

Eighty Years of Open Educational Resources in CALL

Deborah Healey, University of Oregon, United States
Phil Hubbard, Stanford University, United States

WorldCALL 2023 – CALL in Critical Times
Conference Proceedings

Abstract

For the past four decades (eighty years between the two of them), Deborah Healey and Phil Hubbard have devoted substantial portions of their professional careers to developing, maintaining, and promoting free and open resources for computer-assisted language learning (CALL). In this paper, they take a chronological look at that journey and the resources that they have made available. In the 1980s, microcomputers like the Sinclair, Apple IIe, and IBM PC made CALL more widely possible. Both authors, like others, were inspired then to begin creating and sharing free educational technology resources. Over time, even more teachers were involved in using CALL and providing information and resources to each other. The authors describe some of the open resources that they created and shared, along with the stories behind them. They conclude by discussing some of the challenges of creating and disseminating freely usable material and describing their plans for future open resources, encouraging their colleagues to do the same.

Keywords: Open Educational Resources, Free, Sharing, History



WorldCALL Conference 2023 in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Introduction

In the 1980s, many practitioners of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) shared their work freely with colleagues, often with few or no restrictions. They were contributing open educational resources (OERs) before OER became a widely-used term. Creative Commons defines OERs as:

Teaching, learning, and research materials that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. (Creative Commons, n.d.a, para. 3)

In this article, authors Deborah Healey and Phil Hubbard define an OER broadly: it is any educational resource that is shared freely with everyone. All of the resources described here are (or were) freely available. Many need to include attribution to the original author; some resources can be modified while others cannot; a few are completely free and open. For the past four decades (eighty years between them), the authors have been developing and maintaining their OERs for CALL.

The 1980s

Deborah Healey became involved with CALL in 1984. She taught programming in BASIC, a common computer language, to her international students. She used cheap resources and very cheap computers with her students before moving to the Apple IIe and an interest in free software. She was concerned from the beginning with the digital divide and so wanted to be able to provide free resources to as many teachers as possible. Deborah and others in the new CALL Interest Section (CALL-IS) from TESOL International Association began distributing Apple IIe, Atari, Amiga, and MS-DOS software at the TESOL conference and by mail. These programs were freeware, with no cost involved, or shareware, where the user was asked to send money directly to the programmer. The CALL Interest Section Software List, started by Claire Bradin Siskin and maintained by Norm Johnson and Deborah, had some commercial programs but with special attention to free or inexpensive options. Each title included publisher/author information, skill area, learner level, and a description. Where available, the original lists also included contact information for a teacher who used the program and was willing to talk about it. Macintosh and Windows titles were added later. A few notable free titles from the CALL-IS Library included the adventure game *Mystery House* and the authorable *Open Cloze* for Apple IIe; clip art collections and HyperCard programs such as *HyperQuest* and *PhraseCraze Plus* for Macintosh; and text adventure games such as *Crime Lab* and *Master the Market* and grammar programs for MS-DOS.

In the early 1980s, Phil Hubbard started developing Apple II-based exercises for his ESL students and sharing them freely with interested colleagues at conferences. Like others using Apple's BASIC language, his ready-to-use versions included the source code so that users could adapt them. All of his software in this period was released as public domain. To encourage others to take the same path, he founded the Clearinghouse for ESL Public Domain Software at Ohio University in 1985, providing a home and distribution process for free software. Soon after, he began donating his programs to the TESOL CALL Interest Section library, keeping them in the public domain. Some titles for Apple II's included the aforementioned *Open Cloze* authoring system; *Skimmer/Scanner*, a reading strategy game; and *Keyword Vocabulary*, which focused on teaching high frequency words to improve reading. Switching to Macintoshes in the early 1990s, he produced two HyperCard programs

for listening: Fogg City Adventure, where students had to locate places on a city map by following directions, and Island Paradise, a report on the Bahamas supporting note taking and listening for details.

Mid-1990s – 2009

With the Web in the mid-1990s, a whole new arena for resource sharing emerged for both authors. Deborah and Norm Johnson continued and expanded work on the list of software for English language teaching - now for Macintosh and Windows platforms - and moved the list online. The list was offered by platform and skill; during its heyday, the list also had an option to add additional titles. The longer list online had far more commercial programs, but the list was free. The archival version is at www.eltexpert.com/softlist.

Deborah also began her Tech Tips of the Month (<https://deborahhealey.com/techtips/>) in 1995 to help teachers, including those in low-resource areas, use the Internet effectively. Early topics included mailing lists (LISTSERVs), searching, finding authoritative sources, paraphrasing, and using chat effectively. Later topics in the early 2000s revisited searching, using Word and PowerPoint, and finding authoritative sources. Deborah also shared syllabi for several of her courses, including technology training for teachers, pronunciation, advanced reading & writing, and grammar through the 1990s and early 2000s.

In the 1990s, Phil started sharing websites containing detailed course notes for his CALL classes with links to other free resources. These went through three iterations: 1998-2003 can be found through the Internet Archive at <https://tinyurl.com/CALLMini-course>; 2003-2011 is available at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/callcourse/>; and 2012-2020 can be found at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/callcourse2>. In 2002, he created a website for a project based on a survey of unanswered research questions in CALL containing input from 68 CALL experts of the time regarding a question they would like to see answered. The site at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/callsurvey/> still provides useful ideas for those interested in CALL research, e.g., questions about user choice, interaction of learner characteristics and meaning construction in CALL, and adaptive learner training.

2010 – 2019

Deborah's Tech Tips ended in 2012, but she continued to share course syllabi and material where possible. Most of her University of Oregon courses were online teacher training for teachers around the world, often created collaboratively. One course currently visible is for the Oregon-Iraq Guided Online English Study, a tandem learning project for teachers and learners in Iraq (<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/aeiprojects/oelc/iraq/>). She was a co-author of *Women Teaching Women English* (<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/aeiprojects/wtwe/>), a freely-available textbook and teacher's manual. *WTWE* was designed for Lebanese women, who were ill-served by the currently-available English textbooks that seemed aimed at high school and university-level students. She was the linguistics lead on the US Department of State team that created the *Trace Effects* video game for language learners and helped train teachers to use the game and the additional teaching and learning material. The game, teacher's manual, graphic novel, and additional material can be downloaded at www.deborahhealey.com/trace. The game has not been updated to work on mobile devices or most current operating systems, but the graphic novel is fully usable in the classroom. Deborah also offers a number of freely usable (with attribution) teacher training resources at

www.deborahhealey.com. Material includes resources for gamification, assessment, and a variety of skill areas.

Many of Phil's freely accessible resources appear on his open resource page at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/PhilHubbard-Resources>. For the 2010s these included a number of published papers, such as "Making a Case for Learner Training in Technology Enhanced Language Learning Environments" (2013) at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/LT-CALICO-CC.pdf> and "Some Emerging Principles for Mobile-assisted Language Learning (2013, co-authored with Glenn Stockwell) at <https://www.tirfonline.org/resource/2013-october-mall-some-emerging-principles-for-mobile-assisted-language-learning/>. There is also a link to download a 2017 ebook he co-edited with Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou: *Teaching English Reflectively with Technology*, https://members.iatefl.org/downloads/sigs/LTSIG_ebook.pdf. Slides from selected conference presentations in the 2010s are similarly available on his resource page. Two of these are "Theory in CALL Research: The Role of Context" at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/CALL2017> and "Five Keys from the Past to the Future of CALL" at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/GC2018p>. Finally, he has made freely available the extensive course notes from his Stanford classes, including "Learning English on Your Own" at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/689e/>, "Advanced Listening & Vocabulary Development" at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/693b> and "Writing & Presenting Research" at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/698c/>.

The 2020s

Deborah's website at <https://www.deborahhealey.com> continues to provide resources for teachers, most Creative Commons licensed and free (with attribution) to teachers. As part of an Africa ELTA workshop on OERs, she created a WebQuest-style project-based learning OER about mapping and describing locations with supplemental teaching material as a sample. Along with that OER are a template and detailed instructions about each project-based learning element to help those interested in project-based learning create their own open educational resource to share. The sample OER, template, and instructions are at <http://tinyurl.com/pbloer>.

Phil has kept adding to the conference presentation slides, articles, and courses he has made freely available. His CALL course notes were formally published as a free downloadable ebook, *An Invitation to CALL: Foundations of Computer Assisted Language Learning*, available at <https://www.apacall.org/research/books/6/>. Other additions include slides from recent conference talks such as "Exploring Openness in CALL" at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/CALICO23>, which includes a number of OERs from other sources, and "Listening and Language Learning: Moving Beyond the Classroom" at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/ICLL21>. His most recent open-access journal paper, "Emerging Technologies and Language Learning: Mining the Past to Transform the Future" is at <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/jccall-2023-0003/pdf>.

Deborah and Phil were on the TESOL Technology Standards team (Healey et al., 2011; TESOL, 2008). They are pleased to announce that as of 2023, the TESOL Technology Standards Framework has been released as CC BY for non-commercial use and is hosted by the TESOL CALL Interest Section at <https://www.call-is.org/WP/2023/06/12/tesol-technology-standards-framework/>. They have recently returned to this topic by serving as half of the team developing technology standards for the Canadian settlement language sector

(adult immigrant education), which is similarly being released as CC BY for non-commercial use. A draft version was presented at WorldCALL: <https://tinyurl.com/inststds>.

The slides from their joint talk at WorldCALL that formed the basis of this article are at <https://tinyurl.com/worldcalloer>.

Possibilities and Challenges

This paper has focused on the authors' work, but we are just two of many who have devoted their time and effort to making CALL resources openly available. In this last section, we briefly discuss the possibilities and challenges for others.

Possibilities

OERs are increasingly available. In addition to the resources in Phil's list at <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/CALICO23>, teachers can search through an extensive library at OER Commons, <https://oercommons.org/>. Georgetown University offers links to a number of US government-funded free resources and others at <https://library.georgetown.edu/scholarly-communication/open-access-esl-efl>. A search for open educational resources for language teaching brings up additional possibilities.

Other reasons for an increase in OERs are that teachers are better able to produce material to share, and many institutions consider creating and sharing an OER a service opportunity. OER Commons provides Open Author, a template for creating OERs to share on OER Commons. Google offers a number of free tools, including Google Sites and Google Drive where resources can be shared.

Challenges

While OERs may be easier to create, distribution remains an issue. Unless teachers are aware of different repositories, they may not be able to share the OER they create or to find an OER that fits their needs. Both Phil and Deborah have had issues with "page not found" errors when they were looking for previously active links. Fortunately, many pages are available in archived form from Internet Archive at <https://archive.org>.

A challenge of institutional vs. personal ownership arises for those whose institutions claim copyright on in-house material. It may not be possible to share openly. A similar issue is when the author does not take care to use only freely-available images and other resources within their OER. The copyright holder of the resource can challenge free distribution and ask for compensation.

Many authors are willing to share what they create, but there may be a substantial cost for development and distribution or storage of extensive OERs. Open access journals are free to users, but they charge authors in their publications, and the cost can be substantial. Upgrades may also come at a cost, or not at all. For example, the *Trace Effects* video game did not have a needed and potentially costly upgrade to its underlying system and so no longer works online or on most current computers.

Another disincentive to create and distribute material as an OER is that authors have more options to sell the material they create. A commonly-used website is TeachersPayTeachers

(<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/>). Material can be free, but most resources have a fee. For authors who do not get funding or recognition for their OERs from their workplace, self-funding becomes quite attractive.

Conclusions

Almost all teachers create material at one time or another; many write articles and present at conferences. Creative Commons is an approach that lets authors retain copyright while sharing their material to the extent that they choose. The stated mission of Creative Commons is to "build and sustain a thriving commons of shared knowledge and culture" (Creative Commons, n.d.b, para. 1). Authors can use a Creative Commons license to specify whether they want attribution, and whether and how they permit copying, distribution, and modification of their work. Authors can share while maintaining copyright and control. Both authors continue to share what they create using Creative Commons licensing whenever possible. Deborah is hoping to create OERs related to gamification and alternative assessment, as well as to share future publications and presentations. She and Phil are still working on the Canadian settlement sector technology standards for language instructors, learners, and programs. Phil plans to continue to share writing and conference presentations, making that work open access as much as possible and expanding and updating his resource list. They hope that others will contribute to the common good as well.

References

Creative Commons. (n.d.a). *Open education*. <https://creativecommons.org/about/education-oer/>

Creative Commons. (n.d.b). *What we do*. <https://creativecommons.org/about/>

Healey, D. (2023). *Deborah's attic*. <https://www.deborahhealey.com>

Healey, D., Hanson-Smith, E., Hubbard, P., Ioannou-Georgiou, S. Kessler, G., and Ware, P. (2011). *TESOL technology standards: Description, implementation, integration*. Alexandria VA: TESOL.

Hubbard, P. (2023). *Phil Hubbard's publications/presentation slides/course notes*. <https://web.stanford.edu/~efs/PhilHubbard-Resources>

TESOL (2008). *TESOL technology standards framework*. Alexandria VA: TESOL. <https://www.call-is.org/WP/2023/06/12/tesol-technology-standards-framework/>

Contact emails: dhealey@uoregon.edu
efs@stanford.edu