Preface

In 2011, Robert Fischer announced his retirement from CALICO’s top two positions, as Executive Director and *CALICO Journal* Editor. He had taken over these roles in 1997 and led both the organization and the journal to fiscal and functional stability, increasing their influence on the national and international stage. Along the way, he helped many graduate students and young scholars (and even some older ones) find their professional path in the field of language learning technology. Readers will see some of those stories told in the pages that follow.

In the process of devoting the countless hours necessary to making that happen (on top of his day job as a professor of French, along with chairing his department and division at Texas State University), he published several articles that feature prominently in a number of the studies here. At the time he took over at CALICO, he was best known to most of his colleagues through his work with and numerous publications on the Libra multimedia authoring environment. In May 1999, not long after taking the helm, he published a paper on the status of CALL in academia “Computer applications and research agendas: Another dimension in professional advancement.” *CALICO Journal*, 16. This proved to be a fitting companion to the CALICO/EUROCALL/IALLT joint policy statement on the topic (https://www.calico.org/page.php?id=506). Another important work appeared in 2007: “How do we know what students are actually doing? Monitoring students’ behavior in CALL.” *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 20. It offered compelling evidence for the need to employ tracking technologies to distinguish what learners do with CALL from what they think or say they are doing. Most recently, he published “Diversity in learner usage patterns” in Glenn Stockwell’s 2012 edited volume *Computer-assisted language learning: Diversity in research and practice*, echoing the need for more empirical study of learner-computer interaction and concluding that “there is a pervasive need for learner training in order for students to become effective users of CALL software” (p. 14).

At the *CALICO Journal* Editorial Board meeting during the 2011 conference in Victoria, the members unanimously decided to begin work on this volume as a tribute to what he has meant to CALICO. As the theme, we chose a broad and fundamental question at the center of much of Bob’s own work, especially the 2007 paper noted above: what learners actually do when they interact with tutors, tools, language content, and one another through the mediation of computers. Following an introduction by Esther Horn (who, it should be added, deserves much of the credit for bringing this to publication), the first part of the book presents a number of personal essays on how Bob Fischer has influenced CALL, CALICO, and his colleagues. The second and main part of the volume includes a series of ten refereed papers connected to the theme of learner-computer interaction. The final segment comprises a set of commentaries, where the authors offer suggestions for future research directions relating to the theme.

The field of computer-assisted language learning owes Bob Fischer a great
debt for his selfless devotion to the organization and the journal. We are proud to dedicate this volume to him as a small token of the gratitude felt by us and our many colleagues. We hope this tribute encourages him to hang around with us a while longer and continue helping us find our way.

Philip Hubbard, Mathias Schulze, and Bryan Smith