

May 2017 – Volume 21, Number 1

A Brief History of CALL-IS Webcasting in the New Millennium

***** On the Internet *****

Christine Bauer-Ramazani

Saint Michael's College
Colchester, Vermont, USA
<cbauer-ramazani@smcvt.edu>

Vance Stevens

Higher Colleges of Technology / CERT /
KBZAC
Al Ain, UAE
<vankestev@gmail.com>

Jennifer Meyer

Williamson County Schools
Franklin, Tennessee, USA
<jennylynn41069@gmail.com>

Jack Watson

University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, NB, Canada
<jack.watson@unb.ca>

Abraham Reshad

Ohio University
Athens, Ohio, USA
<reshada@ohio.edu>

Introduction

English teaching has had a natural affinity for the online environment, which grows with each new development in Web 2.0 connectivity and increasing ubiquity of social networking. Much has been written since the new millennium began about this trend, but this is not what this article is about. Instead, this article is about how teachers who experiment with putting their students in connected spaces for the purpose of promoting authentic and motivating communication have been sharing their expertise with these tools with colleagues in both online and face-to-face (f2f) conferences. Furthermore, as the internet has become increasingly available at f2f conferences, it has become apparent to attendees that they could be using these same tools to share their presentations in real time with colleagues not able to attend.

IATEFL has been increasing online access over the years, reaching by now the point where one can see recordings of about forty presentations from their 2017 conference in Glasgow. Elsewhere on the site you can find dozens of interviews recorded with speakers at the conference. In allowing open access to parts of the conference, IATEFL has taken significant steps in making rock stars of their main presenters and promoting connectivity

with their membership. I argue in Stevens (2016; 2017a) that allowing audiences to access conference presentations online for free might serve not to suppress attendance at f2f conferences, but to incentivise people to come and meet their thought-leaders in person, which might in turn reverse declines in membership in TESOL, the American counterpart to IATEFL.

Fortunately, in TESOL, similar initiatives have been put forward over the past two decades by the members of the CALL Interest Section (CALL-IS). This article is crowd-sourced by leaders of that initiative in CALL-IS, and seeks to tell the story in first person of how this movement has been growing since the turn of the century.

The authors, in order of appearance, are first, Vance Stevens, a founding member of CALL-IS who has been experimenting with computer-mediated communications tools for the past twenty years in teaching EFL online and connecting colleagues in professional development. Next, we hear from Christine Bauer-Ramazani, who was instrumental in starting both the Electronic Village Online in 2001, and CALL-IS webcasting in 2006. Next, Jack Watson continues the story, with his taking over the CALL-IS Webcast Coordinator role from Christine and Chris Sauer. He is followed by the next CALL-IS webcasting coordinator Abe Reshad, who initiated a radical shift in our approach to webcasting through skillful utilization of YouTube Live. Abe then hands off to Jennifer Meyer, one of our most astute webcasting newbies, who explains how she learned the ropes well enough to take the baton of CALL-IS Webcast Coordinator from Abe forward to the TESOL 2018 conference in Chicago.

Let the stories begin...

Vance Stevens on precursors to CALL-IS webcasting

I started out in online teaching when I accepted an offer to teach courses through email late last century for Study.com, a website run by David Winet, who essentially put teachers in touch with students in online classes (Winet, 2015). Thanks to one of my students, my classes moved on to the Web 1.0, and eventually we met in The Palace, an avatar-based chat site giving the impression of 3-D mobility through clicking on a 2D screen and transporting to spaces seemingly behind doors. In this space I met two other teachers, Maggie Doty and Michael Coghlan, and eventually we formed Writing for Webheads (WfW), where we logged our online sessions within The Palace starting in 1998. Soon we were experimenting with a range of synchronous online spaces, including real-time voice chat which we implemented through a free browser plug-in called HearMe. We started taking our show on the road, participating first in online conferences where participants communicated with our students in real time, and then to TESOL conferences, where f2f participants there had a chance to meet our students.

Our first “webcast” from a TESOL conference was at a New York TESOL 1999 Web Faire in the CALL-IS Electronic Village. Maggie, Michael, and some of our students appeared at the Palace and chatted with passers-by from the conference, who were charmed by the novelty of the occasion. By the time of the 2000 TESOL Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, we had gained enough attention from teaching peers that I was invited to present a live online demonstration of our WfW class as part of an invited presenters session. Michael, Maggie, and two students from China performed online on a big screen

set up to project my desktop before an audience of around 100 conference delegates, plus a few online colleagues who knew to stop in online.

Up to that point, we were bringing students and teachers into f2f conferences but not broadcasting the experience out to the online participants in a way that would scale. However, in 2002, at the TESOL conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, we mounted what might have been the first webcast from TESOL by streaming panelists' presentations from the CALL-IS Academic Session event entitled "Theory Meets Practice in CALL" (an 'academic session' is a slot on the TESOL conference program given to each interest section so they can organize a symposium on a topic of timely interest to that interest section). The online audience listened to the panelists' presentations and communicated with us via Yahoo Messenger voice and text chat. The breakthrough came when we took a question in the f2f session from the online text chat and relayed the answer from the presenter to the participant online. We felt truly connected at that moment, and the event is archived.

By then, EVO, or Electronic Village Online, had been "started as a TESOL Special Project in 1999 and then founded in 2000 by Christine Bauer-Ramazani, Tom Robb, and Susan Gaer" (according to academics.smcvt.edu/cbauer-ramazani/TESOL/EVOL/portal.htm; see also Hanson-Smith and Bauer-Ramazani, 2004). In 2001 EVO held its first sessions, and in 2002 I moderated a session called Webheads in Action (WiA), which modeled for teachers the techniques in community formation and connectivity which had been used with online students in Writing for Webheads.

Some participants in the WiA session came together both online and f2f at the 2003 TESOL conference in Baltimore, Maryland in a colloquium called a "Case study of a community of practice." Because war had just broken out in Iraq, many panelists had decided not to travel to Baltimore, so we purchased a phone line from the Convention Center and brought the four missing presenters to our colloquium remotely using Wimba for voice presentations and Yahoo for webcam broadcasts. We also held two sessions in the CALL-IS Electronic Village (EV)¹ where we webcast from the EV to those in our distributed community of practice worldwide.

In 2004 in Long Beach, Webheads presented a Pre-Convention Institute on Enhancing Online Communities with Voice and Webcams. This was a six-hour event, in which five colleagues and I arranged for participants to experience hands-on use of synchronous text and voice and webcam enhanced chat. Some online participants joined us (and one of our presenters joined us at a distance). We later gave an interactive webcast event from the Electronic Village. For this, we set up a webcam and used voice chat software to enable the local and distant participants to communicate and interact with one another in the EV.

By the time of the 2005 TESOL conference in San Antonio, Texas, Webheads in Action had hit a stride where we were using a robust TappedIn text chat, a presentation room in Elluminate (since purchased by Bb Collaborate) provided to us on a long-running grant from LearningTimes, plus Yahoo Messenger for webcams of multiple participants. There were many connected Webheads in Action events scheduled, including our webcast of a CALL-IS academic session entitled Future Visions of CALL, with Susan Gaer, Deborah Healey, Karen Price, and Jim Duber, and I, streamed out to the world using Elluminate.

I missed the 2006 conference in Tampa, Florida, where Christine Bauer-Ramazani initiated what turned out to be a regular recurrence of webcasting from CALL-IS events, so she takes the story from here.

Christine Bauer-Ramazani on CALL-IS Webcasting, 2006 – 2009

Christine has compiled a table with links to CALL-IS webcasts portal pages from 2006 to 2017, each with links to webcast spaces, instructions, archived chat scripts, and audio/video recordings (Table 1).

Table 1. Links to webcasts through the years (2006-2017)

2006	2009	2012	2015
2007	2010	2013	2016
2008	2011	2014	2017

See Appendix 1 for full links to these webcast portals

The first webcasts for the CALL Interest Section (CALL-IS) were inspired by the online broadcasts of events at the Electronic Village Online (EVO), which connected participants from all over the world in online professional development seminars. For the first time in 2006, the CALL-IS in its capacity as an interest session reached out to participants who were unable to attend the sessions offered at the Electronic Village as part of the 40th Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit in Tampa, Florida, USA. The goal of these webcasts was similar to that of EVO, namely to extend the professional development offered by the events organized by the CALL-IS at each TESOL convention to all ESL/EFL teachers in the world. As co-founder and lead coordinator of EVO until 2004, then CALL-IS Steering Committee member, Christine Bauer-Ramazani, saw a unique opportunity to connect these two branches of the CALL-IS by broadcasting sessions from the Electronic Village at the TESOL conventions and organizing the first of many CALL-IS webcasts.

The venue for these first webcasts was WorldBridges, managed and operated by Jeff Lebow (see Lebow, 2006). Presentations were delivered via Skypecast, and WorldBridges captured the feed and streamed it worldwide to teachers interested in using technology for teaching. The “Internet Fair Classics,” one of the main events of the Electronic Village, was chosen as venue for broadcasting four presentations that had had a large number of attendees the previous year. Each session ran for forty minutes and was broadcast in audio. In addition, moderators Chris Sauer and Christine Bauer-Ramazani also interviewed two leading experts in CALL, Randall Davis and Tom Robb, about their

instructional uses of CALL. In that first year, the webcasts from the Electronic Village at TESOL counted 62 attendees in the online audience.

The following year at TESOL 2007 in Seattle, Washington, six presentations from the EV Fair Classics of the Electronic Village were webcast, using the now defunct audio platform Alado.net as the venue (Andrew Pincon of Alado had graciously donated use of this proprietary web conference space to WiA, EVO, and CALL-IS at no charge). The six sessions followed the schedule of the EV Fair Classics, with each presentation lasting thirty minutes, then repeated. Participants in the audience consisted mainly of Webheads community members as well as moderators and Electronic Village Online participants, but word of these virtual sessions from the Electronic Village at the annual TESOL conventions continued to spread, increasing audience participation significantly each year.

Although it was not on the CALL-IS webcast schedule, Vance Stevens streamed independently from Seattle in 2007, from a colloquium entitled: "CALL-IS Electronic Village Online Communities". The event, which was itself about webcasting from EVO, was streamed live via Skypecast over the Worldbridges network.

As of 2009, programming for the webcasts was expanded to include major sessions held in the Technology Showcase, adjacent to the Electronic Village room at the TESOL convention, such as the CALL-IS Academic Session as well as InterSection sessions in which the CALL-IS participates jointly with other interest sections in TESOL. This expansion required careful scheduling, for the one virtual web conference room available for webcasts soon became too limited to accommodate the increase in programming of the CALL-IS.

For the 2010 webcasts, a more durable and permanent solution was found with Elluminate, now called Blackboard Collaborate. This was the web conferencing platform with audio/video which Webheads in Action had been using to webcast some of its events, such as its free online 36-hour Webheads in Action Online Convergences held in 2005, 2007, and 2009 (see Stevens, 2012). Our benefactor (LearningTimes) provided free and comprehensive support for all of these endeavors as a professional courtesy, considering the open and non-profit nature of EVO, WiA, and CALL-IS. As coordinator of the WiA community of practice, Vance Stevens acted as liaison with LearningTimes, to arrange the use of the Webheads Virtual Office, the Elluminate room dedicated to WiA, for use by the CALL-IS, and whenever asked, LearningTimes has provided additional rooms so that we could cover simultaneous events, a level of support that has always been highly appreciated.

Recordings of the presentations were vastly improved with this platform as they included the slides, audio, and video, as well as chat comments made by the online participants during the presentations. The use of this web conferencing platform in addition to continued promotion of the events increased participation by a worldwide audience to several hundred.

Although interest in webcasting was initially limited to a few members of the CALL-IS Steering Committee, the CALL-IS continued to see the value in extending its reach beyond the confines of the TESOL Convention. In 2011, a Webcast Development & Coordination

Team was established to develop protocols for webcast organizing and moderating, and to conduct training during the year using the web conferencing platforms to be used at the annual convention. Since the beginning, webcast moderators-in-training have been shadowing more experienced webcasters who have continued on or stepped into other organizing roles within the CALL-IS. Webcasting has become an established component of Electronic Village events to be coordinated, with a Webcast Coordinator in the lead, and a Webcast Team to support the new role (see the Webcast Coordinator job description at CALL-IS.org).

The narrative continues with Jack Watson, CALL-IS Webcast Coordinator 2010-2016

Jack Watson took over the CALL-IS Webcast coordinator position from Christine in 2010. Here is his story.

2010, Boston, Massachusetts, USA—The way I remember it, I'm seated directly behind Christine Bauer-Ramazani, peering unobtrusively (I think) over her shoulder as she webcasts a session. Webcast audio is delivered directly through the presentation speakers, and the Wi-Fi connection delivers the message clearly and globally. Presenters speak to the f2f audience and shift their PowerPoint slides, and Christine advances the corresponding slides online in the Elluminate program, all the while engaging the online audience through questions and commentary in the chat function. And it works.

To me, the event was at once fascinating, challenging, and rife with potential for international access and participation. Twice more, I watched webcasters (Chris Sauer and Carla Arena) whose expertise belied the complexity of preparation and execution. I definitely wanted, and didn't want, to do this.

2011, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA—We had four sessions webcast. The success of more experienced webcasters was not to be my fate. Ambient noise, speaker feedback, the error of having two Elluminate moderator rooms with active mics, and my own inexperience rendered some sessions unrecordable. We addressed the first three issues the following year with a dedicated audio line-in to the central webcasting computer.

2012, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA—Audio was vastly improved here, but by this time everyone in the convention center had discovered Wi-Fi, causing the network to slow to intermittent connection at best. Another lesson involved the importance of not trying to webcast animated slides—these transmit only part of the slide, with most unfortunate results. So it was that, henceforth, only static slides would be collected for webcast transmission. Prezi was not an option with Elluminate.

2013, Dallas, Texas, USA—By the time we got to Dallas, I was finally getting the hang of Elluminate. Gone were the animated slides (presenters had been warned not to include them), audio was markedly clearer at all times, and there was a dedicated DSL for the webcast machine. Finally, a consistent product was within reach. With eight sessions webcast, the need for more webcast volunteers and at least two webcast platforms was becoming clear.

In 2013, webcast audience members hailed from 24 different countries around the world (Figure 1).

Connecting with the world



Figure 1. Graphic display of CALL-IS webcast audience by country in 2013

2014, Portland, Oregon, USA—This iteration of CALL-IS Electronic Village and Technology Showcase saw fifteen sessions successfully webcast. Up to that point, the webcast team had used a system of paired teams consisting of a lead and an assist: one to follow the presenters and advance the corresponding slides, and the other to attend to the online audience, help to resolve any online technical difficulties, and act as moderator between the presenters, panel members, and online participants. For Toronto, Ontario, Canada, we added a third team member: a volunteer observer, who could watch the webcast team in action (as I had back in 2010), collect a record of online participants' countries of origin, as shown in Figure 1 (and here), and find in-house technical help when needed. To help meet the need for additional web conferencing space, the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, Canada, lent its Blackboard Collaborate system for webcast use in the EV Fair Classics from Portland and the following year in Toronto.

2015, Toronto, Ontario, Canada—Abe Reshad began training to take up the mantle of webcast coordinator, and we webcast eleven sessions. Since we now had cultivated a solid core of webcast volunteers, the challenge for the following year would be to webcast every session we could.

2016, Baltimore, Maryland, USA—With Abe down with a flu and having to miss the conference, I served as onsite webcasting anchor. Thank goodness for Abe's foresight in having recruited sufficient volunteer webcasters, of whom there were sixteen. I chaired a live online CALL-IS Steering Committee meeting in August of 2016, because by now it was evident that we needed a new approach to webcasting. Abe Reshad took the helm of an ad hoc committee (comprising Heather Benucci, James May, Jennifer Meyer, and Ellen Dougherty) to investigate, develop, and institute that new approach.

2017, Seattle, Washington, USA—*And now it is time for Abe to tell the story.*

Abe Reshad brings CALL-IS webcasting into the future with YouTube Live

Reflecting on the years of webcasting in CALL-IS, it seems clear that in the year 2016 there was reached a critical mass. TESOL 2016 marked a record number of webcast sessions since the CALL-IS started offering webcasts as a service to educators. This milestone brought with it the need to find a sustainable and customizable product that could meet the growing diversity in both the content being delivered and the web audience being served. To start this great adventure, the CALL-IS allocated steering committee resources in the form of the aforementioned ad hoc committee, and we began addressing this goal. The criteria for a webcast platform was for it to be free, customizable for our purposes, simple (in terms of content delivery), allow for some form of audience/webcaster interaction, and did I mention FREE? Google came to the rescue with its free and robust live streaming services through YouTube Live.

Free—in terms of any form of software or cloud platform—meant that we would have to put in the hours to tweak it for our purposes. We immediately learned that there are a great number of ways to use YouTube Live, but we chose to model our setup with that of many gamers on the web by using the encoder Open Broadcaster Software (OBS) in combination with YouTube Live (see Stevens, 2017b, for a detailed slideshow on how to configure these). After watching about a dozen video tutorials made by the growing YouTube broadcast community, we figured out what we thought would be the optimal setup and identified the hardware needed to get the job done for TESOL 2017. Members in our webcasting team and committee signed up to bring certain items in preparation for our plan plus any item we thought would be useful if we decided to scrap our plan at the last minute. Fortunately, we beta tested our webcast platform numerous times prior to TESOL, so we had already experienced issues we could anticipate and ways to counter them.

TESOL 2017 quickly came, and despite the many hours put into planning for the conference and preparing the team (with instructional videos and live meetings), we immediately encountered a good number of curveballs when we started setting up and testing equipment in Seattle. Not knowing the dimensions of the conference rooms and the location of power outlets makes webcasting preparation quite challenging. Fortunately, I have the pleasure of working with individuals who love a challenge. We eventually came up with a decent setup before the first presentation. However, by the time the third presentation came around, we had already improved upon the quality of what we broadcasted to the web audience. Webcasters came up with suggestions throughout our time in Seattle and our webcasting gradually became fine tuned.

What did we change from the original plan and why?

The original plan was to rely on webcams to relay both the live video of the presenter and whatever content was being displayed on the projector through a picture-in-picture broadcast. What we immediately noticed is that the projector webcam could not be calibrated to clearly view the small text in presentations. It was fine for the live audience, but the text was indecipherable in the reduced resolution of the webcast. It became very clear that we had to utilize software that allowed us to screen share with the presenter's

laptop, which was then sent to YouTube Live through the webcast computer. We used Zoom, a video conferencing application that allows users to screen share. Once we made this change, our webcasts started to work extremely well. However, when presenters brought in their own computers without the screen sharing software we had installed on the presenter desktop, we were forced to revert to the projector webcam, which worked for the most part, although with less clear image quality.

Fortunately, with OBS Studio, switching between feeds is extremely easy. OBS lets you preset a number of scenes and choose one to broadcast while cueing the next one you plan to use. Therefore, you see two scenes at any given time, one of which is streaming to the online audience. For example, one scene might be the slideshow (which we were getting via screen share from the presenter computer), with perhaps a thumbnail of the presenter's webcam in its corner, and another might be a full webcam view of the presenters themselves. Webcasters could show the first scene when the presenter put up a slide, but if the presenter began to talk off the slide or take questions, we could easily switch to the full-view webcam and focus the online audience on the presenters.

Another aspect of the plan that was completely changed was how we covered the Electronic Village. Our plan initially was to use a similar configuration to that of the Technology Showcase. After running through the plans with the webcast committee and receiving feedback regarding how difficult they would be to implement in the vibrant context of the EV, we decided to start from scratch. Instead of using wired webcams and laptop computers, we decided it would be best to go mobile. We decided to take the reporter-in-the-field approach and stream live through mobile apps. This would allow for a lot more movement through the crowds of participants in the EV and a lot more interaction with presenters. James May spearheaded this approach by introducing us to Live for YouTube by Yatko (only for iOS, but there are plenty of similar streaming apps for the Android echo system), and he and Vance Stevens roamed the EV fairs with their mobile devices as roving reporters. This resulted in a record number of short presentations about useful tech tools and approaches to CALL available on the web. Check out our archives and our WordPress site.

Now, let's describe what the webcasting team refers to as "the untamable beast," the Mobile Apps for Education session. This session has always been a challenge to cover for both the web audience and those actually presenting at the big TESOL conference because one never knows what mobile device a presenter is going to bring for the presentation. This combined with the fast pace of the presentations usually leaves both moderators and webcasters sprinting to keep up. Our original plan for taming this session was to use webcams in combination with a document camera. The document camera would send a live image to the projector, and the webcams would broadcast that image to our web audience. However, on arrival the day before the big conference, we learned that we did not have access to a document camera. Like many challenges we encountered in 2017, this gave us an opportunity to think outside the box and provide both the live and online audiences with a better experience.

We decided to create a Wi-Fi network only for presenters to join and have them share their screens with the computer at the podium via Reflector 2, a robust screen mirroring app that works with both Android and IOS. Then we shared that screen with the

webcasting computer, which broadcasted everything to the web audience. The webcasting team was sweating as all of this was falling into place, but it turned out to be the best mobile apps session in CALL- IS history. There were a lot of high fives.

Afterthoughts

The webcasting team is not finished processing this experience, and we are certainly not finished with improving what we offer to our web audience. We are pleased with the progress made this year, and we are ready to dive into other dimensions of this platform. As we gear up for TESOL 2018 in Chicago, Illinois, we hope to be utilizing the social media and branding potential of YouTube for the purpose of making our presence known to the CALL community around the world. Also, now that we will be creating even more content for our web audience, we need to consider different ways to make this available to everyone globally. Stay tuned for these developments and feel free to join our team.

Next CALL-IS Webcast Coordinator Jennifer Meyer on her build-up to 2018 and beyond

Incoming CALL-IS webcast coordinator Jennifer Meyer, wraps up our article.

In January 2016, I joined the webcasting team through a generic Call for Volunteers put out by TESOL. My name was forwarded to Abe Reshad, the Webcasting Team leader, and he contacted me about joining the group. I really had no idea what I was getting myself into, but it sounded interesting, and I was up for learning something new. Shortly after that, I was invited to an online training session using the Bb Collaborate software. Initially, I thought I'd never be able to figure out how to even log in to the meeting, but it was actually very simple; and before I knew it, I was learning how to use the software. I had a lot of questions, but Abe and Jack and the other veteran webcasters were all very helpful and made me feel like my questions were being asked for the very first time, even though I'm pretty sure they had heard them several times over the years.

I'm the type of person who wants to try something out before I actually have to do it officially, like a dress rehearsal, to see how things are going to work in the moment and troubleshoot any difficulties that might come up. I volunteered to do some webcasting for TN TESOL, my local affiliate, at the annual meeting in March 2016 in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, USA. Being part of the organization and a past conference organizer, I knew that for quite some time, the group had been looking for a way to broadcast the State Day sessions put on by the Tennessee State Department of Education. When I approached the organizing committee about webcasting the sessions, they were very receptive and put me in touch with the facility technology coordinator to line up the technology needs for the webcasting.

After two training sessions with Jack, Abe, Vance, and the other webcasting team members, I was about to webcast a six-hour conference day independently. I didn't sleep much the night before. I knew the TN TESOL committee was depending on me to deliver the promised online access to the sessions, and we had publicized the webcast to school districts, administrators, and universities all across the state. Luckily, Vance was able to tune in from his location in the UAE to serve as my remote webcast support, and I needed him. After a few initial glitches were solved with Vance's help, I was able to get the webcast up and running. Among several others who tuned in online, a colleague from

Clarksville attended the webcast from her dentist office, where she was having an emergency dental procedure. Another colleague tuned in from Lewisburg, where he was busy implementing federally-mandated testing and unable to attend the conference in person. It was a success after all, and here are the recordings (file download which can be played on Bb Collaborate).

My experience having to set up the webcasting equipment in conjunction with the facility technology personnel and manage the webcast independently helped me understand the process from start to finish. I felt confident that whatever would be required of me at the upcoming TESOL conference in Baltimore, where I would have my debut as a volunteer CALL-IS webcaster, I could handle it.

Baltimore would be my second TESOL conference, and I was excited to see what the webcasting would bring. My first TESOL conference was in Toronto, Canada, in 2015, and it was very disappointing for me. My colleague and I walked around lost most of the time. Being a part of the webcasting team in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in 2016 changed all of that for me. I truly enjoyed the social aspect of being involved with the webcasting team. It was an excellent opportunity to network and connect with colleagues from around the world in a smaller setting than I had been exposed to in Toronto the previous year.

As it turned out, my experience webcasting at TNTESOL had prepared me well for Baltimore. Several of the hardware and software problems that I had dealt with in Tennessee also came up in Baltimore. Because of my experience at TNTESOL, I was able to help troubleshoot and solve similar situations in Baltimore.

After our successful webcasting in Baltimore, the team sat down to discuss some of the limitations and problems we had encountered, both with hardware and software. Abe put together a committee to explore other options for webcasting for Seattle, Washington, 2017. James May, Heather Benucci, myself, and Abe started researching different solutions and met several times to hash out the details. We finally settled on using OBS Software to encode videos to webcast using YouTube Live. Some of the reasons we chose this configuration were ease of use, wide accessibility, and best of all—it is free of charge: free to stream, free to record, free to archive, free to promote, free to watch.

Now that we had established how we were going to manage the webcasting at TESOL 2017 in Seattle, we had to roll out the new system to our webcasting team. We did this through several methods. Abe recorded several training sessions using the new software and sent out the links to the YouTube Live videos to the webcasting team. We also held live online meetings using Google Hangouts on Air (which can stream to YouTube Live as well), where Abe was able to demonstrate live how to use the new software.

Even though I was involved in the entire process this time around, I still wanted the opportunity to try out the new system before having to implement it in Seattle. So I called up my TNTESOL colleagues and arranged to do the webcasting of our annual State Day sessions in Memphis in March 2017. In addition to the State Day sessions, the TNTESOL organizing committee also prepared a breakout session room for webcasting.

I arrived at the conference in Memphis a day early to meet with the facility technology coordinator to discuss the setup that was required and to have access to the rooms I would be webcasting in. The new webcasting system we had decided on involved

additional pieces of hardware that needed to be connected and tested before the webcasting could start. It took us almost three hours to work out all the kinks. Again, this was an extremely helpful process because it would help shorten the initial setup time later in Seattle to two hours.

After working out all the kinks and being satisfied that the new system was going to work better than the old, I slept peacefully that night in Memphis. The next morning, I planned for a 1.5 hour setup window and was amazingly surprised to have everything ready to go in 30 minutes. That's not to say that there weren't more kinks. One webcam, which had communicated just fine with my laptop the previous day, suddenly didn't want to talk anymore. I solved the problem by using the webcam integrated in my laptop as the camera that captured the speaker for the webcast. This made it difficult to use my keyboard; I had to sit sideways and be sure to keep my head away from the camera. Additionally, the facility in Memphis had not provided a direct ethernet connection, so I had to stream using the Wi-Fi. By the afternoon sessions, the bandwidth available to me was so limited that I had trouble maintaining the live stream. In spite of the glitches and kinks, the webcast was a success.

Here are:

- the YouTube channel where you can watch the sessions streamed from State Day at TNTESOL 2017 in Memphis
- the YouTube channel where you can watch the breakout sessions which were streamed from the presentation room at TNTESOL 2017 in Memphis

Since I was also giving presentations of my own, and was not able to webcast from the breakout room for all the scheduled sessions, the TNTESOL organizing committee had arranged for two volunteers to assist me, Aaron Thomas and Howon Lee. Hopefully, the webcasting team for TNTESOL is now expanded to three people for the next conference in Franklin in September 2018.

The Sunday after the TNTESOL conference, the CALL-IS webcasters lined up for Seattle had a Webcasting training meeting, where I was able to share my experiences from Memphis with the team. This information and information from others who had been beta testing the new system enabled the team to make plans and decisions to best optimize the setup and implementation in Seattle. Soon we were all on our way to Seattle, where we met in the webcasting room the day before the conference started to explore the various setup options. After two hours of connecting and arranging, we had the cameras and audio configured and functioning. This process involved problem-solving and brainstorming to get everything to work exactly as we expected for optimal streaming and recording.

The following day, we gave ourselves a 30-minute setup window to get everything connected and ready for our first webcast from TESOL 2017 using the new configuration. We structured it so that we had three people sitting at the webcasting table:

- Person One is the lead webcaster. This person's responsibilities include soliciting information about the session to be webcast, as well as the presenters' bios, and uploading this information to the Wiki about the session. At the time of the session, the lead webcaster sits at the lead computer and is responsible for starting and

stopping the stream, as well as changing cameras and views as needed for the flow of the presentation. One camera is focused on the presenter podium and the other camera is focused on the presentation screen. Furthermore, we have developed bumpers, brief text segues between segments, to run at the beginning and end of the stream, and these need to be blended in at the appropriate times as well. Any other feeds we need, such as screen sharing from the podium computer, need to be managed by the webcast lead too.

- Person Two is the webcast assistant. This person is responsible for monitoring the live stream on YouTube and facilitating any online discussion or comments. Should the stream health deteriorate, the assistant informs the lead, who can troubleshoot for the cause. In addition, the assistant monitors the audio quality and indicates if any adjustments need to be made to the sound in the room or the sound on the webcast.
- Person Three is the webcast support. If any issues appear that neither the webcast lead or assistant can solve, or if a facility technology specialist needs to come to the room to solve a larger issue, the webcast support is available to provide help or go and get it. This way, the lead and assistant can remain with the equipment and maintain the stream in spite of problems, while the support person can concentrate on troubleshooting.

In some cases, it is not a matter of solving a problem, but of rearranging the hardware and software to accommodate different types of presentations. Occasionally, we had speakers who preferred standing on the floor instead of at the podium. This required a camera adjustment, which the webcast support could accomplish, while the lead and assist maintained the live stream from the webcasting table, switching cameras until the new configuration was ready to go live.

Another session which requires a different configuration of equipment is Mobile Apps. In order to demonstrate the mobile apps, different software and hardware are necessary to demonstrate what is happening on the screen of a mobile device, as Abe Reshad describes above in his remarks about the ‘untamable beast’.

I think our numbers of online viewers from the Seattle conference in 2017 are the highest they have ever been; or it could be that now that we are using YouTube Live, we have better access to statistical information about viewers. While we feel we had a low real-time live viewing audience this year, thanks to YouTube Live, we are now able to track the statistics of viewers during the conference and historically over time. Not knowing what to anticipate exactly, Abe created several channels but in the end we used just two. During the conference from March 21-25 we had 507 views on the Tech Showcase channel and 225 views on the EV channel. From March 26 through May 20, we had 411 views on the Tech Showcase channel and 444 views on the EV channel.

During our webcasting team meeting following the conference, we discussed possible reasons for the low live viewing numbers. The most widely acknowledged reason was that the webcasting was not sufficiently advertised. Most of the presenters whose presentations were webcast were not even aware that they would be webcast. Of course, we gave them the YouTube channel information so they could inform their friends and colleagues at home to watch their sessions, and this could explain the large number of

viewers we had during the conference, even though the number of live viewers was below expectations. On our agenda for the 2018 conference in Chicago is how to improve our advertising of the webcasting so we can improve our live viewing numbers.

Conclusion – Looking ahead to Chicago

At the end of the conference in Seattle, Abe stepped down as Webcast Team Lead and Jennifer took on the responsibility. An online meeting was held a month after the conference to reflect on the experience using the new webcasting system and to plan for optimization for next year's conference in Chicago. Some major points from this discussion included budgeting for hardware needed to webcast most efficiently and professionally. Also discussed were the organization of sessions and reorganizing these to more easily facilitate the different hardware configurations needed to live stream the different sessions most successfully. Finally, we discussed branding our webcasting with the development of graphic designs to use on our YouTube channels and as graphics as a part of the live streams that we webcast.

As the contributors here suggest in their personal stories, webcasting from face-to-face conferences presents unique challenges. Problem-solving requires part technical skill, part creative engineering, and part *je ne sais quoi*. As we were planning this article, and one to follow in the *CALL-IS Newsletter*, Larry Udry, the newsletter editor, wrote us to interject this observation (personal communication, Apr. 24, 2017):

I remember four years ago- setting up [a webcast via] Blackboard Collaborate and we had a problem with the sound. After numerous tries to no avail, Vance walks in the room. Vance is told of the problem and produces from his ever-present backpack a small extendable microphone. In order to get the sound from the speaker in the room to audience Vance takes two chairs, inverts one of them upside down, places his extendable mic up to the speaker in the room and once again ... rescues the day.

It is this kind of on the job ingenuity that drives CALL-IS webcasting forward and will certainly continue. As Jennifer says in the conclusion she submitted for this article, "it is the contributions of the entire team that make us so successful and make the collaboration enriching and enjoyable."

Note

1. [The Electronic Village is a physical area where CALL-IS bases itself at annual TESOL conferences. Usually there are two rooms, one stocked with computers and used for kiosk presentations and hands-on training events, and the other room is used for presentations and CALL-IS seminars, such as the annual CALL-IS Academic Session. These rooms have long been provided with Internet, even before Wi-Fi became commonly available throughout our conference convention centers, which is how we have been able to webcast from there since 2006 – but had to purchase dialup phone connectivity in 2003. EVO, or Electronic Village Online, was a concept that Christine Bauer-Ramazani and others in CALL-IS implemented in 1999 as a virtual space emulating, between conferences and in an online environment, what CALL-IS had been doing and still does f2f in the EV at annual TESOL conferences].

References

- Hanson-Smith, E., and Bauer-Ramazani, C. (2004). Professional development: The Electronic Village Online of the TESOL CALL Interest Section. *TESL-EJ* 8, 2 (n.p.). Available: <http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume8/ej30/ej30int/>.
- Lebow, J. (2006). Worldbridges: The Potential of Live, Interactive Webcasting. *TESL-EJ* 10, 1 (n.p.). Available: <http://www.tesl-ej.org/ej37/int.html>.
- Stevens, V. (2012). Learning2gether to teach one another about learning online. *Learning2gether*. Available: <https://learning2gether.net/2012/03/30/learning2gether-to-teach-one-another-about-le/>.
- Stevens, V. (2016). Can a paradigm shift in conference business models reverse declining attendance at face to face conferences. *AdvAncEducation*. Available: <http://advancededucation.blogspot.ae/2016/04/can-paradigm-shift-in-conference.html>.
- Stevens, V. (2017a). Learning2gether with IATEFL 2017 Glasgow. *Learning2gether*. Available: <https://learning2gether.net/2017/04/07/learning2gether-with-iatefl-2017-glasgow/>.
- Stevens, V. (2017b). Configure encoders, stream YouTube Live, and record lesson materials on-the-fly: A manual in progress. Google Slides presentation given at TESOL Conference, Seattle, March 22, 2017. Available: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/12KL1390JLzBsopdsMLMi6ZHNC23CEzT2biNp0mCOV3M/edit?usp=sharing>.
- Winet, D. (2015). Reflections on StudyCom. *TESL-EJ* 19, 1 (1-18). Available: <http://tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej73/int.pdf>.

© Copyright rests with authors. Please cite *TESL-EJ* appropriately.

Appendix 1

Full links to CALL-IS webcasts 2006-2017 (including archives from <http://Learning2gether.net>)

2006	http://academics.smcvt.edu/cbauer-ramazani/TESOL/2006/IF_Classics/webcast_schedule.htm
2007	http://academics.smcvt.edu/cbauer-ramazani/TESOL/2007/IF_Classics/webcast_schedule07.htm
2008	http://academics.smcvt.edu/cbauer-ramazani/TESOL/2008/EV-Fair-Classics/schedule.htm
2009	http://colloqtesol09.pbworks.com/
2010	http://academics.smcvt.edu/cbauer-ramazani/TESOL/2010/Webcasts/Sessions-Schedule.htm
2011	http://callinterestsections2011.pbworks.com
2012	http://www.call-is.org/WP/mod/resource/view.php?id=379
2013	http://callis2013.pbworks.com/ http://learning2gether.net/2013/03/23/learning2gether-from-live-events-webcast-from/
2014	http://callis2014.pbworks.com/ https://learning2gether.net/2014/03/29/learning2gether-from-tesol-2014-portland-march-25-29/
2015	http://callis2015.pbworks.com/
2016	http://callis2016.pbworks.com/ https://learning2gether.net/2016/04/08/gamification-at-tesol-2016-conference-in-baltimore/ https://learning2gether.net/2016/04/07/learning2gether-with-call-is-webcasts-from-tesol-2016-in-baltimore/ https://learning2gether.net/2016/04/06/learning2gether-with-david-winet-at-tesol-baltimore-classrooms-of-the-future-vr-and-ar-and-robots-oh-my/
2017	http://callis2017.pbworks.com/ https://learning2gether.net/2017/03/24/learning2gether-assists-call-is-with-streaming-from-2017-seattle-tesol/