


How the CALL Interest Section Began

Stevens, V. (2015). How the TESOL CALL Interest Section began (updated). On CALL (Sept 2015). <http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolcallis/issues/2015-08-25/1.html>

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SEPTEMBER 2015

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On CALL

The Newsletter of the Computer Assisted Language Learning Interest Section




LEADERSHIP UPDATES

HOW THE TESOL CALL INTEREST SECTION BEGAN (UPDATED)

Vance Stevens, EFL and Computing Instruction to Air Force Cadets, Khalifa Bin Zayed Air College, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

Co-founding member and first officially appointed chair of TESOL CALL-IS



This article is based on an original prepared for the CALL-IS newsletter (Stevens, 2003). It draws on emailed recollections of Carol Chapelle, Elizabeth Hanson-Smith, Deborah Healey, Roger Kenner, and Claire Bradin Siskin. This revision updates the earlier work.

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CFP is [here](#). Proposals on any topic relevant to TESOL. Sessions between Jan. 10 and Feb. 14, 2016. Potential moderators find instructions on how to create proposal pages [here](#). **Proposals are due Sept. 6, 2015.** Past session types, look [here](#).

2015 TESOL CALL-IS Webcast Events from the Technology Showcase and the Electronic Village Fair Class

TESOL CALL-IS is pleased to present recordings of sessions from the Technology Showcase and the Electronic Village Fair Classics. The link is available [here](#).

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Neither Roger nor Vance were in Anaheim in 1986, but Roger's documents state that the first 'Hospitality Room' appeared at that conference. In 1987, Macey Taylor turned a room in the convention hotel in Miami into a CALL-IS Hospitality Room. She set up her Amiga there along with some DOS PCs and Apple IIe computers and kept it open to those wishing to drop by and learn more about our Interest section. Roger recalls that the following year, 1988 in Chicago, Peter Lee arranged to provide computers for a Hospitality Room and union rules had to be circumvented through discrete tipping to get them in and out of the conference center.

The idea of assembling computers in one place at annual conventions for the purpose of presenting language learning software led to the establishment of a regular venue for sharing and exchanging it. Soon, freeware and shareware software collections for Apple, Mac, PC, Commodore, etc. were maintained by separate librarians for each different platform. The collections themselves were brought to each conference; lists were published in newsletters during the year, and copies of the software were mailed to people who sent money to cover cost of postage and diskettes. In 1989 Claire Bradin Siskin compiled a number of these lists into one big list and brought it to San Antonio with her. She remembers that before the conference started, she ran off about 100 copies and put them in the HR. "They immediately disappeared, and people kept demanding copies ... so we took one master copy and put it at the central handouts booth. The funny thing then was that the master copy kept disappearing from the handouts booth, and they kept asking me for a new master copy! None of us had anticipated the great demand for the list, and this experience was probably what led Deborah and Norm to start the first 'official' CALL-IS list the following year." (quoted from email 17 May 2003, with Claire's permission)

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By now commercial vendors at TESOL had begun to take what was by-and-large a healthy interest in CALL-IS and the librarians were becoming heir to boxes of donated commercial software that had to be stored between conferences and then shipped to the next venue. In 1993, Deborah Healey and Jim Buell greatly aided the management of this situation by arranging through Lloyd Holliday at La Trobe University in Australia for the CALL-IS public domain, shareware, and commercial demo software collections (and the electronic version of the CALL-IS Software List) to become available via FTP from CELIA (Computer Enhanced Language Instruction Archive; the collection was retrievable on May 15, 2003 from <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/education/celia/celia.html> but was found to be timing out after May 20, 2003). Then in 1996, with the instigation of Elizabeth Hanson-Smith, these materials were ported to a CD-ROM which was published by TESOL, and listed in their catalog as late as 2004, just below the software list (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The last Internet Archive snapshot of <http://www.tesol.org/pubs/catalog/tech.html> was made July 26, 2004 [here](#).

As the Hospitality Room grew into a place where conference delegates could come each year to try out a growing collection of commercial and non-commercial software in a setting free of promotion and bias, the job of arranging for the computers at each conference, installing software on them, and maintaining and networking them grew increasingly complex and labor-intensive. Roger mentions the guitar jams we used to have late at night in the CALL Hospitality Rooms. These occurred because CALL-IS volunteers and steering committee members used to have to work late nights after each conference day to maintain the computer software and networking in the HR (networking was a late development - initially we resorted to 'sneaker-net' - and Deborah nostalgically recalls hours happily "spent copying those damn shareware floppies" (quoted from email 16 May 2003, with Deborah's permission). We would keep our guitars under the tables during the day and send out for food and drinks as darkness fell. Early to late evening we'd maintain and copy, and man you shoulda heard us, just about midnight.

Roger notes that 1997 in Orlando was the year that the HR became known as the EV, or Electronic Village. Eventually the CALL-IS has succeeded in getting TESOL to contract out for setup, maintenance, and network administration of the EV, and CALL-IS organizers can now walk away from the conference like everyone else after the last discussion session has wrapped up. This has led to marked improvements in the stress and sleep deprivation levels of the organizers, but also to a loss of what used to be a great source of entertainment and community spirit in what was once a much smaller and very close-knit CALL-IS. But size has its advantages as well, and it is gratifying to see events set in motion so many years ago develop into an interest section whose many offshoots have become institutionalized for the benefit to so many people.

And that is how CALL IS began. But there's a lot more, much of it recorded in Roger's "The CALL Interest Section Community History" (Kenner, 2000, 2003). If you read through this, you can't fail to notice first that Roger has taken great pains to document our beginnings and maintain that record. You also can't fail to notice that as the years go on, the documentation gets sparser. Who is going to fill in the gaps and refresh the record before memory fades? Could it be you?

References

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NOTE: This article has not been copy edited due to its length.

Vance Stevens teaches EFL at the UAE Air College in Al Ain. He had taught ESOL in Saudi Arabia, Hawaii, and Oman, serving as CALL specialist and coordinator, before moving to California briefly to work in software development. He returned to the Middle East as Amideast consultant and CALL coordinator for a language school before becoming lecturer in computing at Petroleum Institute, both in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Meanwhile he founded the online community Webheads in Action resulting in many online professional development endeavors including Learning2gether, podcasting weekly since 2010. He is on the editorial board of CALL Journal and has served on the coordination team of Electronic Village Online and as editor of On the Internet, TESL-EJ since 2003.

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As the Hospitality Room grew into a place where conference delegates could come each year to try out a growing collection of commercial and non-commercial software in a setting free of promotion and bias, the job of arranging for the computers at each conference, installing software on them, and maintaining and networking them grew increasingly complex and labor-intensive. Roger mentions the guitar jams we used to have late at night in the CALL Hospitality Rooms. These occurred because CALL-IS volunteers and steering committee members used to have to work late nights after each conference day to maintain the computer software and networking in the HR (networking was a late development - initially we resorted to 'sneaker-net' - and Deborah nostalgically recalls hours happily "spent copying those damn

shareware floppies" (quoted from email 16 May 2003, with Deborah's permission). We would keep our guitars under the tables during the day and send out for food and drinks as darkness fell. Early to late evening we'd maintain and copy, and man you shoulda heard us, just about midnight.

Roger notes that 1997 in Orlando was the year that the HR became known as the EV, or Electronic Village. Eventually the CALL-IS has succeeded in getting TESOL to contract out for setup, maintenance, and network administration of the EV, and CALL-IS organizers can now walk away from the conference like everyone else after the last discussion session has wrapped up. This has led to marked improvements in the stress and sleep deprivation levels of the organizers, but also to a loss of what used to be a great source of entertainment and community spirit in what was once a much smaller and very close-knit CALL-IS. But size has its advantages as well, and it is gratifying to see events set in motion so many years ago develop into an interest section whose many offshoots have become institutionalized for the benefit of so many people.

And that is how CALL IS began. But there's a lot more, much of it recorded in Roger's "The CALL Interest Section Community History" (Kenner, 2000, 2003). If you read through this, you can't fail to notice first that Roger has taken great pains to document our beginnings and maintain that record. You also can't fail to notice that as the years go on, the documentation gets sparser. Who is going to fill in the gaps and refresh the record before memory fades? Could it be you?

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NOTE: This article has not been copy edited due to its length.

Vance Stevens teaches EFL at the UAE Air College in Al Ain. He had taught ESOL in Saudi Arabia, Hawaii, and Oman, serving as CALL specialist and coordinator, before moving to California briefly to work in software development. He returned to the Middle East as Amideast consultant and CALL coordinator for a language school before becoming lecturer in computing at Petroleum Institute, both in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Meanwhile he founded the online community Webheads in Action resulting in many online professional development endeavors including Learning2gether, podcasting weekly since 2010. He is on the editorial board of CALL Journal and has served on the coordination team of Electronic Village Online and as editor of On the Internet, TESL-EJ since 2003.

Links that are no longer working have been deactivated in the References above (and below).

The material in this article derives from

Stevens, V. (2003). **How the CALL interest section began.** *On CALL News*, 21:1 (October 2003).

The originally submitted version of the 2003 article was prepared at the request of Chris Sauer, CALL-IS Newsletter Editor, May 2003. It appeared in an email sent to all CALL-IS members in Fall 2003 via the TESOL organization. Here is its publication history:

- The originally submitted version appears on my website here,
http://www.vancestevens.com/papers/tesol/newsletter/callis_began.htm
 The article itself appeared here
[http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/interest-section-newsletters/on-call/2011/10/27/on-call-news-volume-21-1-\(october-2003\)](http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/interest-section-newsletters/on-call/2011/10/27/on-call-news-volume-21-1-(october-2003)) but was returning 404 in July 2021. A version of that link from Aug 26, 2017 has been archived here:
[https://web.archive.org/web/20170826214147/http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/interest-section-newsletters/on-call/2011/10/27/on-call-news-volume-21-1-\(october-2003\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20170826214147/http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/interest-section-newsletters/on-call/2011/10/27/on-call-news-volume-21-1-(october-2003)) ; however the link to the [Articles](#) in that archive was not preserved.
- The article was reprinted as Stevens, V. (2003-2009). How the TESOL CALL Interest Section began, in *On CALL News*, 25:1 (March 2009) at
[https://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/interest-section-newsletters/on-call/2011/10/28/on-call-news-volume-25-1-\(march-2009\)](https://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/interest-section-newsletters/on-call/2011/10/28/on-call-news-volume-25-1-(march-2009)). The bookmarks there didn't work but you could scroll down to find the article. The link was also returning 404 in July 2021. A version of that URL was archived on Aug 26, 2017 here
[https://web.archive.org/web/20170826224233/https://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/interest-section-newsletters/on-call/2011/10/28/on-call-news-volume-25-1-\(march-2009\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20170826224233/https://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/interest-section-newsletters/on-call/2011/10/28/on-call-news-volume-25-1-(march-2009)) ; however the link to [How the TESOL CALL Interest Section Began](#) was not preserved.
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