

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORLD LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Gay Zoldesy Rawson '90

This past November, alumnae Gay Zoldesy Rawson '90, was awarded the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)/Cengage Postsecondary Award for Excellence in Foreign Language Instruction Using Technology with the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT). This national award for technology integration in the world language classroom is a well-deserved achievement for Gay, who currently serves as a Professor of French and as Chair of the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Concordia College in Moorehead, Minnesota.

Gay has been teaching with technology for more than fifteen years and was one of the people who founded and conceptualized the first Masters of Education program at her college. Dr. Rawson handled all of the program's online components, including developing the online pedagogy and determining how best to implement technology into the classroom.

In addition to her teaching at Concordia, Gay works with undergraduate and graduate students through a grant from the NSA, teaching

other educators how to utilize technology in the classroom to best teach Chinese. As a novice Chinese speaker herself, Gay's primary goal in this program is to help foster meaningful interactions amongst the teachers and students using technology as an aid.

In the past year, as a result of the global pandemic, Gay has spent significant time collaborating with educators from other institutions, helping them pivot towards online



learning. Gay's colleagues at Concordia were lucky to have her as a resource during COVID, as they had already long begun using technology in the classroom thanks to her guidance.

In February, Gay participated in the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) - National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) Language Advocacy Days, where she was able to speak with representatives of Congress for Minnesota and North Dakota to advocate for four different bills that will help support language learning at the national level. Gay explains that now, more than ever, she understands the idea of keeping languages as an essential part of post secondary education, as not everyone recognizes their value.

For Gay, who started at Lake Ridge Academy in Middle School, she thanks educators such as Madame Suskin and Señor Catanese for launching her love of language. She picked up French initially as a way to communicate with friends in Canada, and ultimately fell in love with the language. She traveled to France with Mme. Suskin at sixteen years old, and is still happily in touch with her host family.

Thanks to the French language education she received at LRA, Gay was able to jump right into 300-level French courses upon arriving at Wittenberg University her freshman year. Although she started off studying Pre-Med, Gay stuck with her language courses throughout college and ended up a French graduate student at Miami University. This was closely followed by Gay earning her Ph.D. in French from the University of Iowa.



It was at the University of Iowa that on a whim, Gay decided to take a coding class out of a desire to learn something new. She explained how this was quite a shift from her high school

self, who was fearful of technology. Quickly, Gay become more confident using her newfound skills, and was hired by Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa to teach part-time and update their webpages and computer exercises.

Today, Gay is thankful to have pursued a liberal arts education, as it has allowed her to have a wide variety of experiences and to connect her other interests with that of the French language. Although she did not ultimately pursue a medical degree, the medical thread can be seen throughout her life, including her dissertation and her travels abroad to Europe, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Haiti.

“Part of what Lake Ridge started and what I wish people would know, is that you don’t have to give up your language. You can still be that doctor or physicist. Knowing a language matches with any profession you want to do. It allows you to do it in more places and with more people.”

To read about some of Gay’s recent work in Haiti, [click here](#) for a story Concordia College wrote on her travels.

