
J.E.T.T. Interviews the Out-Going President of the International Association for Learning Laboratories (IALL)

The out-going president of the International Association for Learning Laboratories (IALL) is Glyn Holmes. *J.E.T.T.* interviewed Dr. Holmes in July of 1987.

J.E.T.T.: *Tell us something about yourself, Dr. Holmes.*

Holmes: That's a difficult question to start with! What should I say? I'm an ex-Brit, naturalized Canadian, who loves writing and travelling in the United States. I have a doctorate in French literature and now work almost exclusively with technology as it applies to language learning and textual analysis. I love intellectual challenges, but am probably never happier than when I'm banging nails into two-by-fours or putting up drywall. My wife drives a classy Oldsmobile, but I'm happy in my new Chevy pick-up or on my Kawasaki. I guzzle Budweiser and run marathons to stop from getting a beer belly. I like almost everything.

J.E.T.T.: *How long have you been a member of IALL and when did you become president of the organization?*

Holmes: I had to check my *NALLD JOURNAL* collection to find out when I joined IALL. It was 1973. I became president two years ago, in November 1985.

J.E.T.T.: *How would you describe the mission/purpose of IALL?*

Holmes: As an organization, we try to promote the reasonable and effective use of technology in language learning. By "reasonable" I mean that if you do not need technology, it should not be used; by "effective" I mean that if it does not work better than other methods, it should be rejected.

J.E.T.T.: *What do you consider the most significant accomplishments of IALL during your tenure as its president?*

Holmes: I am very happy with what the organization has done during the past two years. It has re-established its vital presence in the profession. It sponsors presentations at the CALICO and ACTFL conferences; it has a new journal; it has attracted new people. All this makes me feel good.

J.E.T.T.: *In your opinion, what makes IALL unique among professional organizations?*

Holmes: IALL is interested in all technology as it applies to language teaching and learning. This makes us quite different from CALICO with which we have certain things in common. We are also a varied organization with members all over North America and beyond.

J.E.T.T.: *As an international association, how does IALL serve its foreign members?*

Holmes: This is an area that we must improve, and I believe our new editor, Suzanne E.

Lindenau, is working to do just that. She is attempting to have regular input from foreign contributors.

J.E.T.T.: *If you were to make predictions about IALL, describe your vision of the organization five years from now.*

Holmes: I would say we are on the up and up. If the drive and originality can be sustained—and I think they can—the organization will probably be more visible in the profession than it was in the heyday of the language lab. It will increase the range of people it serves—teachers at all levels of instruction, as well as large institutions and corporations. It is an organization to join.

J.E.T.T.: *How can an organization like IALL be instrumental in effecting improvements or changes for the better when it comes to practices and products for today's language learning?*

Holmes: Simply by making teachers aware of what is available and how it is being used. Features in *J.E.T.T.* such as the evaluation of the latest language labs will serve that purpose. We provide the same kind of service in the presentations we sponsor at conferences.

J.E.T.T.: *If you were asked to describe the relationship between the existing/emerging information technologies and the learning of languages, how would you characterize that relationship?*

Holmes: I presume we are here talking mainly about computers. It is not possible to define the relationship with great accuracy because many of us are researching this very thing: What can computers do which will be of benefit to language learners? Certainly, computer-assisted language learning is, after a long period of doubt, alive and well. It is a useful, additional learning tool. There are other important applications to languages: textual analysis, the use of data bases, word-processing, composition aids, translation aids, adaptive testing and the like.

J.E.T.T.: *Describe your professional (academic-experiential) background.*

Holmes: I have a Ph.D. in French romantic literature from the University of Leeds in England. I am an Associate Professor of French. Almost all my publications relate to the use of technology in language learning, especially computers. I am the chairman of a group of French teachers who have published a large software package called CLEF. From 1976-1986, I was the Academic Director of the Language Labs at Western Ontario University. I am now editor of the journal, *Computers and the Humanities*.

J.E.T.T.: *As both president of IALL and editor of CHum (Computers and the Humanities), how do you manage to avoid the classic conflict of interest?*

Holmes: There is no conflict, except insofar as both jobs take more time than one can afford. This is why—having spent four years when IALL had top priority—I must now, as editor, give priority to *CHum*. As far as the subject matter is concerned, *CHum* will not publish articles on the language lab and *J.E.T.T.* will probably not be interested in the literariness of interactive fiction.

J.E.T.T.: *Being a Canadian, contrast the American and Canadian perceptions of the role of foreign and second language learning.*

Holmes: Canada has two official languages. This can have good effects; it can make us more willing to learn languages and more receptive to different cultures. It can have bad effects as well; some unilinguals dislike people because they don't speak the same language; this means some Canadians don't like other Canadians they've never met.

J.E.T.T.: *From your perspective, why should a person join IALL?*

Holmes: As I said earlier, IALL is an organization which is on the up and up. Better buy stocks when they are rising than when they are falling. More seriously, it is important that we be involved in a vital professional organization in order to keep abreast of developments in our field. Without this, we quickly become stale, boring, fuddy-duddies.

J.E.T.T.: *What does the future hold for the effective integration of technology in language learning?*

Holmes: Again, we have to be quite uncertain, and, of course, this makes life interesting. I am sure, however, that computers will have *some role*, as indeed they will in almost every other discipline. Technologies change, so our use of technology will also change.

J.E.T.T.: *What advice do you have for future presidents of IALL?*

Holmes: Presidents are people managers—they can do nothing alone. They need the active support of key people in the organization. The most important task is to find the best people for the job and try to blend these people into a team, all working towards common goals. The job is not easy: Sensibilities can be quickly bruised, sometimes permanently. When it becomes

difficult, you have to work harder. When you get down, you have to pick yourself back up.

J.E.T.T.: *What does the immediate future hold for Glyn Holmes?*

Holmes: I shall watch Sue Otto do a superb job as president of IALL, I shall edit *CHum*, I shall write all the articles I have been wanting to write for the past two years, and I shall continue to learn more about the computer. Perhaps more importantly, I shall bang a lot of nails into two-by-fours, put up sheets and sheets of drywall, burn lots of rubber on my Kawasaki, and chug-a-lug gallons of Bud. I hope I do not get a beer belly!

J.E.T.T.: *Describe how Glyn Holmes would like to be remembered?*

Holmes: I don't think I will be—at least, not for long. That's O.K. I shall remember myself.