachable to tour takers.
* Assign someone to routinely clean the heads on the tape players.
* Keep a master copy and a dubbing master of each tape in addition to circulating copies
* Get a local/campus newspaper to write about the tour, i.e. free publicity.
* Keep the tour up to date.