The story of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) is about a small band of educators passionate about finding better ways to help people learn and how they were eventually joined by tens of thousands of others in pursuit of that quest. What began in 1923 as the National Education Association's Department of Visual Instruction became an international association representing professionals in a broad range of occupations who have an interest in improving learning through the use of media and technology. AECT is the oldest professional home for this field of interest and has continuously maintained a central position in its field, promoting high standards, both in scholarship and in practice.

The association's history can be seen in terms of six periods:

1.Formative Period (1923-1931)

The National Education Association (NEA) establishes the Division of Visual Instruction (DVI) in 1923 as school administrators become interested in the use of new media, such as slides and motion pictures, to improve instruction. The membership is in the hundreds, mainly school people eager to liberate instruction from the bonds of "verbalism." They rally under the banner of "visual instruction."

AECT's direct ancestor was formed in 1923 as the Department of Visual Instruction (DVI) of the National Education Association (NEA), and it remained a unit of the NEA, located within its Washington DC headquarters, for 48 years.

It was in the same year, 1923, that the prolific inventor Thomas Edison repeated an earlier prediction that motion pictures would replace books as the primary instructional medium; he figured it would take about twenty years to complete the conversion. This prediction was consistent with the tenor of the times. This was the Roaring Twenties and in the U.S. there was a widespread feeling that we had entered new, even revolutionary, times, driven by the rapid pace of industrialization and urbanization.

Competing organizations

DVI was formed at a time of rapidly increasing interest in the potential of visual media—particularly slides and motion pictures—in schools, colleges, and university extension divisions. During the period of 1916 to 1922 there were already two fledgling organizations outside the NEA struggling to give voice to this new movement, the

National Academy of Visual Instruction (NAVI) and the Visual Instruction Association of America (VIAA). Meanwhile, inside the NEA there was considerable enthusiasm for harnessing the new emerging media but also a complex power struggle to decide how to position this new force within the larger organization. Various individuals and committees represented visual education at the semi-annual NEA conventions leading up to 1923. Many of the leading figures occupied leadership positions in all three organizations. Most prominent were Ernest L. Crandall, Director of Libraries and Visual Instruction, New York City Schools, and Dudley Grant Hays, Chief of University of Wisconsin's Bureau of Visual Instruction.

NEA establishes DVI

After considerable debate and maneuvering at the 1923 summer convention of the NEA in Oakland, CA, the Representative Assembly finally did recommend establishment and the NEA Board of Directors finally did establish the new Department of Visual Instruction (DVI) on July 6, 1923. Harry Bruce Wilson, Superintendent of Schools, Berkeley, CA was named as the first president.

A Tenuous Existence

During the first seven years of its existence, the DVI had no permanent staff or headquarters, disseminated no publications, and offered no substantive services to its members. It took tangible form only at the annual NEA summer convention and the mid-winter meeting of the Department of Superintendence, where members met, participated in their own program, and held meetings of the officers to conduct organizational business. Membership was open to all NEA members upon payment of dues to DVI ($1 in 1931), but effective membership was limited to those who were able to attend these meetings, at which one to two hundred people took part in DVI programs. Office-holding tended to be passed around among those who were regular convention participants (pdf). Following Wilson, the elected presidents were:

- 1924-1927, Ernest L. Crandall, Director of Libraries and Visual Instruction, New York City Schools (served three consecutive terms)
- 1927-1929, Anna V. Dorris, Director of Visual Instruction, Berkeley City Schools, and lecturer at San Francisco State College (two terms)
- 1929-1930, John A. Hollinger, Director, Department of Science, Nature Study, School Gardens, and Visualization, Pittsburgh City Schools
- 1930-1931, W.W. Whittinghill, Supervisor of Visual Instruction, Detroit Public Schools (two terms)

The first presidents, in the 1920s, were all affiliated with public schools. In the 1930s, there was a nearly equal mix of school people and those from universities, especially from extension divisions. After World War II the pendulum swung almost completely toward higher education. From the late 1940s through the late 1960s

presidents worked in higher education.

No Journal of their Own

There had been a number of periodicals promoting the interests of the movement, most prominently Visual Education and The Educational Screen, but by 1924 The Educational Screen was the major publication. The first president, Harry Wilson, established the precedent of publishing DVI news in The Educational Screen and it became thereafter the de facto journal of the organization.

Early Accomplishments

In spite of its limited formal resources, DVI could claim a number of accomplishments. Members helped each other with job placement, they spoke in favor of needed legislation—particularly regarding non-flammable film, and they served as liaisons to other groups and to commercial interests. The group also solidified support behind the use of the term "visual instruction" as the name for the field.

2.Consolidation Period (1932-1945)

DVI merges with two other visual instruction associations to form an enduring association. The visual instruction movement is spreading to higher education, especially university extension divisions. Activity centers on educating pre-service and in-service teachers to integrate the new media into their instruction. Universities begin to establish audio-visual centers, including centralized collections of media such as slides and films. Economic restrictions of World War II curtail conferences, so DVI is dormant during the war.

Coalition of 1932

During the period of the Great Depression, it became more and more difficult to sustain three distinct visual instruction organizations. After several rounds of negotiations, in 1932 the three (NAVI, VIAA, and DVI) merged into one, maintaining the DVI identity. This watershed event in the organization's history was known as "the coalition of 1932."

Growing Membership and Leadership Burdens

During this period the membership was growing from a couple of hundred to over 600 by the start of World War II. Still, the harsh economic conditions prevented the NEA from assigning staffing specifically to DVI, meaning that the presidents and secretary-treasurers found themselves burdened with virtually a full-time job. This was a constant source of frustration.

Members and officers continued to accept these responsibilities with missionary zeal, motivated by the belief that students were hindered in their learning by teaching that was abstract, sterile, and limited to verbal representation. The antidote was to infuse teaching with more active experiences and more richly visualized presentations, as indicated by the title of the leading textbook of that era, Visualizing the Curriculum (Hoban, Hoban, and Zisman 1937). As Charles Hoban, Jr. reminisced some forty years later:

The battle then as now was against verbalism, except that then the issues were more clearly seen and drawn. Verbalism was words empty of concrete, acted-upon, psychologically transformed meanings of reality as experienced through the senses.... The 1920s and '30s were the days when our bag of tools were the school journey or field trip, the object, specimen, and model, the glass slide, and the 10- or 15-minute teaching film...(AECT, 1973, p. 22).

The term "missionary zeal" is quite appropriate to the reality of the times. The small core of enthusiasts tended to act very much as promoters, accepting every opportunity to persuade recalcitrant educators to change their traditional ways.

Helping Teachers Integrate Media

By the mid-1930s training pre-service teachers to use the new media and helping in-service teachers integrate mediated materials into their lesson plans became major emphases of DVI, not unlike the experience with the new computer technology some 50 years later. The most popular topics in visual instruction courses in 1932 were: philosophy and psychology of visual instruction, motion pictures, lantern slides, projector operation, stereographs, photographs, exhibits, and field trips.

At colleges and universities—as at schools—the collections of slide and film equipment and materials were growing to the point that it became necessary to make policy decisions about how to house, distribute, and maintain them. Many institutions decided to establish centralized services. This created a demand for staff with specialized professional skills—the director of visual education services, which became the core constituency of DVI.

 The 1930s began with school people being chosen as president but ended with college people becoming the more dominant figures:

- 1932-1933, Charles F. Hoban, director, State Library and Museum and Director of Visual Instruction for the state of Pennsylvania (the father of Charles F. Hoban, Jr., who would later become a leader of the association himself)
- 1933-1934, Grace Fisher Ramsey, curator, School Relations, American Museum of Natural History, New York City
- 934-1935, Wilbur Emmert, director, Film Library, State Teachers College at Indiana, Pennsylvania
- 1934-1937, Nelson L. Greene, Publisher and Editor, The Educational Screen, Chicago (two terms)
- 1937, Rupert Peters, director, Visual Instruction, Kansas City schools, was elected at the convention, but he resigned because of illness and was succeeded by the first vice-president, Edgar Dale, a professor of curriculum at Ohio State University.

Constitution of 1941

 When Edgar Dale assumed the presidency (1937-1938), he initiated an overdue reconsideration of the constitution, leading to the drafting of two new constitutions in the next four years. The changes were generally aimed at Dale's desire to increase the membership, provide more democratic representation, and to parcel out the burden of official work. With the new constitution of 1941, the association instituted a zonal organizational plan, creating ten geographic zones, each with a president, who would be a member of the executive committee.

In the 1940s the membership dues were $2 (in addition to membership in the NEA), which included a subscription to the commercially published periodical, The Educational Screen. The dues were approximately evenly divided among the Ed Screen publisher, the zonal administration, and the central administration. This symbiotic but rather informal arrangement with Ed Screen lasted into the 1950s.

Issues

One specific technology-pedagogy issue that was hotly debated in this period was the desirability of using the new technology of sound recording to create sound educational films in place of the traditional silent ones. This was not the "no-brainer" that one might think looking backward. Silent film advocates pointed out the value of teachers' adding their own narration to the film as it was shown. This not only personalized the film for the specific audience but also integrated the teacher into the presentation. The issue was hotly debated at the 1936 convention and in other venues. Research and pedagogical theory supported the teacher-narrated silent film, but eventually the force of sheer commercial momentum settled the issue in favor of "talkies."

DVI participated in the lobbying effort to establish 16mm motion picture film as the standard for educational use. Around the same time, the association supported federal action to reserve a band of the radio spectrum for non-commercial broadcasting. The Federal Communications Commission, created in 1934, responded with a set of reservations in 1938 and another in 1945. DVI was not a leading force in the radio arena, as few of its members had a primary affiliation with broadcasting. Their responsibilities began at the point teachers or professors actually used radio programs in the classroom.

The standardization of terminology was another recurring issue as new technological developments continued at an accelerating pace. By 1937, "visual instruction" was becoming obsolete, as radio and other audio sources became available in schools. Although the label "visual-auditory" had crept into some DVI publications by this time, the term "audio-visual" prevailed by the mid-1940s. Technological advances were constantly raising semantic challenges, so committees were established regularly in the late 1930s and early 1940s to meet and issue recommendations on terminology.

 The presidents immediately following Dale were also university affiliated, but during the war years leadership was in the hands of public school audiovisual administrators:

- 1938-1939, Rita Hochheimer, assistant director, Bureau of Visual Instruction, University of Wisconsin extension division.
- 1939-1940, John E Hansen, chief, Bureau of Visual Instruction, University of Wisconsin extension division.
- 1940-41, Paul C. Reed, director, Department of Visual and Radio Education, Rochester, NY city schools

1941-1942, W. Gayle Starnes, director, Department of Audio-Visual Aids, University of Kentucky extension division.

Enforced Dormancy during World War II

US involvement in World War II required increasing national mobilization, including rationing of scarce resources and curtailing non-defense travel. Camilla Best, who was head of the Department of Audio-Visual Aids for Orleans Parish schools in New Orleans, took office as president in 1942 and held the office for three terms. No large conventions were allowed to be held (although the NEA Representative Assembly was allowed to meet), and since the association was essentially a convention-activity-only type of organization, it was essentially dormant for the remainder of the war years.

3.Post-War Growth Period (1946-1957)

The end of World War II brought back home to civilian service a large cadre of specialists in audio-visual training techniques. The returned to schools and colleges that were expanding rapidly and hoping to incorporate the new media into their teaching. DVI became the Department of Audio-Visual Instruction (DAVI) and gained a permanent staff at NEA headquarters. The association began its own separate convention and its own journals (Audio-Visual Communication Review and Audio-Visual Instruction). With the addition of a

permanent staff in Washington DC, the association adopted a committee structure that allowed it to carry on professional activities year-round, not just at the annual convention.

AV Pros Return to Civilian Life

With the end of the war came the end of rationing restrictions and the return of the millions of men and women who had fought abroad. Among them were many that had experienced first-hand the nearly miraculous job of rapid mass training that had been accomplished through the use of motion pictures and other audiovisual media. If anything, the postwar group had an even more evangelical zeal to implement the new technologies. In addition to the old claim of improved quality of learning they added the new claim of increased efficiency in accomplishing the task.

The pool of trained audiovisual manpower that returned to civilian life after the war removed one of the largest barriers to the expansion of the audiovisual enterprise in schools and colleges. Their presence in the profession and the association provided a jolt of energy that accelerated the pace of change. Within a year after the end of the war, membership in DVI doubled to over a thousand.

At Last, a Full-Time Staff

In 1945 the NEA created a new internal administrative unit, the Division of Audio-Visual Instructional Services, to provide consulting and technical services to the larger association. They offered to share the director of this unit with DVI as an executive secretary, fulfilling a dream of decades to finally have a permanent staff. Vernon G. Dameron was the first to hold this dual position, an arrangement that would last until the end of the 1960s. Dameron resigned in September 1949 and was succeeded by Herbert R. Jensen as acting executive secretary from March to September 1950 and by J. James "Jim" McPherson in September 1950.

 The presidents in the immediate post-war period were mostly from university audio-visual centers:

- 1945-1946, Boyd B. Rakestraw, associate director and business manager, University of California's extension division

- 1946-1947, Walter Wittich, professor of education and director, Bureau of Audio-Visual Education, University of Wisconsin
- 1947-1948, Stephen M. Corey, professor of educational psychology and director, Center for the Study of Audio-Visual Instructional Materials, University of Chicago
- 1948-1949, F. Dean McClusky, associate professor of education and head, Audio-Visual Extension, University of California at Los Angeles (assumed presidency in June 1948 when Corey resigned to accept a new position in New York).
- 1949-1951, Francis W. Noel, chief, Bureau of Audio-Visual Education, California state education department (two terms; the 1946 constitution called for biennial elections)

Constitutional and Name Changes: DAVI

Pressure was building to change the zonal organization dictated by the 1941 constitution. A committee was formed, chaired by Paul R. Wendt of the University of Minnesota. It recommended a new constitution, which was officially adopted in 1947. It changed the name of the association to Department of Audio-Visual Instruction (DAVI) and instituted sub-division by state rather than zone, following the pattern of the NEA. It also spelled out the responsibilities of the new position of executive secretary, enlarged the executive committee, and specified further changes in the election procedures to make the process more democratic.

Mission: Better, More Efficient Learning

The new constitution enlarged the mission of the association somewhat, but the corporate vision was not all that different from the one of the founders. In fact, the program for the 1950 St. Louis convention quoted the very first DVI president, Harry Bruce Wilson, on the "quality and efficiency" missions of the organization:

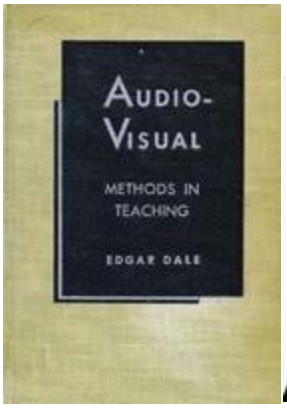
The necessity for teaching more and more without increasing the class period, school day, or graduation age; the futility of trying to provide meaningful learning experiences without showing that which cannot be adequately expressed or understood thru words alone/ the tragic neglect of the paramount responsibility for building better citizens of the nation and of the world by instilling desirable attitudes and appreciations thru the use of dramatic, emotionally derived learning—these are some of the vital problems which can be solved best, if not only, thru the use of audio-visual materials.

 Francis W. Noel, elected president in 1949 for a two-year term, faced the challenges of identifying a new permanent executive secretary (McPherson was named in 1950), regaining the association's momentum following the dormancy of the wartime and post-war years, and responding to pressure from some members to withdraw from the NEA.

Meanwhile, in the post-World War II period a new paradigm was gaining influence—the communications movement. Gradually, people in this field began to see themselves not just as visualizers, but also as designers of communication systems and the messages that flowed through them. This shift of focus gradually led to the broadening of the membership and, eventually, to the first of several "identity crises" in years to come.

During this period one of the major influences on theory and practice was Edgar Dale's new textbook, Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching, published in 1946. His "Cone of Experience" provided not only a framework for classifying the various methods and media but also a theoretical rationale for how media fit into the educational enterprise.

In Teacher Education



 The most popular topics in introductory educational media courses in 1947 were: selection and utilization principles, equipment operation, evaluation of materials, history and philosophy of educational media, and production of audio-visual materials (photo, non-photographic visuals, radio, and video).

On the business side, the growth of the field and the organization was being impelled by the rapid development of educational (16mm) film libraries by school districts and

universities—including Penn State, Syracuse, and Indiana—which rented films to other universities, to schools, and to other organizations on a national basis. Although these were nonprofit operations they generated large amounts of revenue that could be reinvested in adding to the collection and in providing other services.

A New Structure for Future Growth: 1951 Constitution

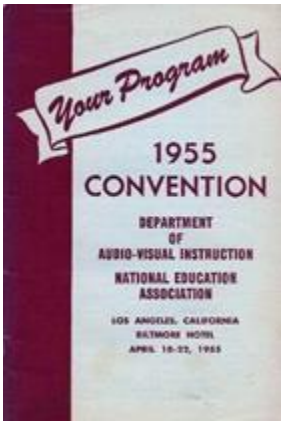
By 1951 another constitutional revision was adopted, with the primary intent of making the organizational structure more efficient. It specified a new Board of Directors, the composition of the executive committee, and detailed provisions for the succession of new officers. To the Board it granted sweeping powers over policy, procedure, finances, and personnel, and it empowered the executive committee to act for the Board in the intervals between Board meetings. It also encouraged the affiliation of subgroups at the state, regional, and national levels. Eventually there would be audio-visual education associations in virtually all the states, affiliated with DAVI. The basic structure laid out in the 1951 turned out to be sufficiently robust that the framework in place in 1999 still resembled that of 1951.

Membership dues were raised to $5 at this time. This still entitled members to a subscription to The Educational Screen, which continued to carry association news and transcripts of major convention presentations. However, discussion continued concerning the establishment of a professional journal of DAVI's own.

A Convention of One's Own

Another watershed occurred in 1952 when for the first time the DAVI national convention (pdf) departed from the traditional cycle of NEA semi-annual meetings—the summer convention of the whole NEA and the winter meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). Instead, DAVI met in the spring with the National Audio-Visual Association (NAVA), which was the trade association representing AV manufacturers and dealers, and the Educational Film Library Association (EFLA). The following year, after serious deliberation, DAVI added a commercial exhibition to the convention. This had been taboo since the founding of the organization due to sensitivity to charges of "commercialization." AV people were in the business of promoting the use of audiovisual media in schools and colleges, but they did not want to be perceived as mere shills for commercial products. In any event, the 1953 convention in St. Louis featured 41 exhibits. This number grew year by year, reaching over 300 by

the early 1970s. Indeed, commercial exhibits fees became a major revenue stream, eventually outpacing even membership dues. As the association became more and more dependent on this revenue stream, some members began to fear that the trade show was becoming the tail that wagged the dog, with the educational sessions being eclipsed by the exhibit hall.



From 1953 to 1956 the convention format settled into a pattern that would persist for the rest of the century: an opening reception, meetings of national committees and other governance groups, a few (two to six) general sessions, many concurrent educational sessions, workshops, field trips, commercial exhibits, and a closing social event. There were also sessions organized by other autonomous, affiliated organizations. On the informal social side, this was the era in which hospitality suites ruled the night. Dozens of companies, especially educational film distributors, hosted hospitality suites in conference hotels. These often featured open bars and hors d'oeuvres, sometimes running to the lavish. Delegates' exchange of information about the comparative virtues of their favorite hospitality suites was a major conversation topic.

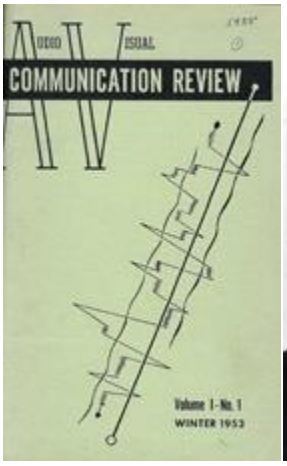
Right from the beginning, the convention also served as a common meeting ground for other organizations, which arranged their national meetings to coincide with the DAVI convention. The earliest national affiliated organization was the Association of Chief State School Audio-Visual Officers (ACSSAVO). This organization was composed of the person from each state education department who was responsible for overseeing educational media operations. Its purpose was to explore and improve the role of state education departments in advancing the use of media in the schools. Over the years their concerns ranged from audiovisual materials to educational television to teaching machines, and even to computers in some states. ACSSAVO flourished between 1953 and 1973 before it withered away with the cutbacks in federal and state funding precipitated by the national recession of the early 1970s.

  ***The Okoboji Conference***

Lee Cochran, during his vice-presidency and presidency in 1954-56 pushed for another type of conference, a small invitational meeting in the summer aimed at identifying future leaders and giving them a venue to develop leadership skills. The first Leadership Conference on Instructional Materials was conducted at the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory site at Lake Okoboji, Iowa, in 1955. This became "the Okoboji

  Conference," to be held every summer for 25 years, the last being held August 20-24, 1979. The keynote speakers at these conferences often challenged participants to cope with new ideas, many of which found their way into the intellectual armory of the field. Participation in "the Okoboji process" became the obligatory pathway to leadership in the association. [For more ...]

A New Research Journal



The dream of a journal published by DAVI came to fruition in 1953 with the publication of the inaugural issue of Audio-Visual Communication Review. The editor was William Allen of the University of Wisconsin; the advisory editors were other luminaries in the field: Edgar Dale, Charles F. Hoban, (the son of Charles F. Hoban, senior, who was

president of DVI in 1932) James D. Finn, Elizabeth Golterman, Kenneth Norberg, and Paul W. F. Witt, in addition to J. James McPherson, the executive secretary. The first issue featured articles by Dale, Finn, Norberg, Hoban, and C. R. Carpenter, each of which was an original and important contribution, some of which were still remembered and quoted in the 1990s. Three subsequent issues of AVCR came out quarterly for the rest of 1953, and then continued for the next four decades (under a succession of titles (pdf)), still going strong through the end of 1999.

The content of those first issues gives a snapshot of the major issues in the field at the time: communication theory and the communication process, perception principles, instructional film research, teacher use of audio-visual (AV) materials, presenting information in diagrams, and television in education. AVCR was at its inception devoted to research and theory, and retained that focus thereafter. It spoke primarily to the professors among the membership and was not perceived as very relevant to the members who worked in school settings, few of whom paid the extra subscription fee.

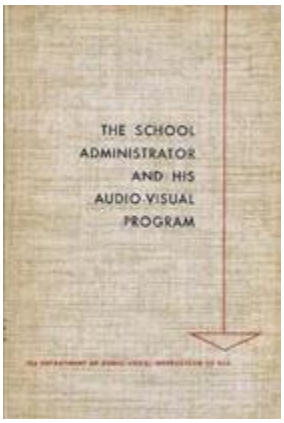
A New Practitioner's Journal

By 1956 the demand to have a practitioner's magazine published by the association led to the publication of Instructional Materials beginning in February 1956. The editor was Floyd E Brooker, who had begun serving as executive secretary in 1955. However there was immediate controversy about the title being too generic, so a vote was held among the membership and the winning title became the new name of the journal in 1957--Audio-Visual Instruction, a title that persisted until 1980. From that time onward the association published at least two periodicals—a scholarly quarterly and more practice-oriented monthly (excepting the summer months). [For other publications ... (pdf)]

Growth with the Baby Boom

Membership continued to grow, reaching 3000 in 1955, as the Baby Boom generation went to elementary school, necessitating a national school construction boom. With new, modern schools came new, modern technology, with classrooms now being outfitted with electrical outlets at the front and back, permanently mounted projection screens, and shades or blinds for room darkening. Of course, as new hardware and materials were being installed there came a demand for technical and pedagogical support, which was provided by the building and district audio-visual coordinator. It was the growth of this job category that provided the life's blood for new membership in DAVI.

Much of the credit for the growth of the association was given to J. James McPherson as executive secretary. As with other executive secretaries during the long NEA affiliation, his salary was paid fully by the NEA, but he worked eighty percent of the time for DAVI. A strong leader, he laid the foundations of the independent convention, new periodical publications, and an active program of non-periodic publications.



Educational Television

This was a crucial period for the development of educational television. In 1952, after much deliberation, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued its Sixth Report and Order, which reserved 242 television channels for non-commercial operation. In the following decade, school districts, universities, and many community-based groups received licenses and gradually took to the air. Before 1953, DAVI conventions still gave more consideration to radio than television, and what conversation there was about television focused on the issues of getting stations up and running. After 1953 the conversation shifted to developing programming and teacher utilization, but other organizations, such as the National Association for Educational Broadcasters (NAEB), became the venue for the business of non-commercial TV.

?DAVI's interest in TV settled around how to make use of broadcast programming in the classroom, exemplified by the 1954  convention sessions, "The AV Director and Educational Television" and "Systematic Instruction Thru the Use of Educational Television." Although DAVI people continued to talk about the uses and effects of mass media, they were not the people in control of radio and television enterprises. They worked mostly at the other end of the pipeline, helping teachers use the new resources generated by the mass media. This political boundary was well represented by the distinction drawn in the state education department in New York, where AV interests were housed in the department of "classroom communications."

By the late 1950s the pace of change was accelerating. Television had grown to overtake radio as the dominant home entertainment medium. By 1956, over two-thirds of all American homes had at least one TV set and the three national networks (CBS, NBC, and

ABC) were broadcasting programs in color. However, DAVI's role in TV had settled into a "consumer" role. The only session related to TV at the 1956 convention was devoted to planning a brochure on "The Audio-Visual Director and Television."


In Teacher Education

The most popular topics in introductory educational media courses in 1957 were: equipment operation, selection, utilization, and evaluation of materials, history and philosophy of educational media, and production of audio-visual materials (photo, non-photographic visuals, radio, and video).

 The presidents between 1951 and 1957 were all from higher education, mostly representing the large audiovisual service centers:

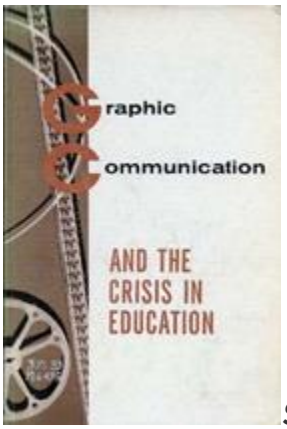
- 1951-1953, James W. Brown, Supervisor, Instructional Materials Center, University of Washington (two terms)
- 1953-1954, Paul F. W. Witt, Associate Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University
- 1954-1955, Lee W. Cochran, Director, Audio-Visual Center, University of Iowa
- 1955-1956, Walter A. Wittich, Professor of Education and Director, Bureau of Audio-visual Education, University of Wisconsin
- 1956-1957, L. C. Larson, Director, Audio-Visual Center, Indiana University.

 ***Committee Mode of Operation***

Since its inception as DVI, the association had tended to function as a special interest group that came to life only during face-to-face meetings at semi-annual conventions. But with the addition of a national staff and a growing membership, a more sophisticated mode of operation evolved during the 1950s. Under the leadership of J. James McPherson and his assistant, Anna L. Hyer, a strong committee structure was built. The interests of the organization were embodied in fourteen committees in 1951, expanding to 34 by 1957. These committees conducted business throughout the year, coming together at an annual convention to display their accomplishments to the general membership. By the late 1950s DAVI had evolved into the sort of organizational pattern it was to retain with minor alterations for the rest of the 20th century.

4.Federal Aid Boom Period (1958-1970)

The surprise launch of the Sputnik satellite by the Soviet Union precipitated a major federal effort in the U.S. to improve the teaching of math, science, and foreign languages. Part of this effort included equipping schools and colleges with more modern instructional equipment and materials, again boosting the need for audiovisual specialists. Television and teaching machines added additional tools to the professional toolbox. DAVI membership grew from 3000 to 11,000. The convention, the national staff (led by Anna L. Hyer), and the publication program also grew in proportion.



Sputnik and NDEA

A jolt hit the nation in 1957 when America's Cold War rival, the Soviet Union, launched a small satellite, Sputnik I. The achievement of this technological marvel by a nation other than the U.S. led political leaders to conclude that there must be a "brain gap" that needed to be filled. Prior to this there had been stolid political opposition to the federal government's playing any role in public schooling, and indeed there was no substantive federal involvement in elementary-secondary education up to this time. But this was an emergency; Democrats and Republicans agreed on that. The result was the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, which provided funding for equipment, materials (pdf) , research, and college scholarships intended to improve the nation's competence in math, science, and modern foreign languages. Many of the sections of the act specifically referred to radio, television, film, and audiovisual media. The legislative process was done in a rush, but still it is interesting to note that not a single representative of the educational research or audiovisual education communities was asked to testify. Title VII, which promoted research and experimentation with media was a late addition to the bill, inserted by congressional staff with the aid of lobbyists from NAVA, the AV trade association. Unfortunately, being neglected at the tables of power was more the norm than the exception for education associations like DAVI. [For more on NDEA ...]

One of the most successful activities funded by NDEA was a series of summer workshops for teachers and professors, National Special Media Institutes, which not only provided training in the use of the new technologies but also attracted many of the participants into the field as audiovisual specialists. [For more ...]

 Another boost came with passage of President Lyndon Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This act, although not so focused on educational media, constituted a massive infusion of federal funds into public education, both at the state education department and the local school levels. [For more ...]

Although DAVI could take no direct credit for these acts, the years following passage of these federal law were years of mushrooming growth for the audiovisual field and DAVI.

- Convention exhibitors grew from 68 in 1958 to 340 in 1970
- Membership grew from 3000 in 1958 to 11,000 in 1970 (pdf)
- DAVI staff grew from 10 in 1958 to 33 in 1970

As schools and colleges purchased more AV equipment and materials they needed specialized professional staff to oversee and promote their use. Thousands of new jobs were created, and many of the job holders joined DAVI.

In 1960 the name of the association was altered by dropping the hyphen between Audio and Visual. Thereafter in was the Department of Audio Visual Instruction.

 In 1958 Anna L. Hyer, who had joined the staff under J. James McPherson, been associate executive secretary to Floyd E. Brooker, and who had a doctorate in Audio-Visual Education from Indiana University, was named the new executive secretary. More than a just a manager, she was respected as a visionary. She was among the first to point out that the real value of educational media lay in its ability to bring about structural change at the system level, and that instructional technology's future lay in the realm of the school administrator, not the teacher.

During this period and since, the practice was for association presidents to be elected a

year prior to their taking office, during which time they served as President-elect. At the convention each spring (pdf) , the current president chaired board of directors meetings up until the middle or end of the convention, when the president-elect was installed as the new president, serving in that capacity until the next convention. Thus, leaders spent a year as president-elect and a year as president; and the year as president was spread over two calendar years. In the following lists, the dates indicate the two years in which a person's presidential term was spent. For example, Robert deKieffer served as president from April of 1957 to April of 1958:

- 1957-1958, Robert deKieffer, director of Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction, University of Colorado
- 1958-1959, Charles F. Schuller, director of Audio-Visual Center, Michigan State University
- 1962-1963, Clyde K. Miller, director of Division of Audio-Visual Education, Ohio state education department.
- 1959-1960, Walter S. Bell, director of Audio-Visual Education, Atlanta public schools
- 1960-1961, James D. Finn, professor of education, University of Southern California
- 1961-1962, Ernest Tiemann, director of Visual Instructional Bureau, University of Texas

Teaching Machines and Programmed Instruction

In the midst of this growth, conceptual changes were also becoming apparent. B.F. Skinner had presented his first teaching machine, based on operant conditioning principles, in 1954 and major school demonstration projects were underway between 1957 and 1962. DAVI got aboard the new programmed instruction movement by publishing Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning; a Source Book, edited by A.A. Lumsdaine and Robert Glaser in

1960. The 1959 convention program had no mention of programmed instruction, but there was a major session in 1960 on "Programmed Instructional Materials for Use in Teaching Machines." This title gives a clue to the link between AV administrators and programmed instruction—the machines that were initially used to deliver the programmed lessons. When schools and colleges acquired teaching machines someone had to take care of them—the AV coordinator. The primacy of the machine was indicated by the name that marked this special interest group at the next several conventions: the Teaching Machine Group.

Gradually, though, the emphasis shifted to designing and utilizing interactive self-instructional systems. The concept of "technology of teaching" was popularized by B.F. Skinner in 1968 to describe his view of programmed instruction as an application of the science of learning, which supported the notion promoted earlier by James D. Finn that "instructional technology" could be viewed as a way of thinking about instruction, not just a conglomeration of devices. Thereafter, technology had the dual meanings of "application of scientific thinking" and the various communications media and devices (pdf). Finn became the most visible leader in the field during the early 1960s. One of the activities that brought him to national prominence was the two-year Technological Development Project.

Technological Development Project

In April 1961 the NEA announced the beginning of a two-year research project, known as the Technological Development Project (TDP), to be funded by a grant from the U.S. Office of Education under Title VII-B of NDEA. James D. Finn was the principal investigator, operating from University of Southern California while the rest of the staff were housed at the NEA in Washington. This ambitious project primarily sought to document the impact of the new technologies—such as closed-circuit TV, multiple AV projection systems, teaching machines, and computers—on education. Its publications, most issued in 1963, encapsulated a lot of the technological advances of the field during

this period. One of the sub-projects of TDP was to compile a standardized glossary of terminology for instructional technology. This activity was closely linked with DAVI's own definition project. [For more ...]

1963's Definition

The sometimes confusing proliferation of new terms—for new concepts or new devices—led to the formation of the Commission on Definition and Terminology. It was chaired by Donald P. Ely, who would be elected a year later as the youngest president-elect of the association up to that time. In 1963 the Commission produced The Changing Role of the Audiovisual Process: A Definition and Glossary of Related Terms. The commission affirmed the term "audiovisual communications" as the central concept of the field, defining it as "that branch of educational theory and practice primarily concerned with the design and use of messages which control the learning process." One small outcome of the 1963 Definition book was a consensus on the contemporary spelling of the key word "audiovisual." From 1963 onward, this spelling replaced the original "audio-visual" spelling. A more significant outcome was the commission's affirmation of the value of communication theory as one of the fundamental pillars of the field and their acknowledgement that the central concept of the field was "technology as process" rather than "technology as product." The editor, Ely, acknowledged that the commission had settled on the traditional term "audiovisual" as the name because of its continuing popularity, but were willing to substitute another term as soon as one had gained popular support. It would take another decade for the term "educational technology" to become fully accepted.

JIMS

Another important definitional effort was the Jobs in Instructional Media Study (JIMS), carried out in the national office, led by C. James Wallington. The researchers went out

into the field to carry out job analyses of people who worked at all sorts of jobs, professional and non-professional, within the field of instructional media. They were able to objectively define the tasks and duties associated with jobs at different levels of responsibility. These data-based descriptions, published in 1971 (Final Report, Jobs in Instructional Media Study), had a major influence on later efforts to establish professional standards and to define "the field."

Tension with the NEA

As the focus of the association shifted away from helping teachers use media to designing self-instructional systems, the connection with the National Education Association, which was increasingly functioning as a teacher's union, became strained. A constitutional change within the NEA in 1968 requiring departments to become integrated into the association brought matters to a head. At the same time, the proliferation of sub-groups within DAVI (e.g. educational film, audiovisual materials, teacher training, instructional television, programmed instruction, graphic design, and instructional design, among others) was diffusing the focus and therefore the influence of the association…in other words, an identity crisis.

In Teacher Education

The most popular topics in introductory educational media courses in 1967 were: utilization and selection of materials, equipment operation, evaluation of materials, production of non-photographic materials, communication theory, history and philosophy of educational media, audio production, systems approach, and photographic production. [For the media actually used in schools … (pdf)]

New Executive Director

In September 1969 Anna L. Hyer and other senior staff members stepped down from their DAVI posts in order to remain in their positions at the NEA, which had actually been their employer all along (and where their pension benefits were vested). The Board selected Howard B. Hitchens, Jr. to succeed her, with the new title of executive director. Hitchens had been director of instructional technology at the Air Force Academy and had a doctorate in the field from Syracuse University.

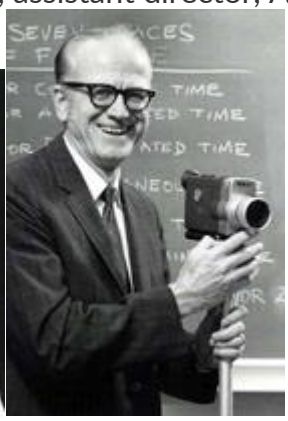
New Association, New Name: AECT

The Board of Directors that met in the summer of 1969, chaired by Lee E. Campion, was faced with a set of momentous decisions, thrust upon them by the reorganization of the NEA. They had the challenge of essentially reinventing the association. They authorized a vote of the membership on a new name and independent structure for the association. There was vigorous debate among the membership about

what key words should be used to identify the association. "Technology" had a lot of support in California, while "communications" was favored in New York and the East. In a political compromise, one of the names offered to the membership for vote combined elements of both. The vote count in June 1970 showed a 3-to-1 preference for the hybrid name, Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT). The change became effective immediately, although it was not official until ratified by the board and the membership at the 1971 convention.

The presidents who served during this time of tremendous growth and change were:

- 1963-1964, William H. Allen, director of research, department of cinema, University of Southern California

- 1964-1965, Mendel Sherman, assistant director, Audio-Visual Center, Indiana University  
- 1965-1966, Donald P. Ely, director of Center for Instructional Communications, Syracuse University
- 1966-1967, Kenneth Norberg, coordinator of Audio-Visual Services, Sacramento State College
- 1967-1968, Wesley C. Meierhenry, assistant dean, Department of Educational Services, University of Nebraska
- 1968-1969, John P. Vergis, coordinator of Audio-Visual Education, Arizona State University
- 1969-1970, Lee E. Campion, director, Division of Educational Communications, New York state education department.

5.Independence and Dispersion Period (1971-1982)

After a major reorganization in 1969-70, the association had a new name, Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), a new "division" structure, and a new executive director, Howard Hitchens. All of this reflected a gradual paradigm shift from an audiovisual orientation to a systems approach orientation. The journals were renamed Educational Communication and Technology Journal and Instructional Innovator, and a new journal was added, Journal of Instructional Development. The 1977 definitional statement now characterized educational technology as a systematic problem-solving process. Later in this period the core constituency—audiovisual directors—began to decline, particularly in the school sector, where the job became combined with that of the school librarian. This led to a change in leadership (Lyn Gubser as executive director) and reorganization to reflect a decline in the traditional membership.

New Organization—AECT—with a New Structure

 AECT's new constitution made a major change in the basic structure of the association—into an "umbrella" organization that encompassed a number of semi-autonomous Divisions and autonomous National Affiliates. By the middle of the 1970s AECT had nine divisions:

- Educational Media Management
- Instructional Development
- Industrial Training and Education
- Information Systems
- International
- Media Design and Production
- Research and Theory
- Telecommunications

And it had ten national affiliates, autonomous organizations that shared the convention and other services (the longest-affiliated group, Association of Chief State School Audio-Visual Officers, ACSSAVO, had ceased operations after 1973):

- American Student Media Association
- Armed Forces/Government National Affiliate
- Association of Media Educators in Religion
- Association of Multi-Image
- Association for Special Education Technology
- Community College Affiliate for Instructional and Technology
- Information Film Producers of America
- International Congress of Individualized Instruction
- International Visual Literacy Association
- National Association of Regional Media Centers.

Although now independent, AECT continued to rent office space at the NEA headquarters until 1977, when it moved to another office building in Washington, DC. Unfortunately, time would prove that the "umbrella" concept would not play out altogether favorably. The division structure tended to fragment the membership into pieces of a pie without actually enlarging the pie. The national affiliates did generate convention attendees, which attracted commercial exhibitors, but did not otherwise contribute to AECT's revenue stream.

New Cassette Technologies

The audio cassette, introduced in the mid-1960s, effectively replaced reel-to-reel audio. In 1969 audio cassette sales were too small to measure, but by 1973 they represented 89 percent of all prerecorded audio materials being sold. In 1973 filmstrips with cassettes were the fastest growing media format in terms of commercial sales. Cassettes made it easy for individuals to tape their own audio material off-air or to produce and

disseminate self-produced cassettes. It was a technological leap forward, but it also infringed on the dominion of the AV center's production studio and their business of renting audio materials to schools. The videocassette player-recorder became a standard home appliance during the 1970s. Viewers could not only purchase inexpensive recordings of films and television programs, but they could make their own recordings off-air. Because of videocassette recorders' inexpensiveness and ease of use, teachers quickly came to prefer them to the previous format—16mm film. Thus began a long, slow erosion of the educational film library business, another one of the mainstays of the audiovisual administrator's dominion. As film libraries declined,

so did sales of educational films, threatening the sustainability of the companies that produced and distributed them. Long-time exhibitors such as Encyclopedia Britannica Films, Coronet Films, McGraw-Hill Films, Julien Bryan's International Film Foundation, and other such companies began to disappear from the exhibit halls at AECT conventions.

Decline of School AV Administrator Jobs

For the first 50 years of its existence AECT predominantly represented professionals working at the elementary-secondary school level as administrators of audiovisual services, with college professors as the next largest group. In the mid-1970s the balance shifted toward higher education as audiovisual directors began to disappear as a separate job classification at the school building level.

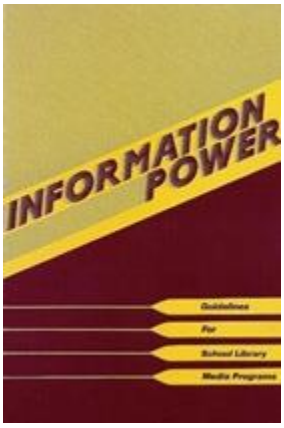
This came about partly due to technological advancement (pdf). Self-threading 16mm film projectors, carousel-type slide projectors, and synchronized cassette filmstrip players reduced the need for technical support and troubleshooting. Equipment became lighter, more portable, and more reliable. Less physical strength and expertise was required to transport and set up AV equipment. For film viewings, a teacher could push a video cassette into a VCR for viewing on a TV monitor instead of wrestling with a big screen and a bulky film projector. Similarly, a small audio cassette could be plugged into a small player instead of threading an open reel tape onto a heavy reel-to-reel tape deck. At the same time, automation was making school libraries less labor-intensive to manage.

Even more important were economic factors. After the period of lavish federal support for educational media in the 1960s came a major national recession in the early 1970s that forced deep cuts in federal and state education funding. These budget cuts forced school administrators to make hard choices at the local level. As schools faced the choice of maintaining an audiovisual coordinator and/or a school librarian, they increasingly chose to keep the librarian (required for accreditation) and change the title to "school media center director." Many school administrators focused just on the handling of equipment and materials, not on the consulting role played by AV directors as they worked with teachers in their classrooms to improve instruction. As a result, many school and district AV jobs were lost, shrinking the base of the association (pdf).

As the functions of audiovisual coordinator and school librarian merged, so did many of the state associations that represented them. Many of the merged state associations retained affiliation to AECT, but allegiance of most members was to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), so closer affiliation to AASL followed in due course. The allegiance of exhibitors also followed the money. As school librarians, rather than AV coordinators, made purchasing decisions for AV materials, the advertising gravitated toward librarians' periodicals and conventions.

AV-Library Collaboration

Because of the perceived overlaps and mutual interests of the two fields, representatives of AECT and AASL worked together for years to develop a single set of guidelines for school media programs, published first in 1969 and in a new version in 1975 (Media Programs: District and School). This was an important work, reinventing the school library as a "media center," with a media program being supervised by a media specialist, who took on the new role of advising teachers on instructional design.



The AECT-AASL partnership was revived for another revision of the professional standards (now "guidelines") spurred by the advent of the computer age (Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs) in 1988. Now access to information became the key concept, but again the role of the school librarian was further expanded to encompass three roles: information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant. These role changes, although probably inevitable, combined to undermine one of the job categories, the school AV director, which formed a core constituency of AECT.

Journal Makeovers

Robert Heinich, a professor at Indiana University and AECT president in 1971-72, had succeeded William Allen as editor of AVCR in 1970 and felt that it was time for the journal to receive a makeover, including its name. He realized that at the time of renaming the association there had been a sharp division of opinion among advocates for "audiovisual," "communication," and "technology," so he decided to go along with the compromise that carried the day in 1970: communication + technology. So the journal became Educational Communication and Technology: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Development in 1978. Heinich continued as editor of "ECTJ" until succeeded by William Winn in 1983.

Although Heinich and others had specifically included the word "development" in the subtitle to indicate their support of development work as a legitimate form of scholarship, a large sub-group of the members wanted a larger venue for scholarly work in the rapidly evolving area of instructional development, so they obtained the support of the board of directors to start a new journal, Journal of Instructional Development (JID) in 1978. JID's editor was Kenneth Silber, a professor at Governors State University, who also served as president of the Division of Instructional Development at that time.

In 1980 the venerable Audiovisual Instruction was recast as Instructional Innovator in an effort to reflect the larger agenda of the educational technology movement—beyond audiovisual media—and to appeal to a broader market of potential subscribers.

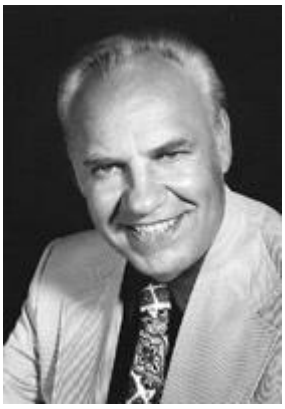
Serving as the first eight presidents of AECT were six university people and two school people:

- 1970-1971, Robert C. Gerletti, director of the Division of Educational Media, Los Angeles County public schools

- 1971-1972, Robert Heinich, professor of education, Instructional Systems Technology, Indiana University 

- 1972-1973, Jerrold E. Kemp, coordinator, Materials Preparation Services, San Jose State College 

- 1973-1974, Robert Jarecke, director, Center for Instructional Media, California State University, Sacramento

- 1974-1975, Gerald M. Torkelson, professor of education, University of Washington 

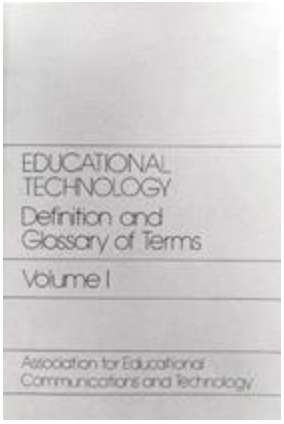
- 1975-1976, Harold E. Hill, professor of communications, University of Colorado

- 1976-1977, Richard Gilkey, director, Department of Educational Media, Portland, OR public schools

- 1977-1978, William F. Grady, assistant professor and chairman of the Division of Educational Communications,
  Temple University.

Founding a Foundation

As the pioneers who had built the association looked toward the future they realized that it could benefit from the establishment of an endowment fund, such as many universities have. Housed in a foundation, such a fund could attract donations from current members and bequests from estates in a way that would provide tax benefits. So in 1972 the Board established the ECT Foundation, which by 1974 had received legal approval from the Internal Revenue Service. Robert Heinich, the immediate past-president of AECT was elected as president of the foundation and a board of trustees appointed. Heinich served for ten years, being succeeded by Robert deKieffer, who had been president of DAVI in the 1950s. The ECT Foundation became active in organizing scholarships for students and award programs to recognize outstanding achievements in the field. It continued to expand its support of AECT-related causes through the end of the 20th century under its third president, Hans-Erik Wennberg. [For more ...]



Definitions Revisited

As technology continued to evolve, the need to rethink the conceptual framework of the field and the definitions of terms within it continued unabated. Around the time the association's name was changed, AECT's Committee on Definition and Terminology, chaired by Donald P. Ely, issued a new definition, meant to supercede the 1963 definition. Now it was possible to drop the audiovisual label and explicitly embrace the educational technology label. The committee's 1972 definition:

Educational technology is a field involved in the facilitation of human learning through the systematic identification, development, organization and utilization of a full range of learning resources and through the management of these processes.

Although this new definition met with little opposition, there was a widespread feeling that this was only a transitional definition—that the field was still evolving in ways that required continuing effort to understand and articulate. AECT's definitional efforts were stimulated by a grant from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) to develop a handbook of terminology to be used to standardize terms in future data-gathering activities of the federal government.

The handbook issued in 1975 provided the springboard for another major effort by the Definition and Terminology committee, now chaired by Kenneth Silber. The result was a 169-page book, The Definition of Educational Technology (1977). The key concept, educational technology, was briefly defined as:

a complex, integrated process, involving people, procedures, ideas, devices and organization, for analyzing problems and devising, implementing, evaluating and managing solutions to those problems, involved in all aspects of human learning.

The writers insisted that a complete definitional statement required acceptance of not only this single sentence but also of the concepts underlying each term—encompassing the whole book. Another major feature of the overall definition was that instructional technology was a subset of educational technology, as instruction is a subset of education. Instructional technology is the label to be used in situations in which "learning is purposive and controlled." In general, though, the definition, accepted as official by the AECT Board of Directors, now centered on a problem-solving process, rather than on audiovisual materials.

Unfortunately, although the concepts of the 1977 definition were extensively rationalized, its complexity and its perceived hair-splitting led to both disagreement and avoidance. Publication Program

The publication program of AECT continued to grow through the 1970s and 1980s, maintaining the two journals, adding JID, and publishing an expanding list of books and monographs. Several staff members were employed to supervise the production and sales of AECT's growing list of periodic and non-periodic publications. Since most non-periodic publications never recovered their cost of development and production, this tended to be an expensive function to support.

Changing Conventions

During this period, the annual convention (pdf) comprised the largest portion of the association's income, with the commercial trade show contributing approximately a quarter of the total annual revenues. Thus, although most of the association's activities

were now conducted by members and national staff daily outside the convention venue, the convention still remained the focus of AECT's economics, justifying a full-time convention coordinator and staff assistants.

Modifications were made to keep the convention relevant to the needs of both members and exhibitors, and organizers went to great pains to try to satisfy these sometimes competing constituencies. The number of exhibitors gradually declined between 1970 and 1980, due to a number of factors, including a national economic recession, a decline in buying of traditional products such as educational films and audiovisual projection devices, and the changing demographics of the association—fewer school AV administrators with dollars to spend and more professors coming to the convention to exchange ideas, not dollars.

A side effect of the changing demographics was a general decline in convention attendance. Members with administrative duties, such as school district AV directors, had budgets that included funds for travel. This was easily justified since they were responsible for procuring new equipment and AV materials, and the convention was where these things were exhibited and orders placed. As the numbers of AV administrators shrank, a greater proportion of the attendees funded their travel out of academic budgets. To justify a trip academically, the member had to demonstrate the scholarly rationale of the trip, preferably by presenting a paper at the convention. Thus, in order to attract registrants, the convention planners had to make lots of spaces for individual papers. This created a growing profusion and dilution of quality of concurrent sessions, leading to impressions such as "I went to a half dozen presentations, but they were all pathetic;" or "I gave my presentation but only five people were in the audience." One of the strengths of the convention in the earlier days had been its coherence. There were relatively few educational sessions, so the speakers were carefully chosen and the sessions heavily attended. Attendees experienced much more of a common experience. As the convention experience became more diffuse it became less satisfying, so fewer people came. Another sort of change—the changing national culture of the 1970s—was eventually reflected in the AECT convention, for example, with the initiation in 1976 of a Student Media Festival (student-made 8mm films) and a Multi-Image Festival (multiple slide projectors and sometimes multiple screens used to display "mind-blowing" presentations) and in 1977 of Evening Flicks (short non-commercial, sometimes "counter-cultural" films). These events were now populated by folks with wide paisley ties, patterned and colored shirts, and bell-bottomed pants.


In Teacher Education

The most popular topics in introductory educational media courses in 1977 were: equipment operation, utilization and selection of materials, production of non-photographic materials, evaluation of materials, audio production, communication theory, systems approach, video production, and photographic production.The four presidents of the 1979-1982 period were drawn alternately from the higher education and school sectors:


- 1978-1979, Marie McMahan, director, Instructional Resources, Kent State University
- 1979-1980, Carolyn Skidmore, coordinator, Libraries and Learning Resources, K12, West Virginia state education department
- 1980-1981, Wes McJulien, associate professor of education, Louisiana State University
- 1981-1982, Rolland Billings, director, Media Services, Ann Arbor MI public schools.

  ***Crisis in 1982***

At the beginning of the 1980s AECT had an ambitious agenda and significant accomplishments but was struggling with a rather large overhead, declining membership (from 11,000 in 1970 to 5,600 in 1980), and declining attendance at and revenue from the convention. Indeed, the burden of deficit spending had put the future of the association in doubt. In 1982 the board of directors, chaired by Elwood E. "Woody" Miller, made a number of hard decisions. The first was to not renew the contract of eleven-year executive director Howard Hitchens, placing Charles Van Horn, the deputy executive director, in the position of acting association manager while AECT searched for a new executive director.

Another major decision was to change directions on the annual convention. Instead of the planned spring meeting in Louisville, AECT would join the National Audiovisual Association (NAVA) at its January 1983 convention in New Orleans, sharing NAVA's trade show, COMMTEX International.

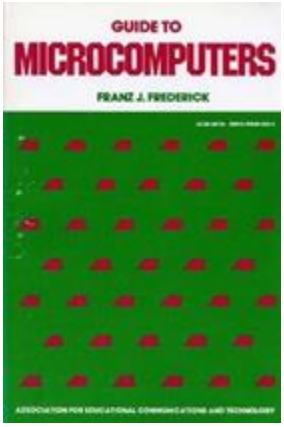
Next, the board decided to reduce the size of the headquarters staff. Admittedly, this move would lead to a reduction in member services, but was vital for the cash flow problem. The downsizing included reducing the board of directors from 17 to 11 people. Another feature of the board's recovery plan was a determination to make better use of electronic technologies in the management of the association itself.

With these and other changes under way, AECT entered 1983 with some trepidation and with the hopes that a leaner and more focused organization could prosper in the coming information age.

6.Computer Impact and Downsizing Period (1983-1999)

The personal computer era began in 1982, signaling another paradigm shift, from analog media to digital media. As digital media came to predominate, audiovisual services were marginalized and film and video libraries shrank. More members now came from the higher education sector than the school sector. Commercial exhibitors at the convention, which once reached over 300, dwindled to a few dozen. In a reorganization in 1986 Stanley Zenor became the executive director, bringing an era of tighter fiscal management. AECT's 1994 definition of instructional technology illustrated the continuing shift toward a "process" focus by placing the instructional design process at the center. AECT adapted to the changing times by reaching out to instructional designers and instructional computing specialists. In 1999 AECT headquarters moved to Bloomington, Indiana and Philip Harris became executive director. So, at the end of the 20th century AECT was considerably changed from its original composition of school administrators and school visual instruction coordinators. What remained constant through the years was the mission—helping people learn more efficiently and effectively through the use of the best technologies available at the time.

The personal computer revolution was signaled by Time magazine's naming "the computer" as its "man of the year" in 1982, shortly after IBM introduced its first mass marketed personal computer. Two years later Apple introduced the popular Macintosh model, which won many educational adherents. From that time on, the world of educational technology was dominated by the trend to digitize everything audiovisual. This created additional strains for AECT as the organization sought to honor its commitment to its traditional core



constituency—school and college media services people—while it attempted to jump aboard the computer bandwagon.

1983 began with a new executive director, Lyn Gubser, who had previously served as executive director of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The association was reaching out for the first time for a manager who did not come from the ranks of the profession, but was more of a professional association manager. He began 1983 with a smaller and virtually all-new staff.

New Trade Show

?  ?Gubser was announced as the new executive director at the end of the 1983 convention in New Orleans, the first one conducted in partnership with NAVA (soon to be renamed the International Communications Industries Association, Inc.—ICIA), sharing their trade show, COMMTEX International. Sharing the trade show meant moving the convention (pdf) to a January date instead of the traditional spring meeting, but it was considered a worthwhile tradeoff to be able to share the revenue of a much larger commercial exhibition. AECT's own exhibition had declined to about 200 exhibitors in 1980-82, while the 1983 show attracted 318 exhibitors, with the numbers climbing to 337 in 1984 and 363 in 1985.
The trade show was renamed INFOCOMM in 1989 to avoid a nuisance lawsuit by the organizers of the COMDEX exposition, the ten times larger trade show of the computer industry. The partnership with ICIA continued until the 1993 convention in New Orleans.

New Initiatives

Lyn Gubser's term as executive director featured a number of new initiatives, including:

- an invitation for members to connect to TechNet, a computer network offering e-mail, listserv, bulletin board, and database services
- editorial changes to Instructional Innovator, attempting to address themes of interest to political decision-makers and to be seen as a voice of authority on technology issues
- renovating the publications program, dropping obsolete items and commissioning new editions of seminal works
- launching a videocassette production and distribution program

- reviving the governmental relations program that had been dropped some years earlier
- improved communications with members, including a newsletter, ACCESS.

By the mid-1980s AECT's membership had stabilized in the 5000 range and the annual conference and trade show continued to maintain their profitability, although the association's annual budget continued to be highly dependent on trade show revenue. Competition for government and foundation grants had failed to yield fruit, and efforts to write major proposals were scaled back. TechNet, the computer network, became TechCentral; it was subscribed to by several other organizations, but did not attract enough AECT members to be a viable communication system for the association.

In 1985 Instructional Innovator was renamed TechTrends to emphasize its editorial aim to provide decision-makers with authoritative guidance on trends in technology. Other publishing ventures, including videocassette production, had proven to be critical, but not financial, successes.

Another Financial Crisis

By 1986 the board of directors, chaired by Robert G. Hale, decided that the continued deficits that resulted from the association's many new ventures were unsustainable and decided once again to seek new management. This time they turned back to the ranks of the membership, choosing Stanley D. Zenor to serve as association manager. Zenor, learning resources director at St. Louis Community College, had been active in leadership roles, especially regarding the convention, for many years. Once again, there was a round

of staff downsizing and tightened fiscal management.

Serving as president during these times of stress were five higher education professionals and one from a state education department:

- 1982-1983, Elwood E. "Woody" Miller, director, Educational Media Center, University of Colorado [His term was extended because of the move of the convention from spring to January. The following presidents' terms fit the calendar year.]

- 1983, Paul Welliver, professor, Instructional Systems, Pennsylvania State University

- 1984, Francis M. Dwyer, professor, Instructional Systems, Pennsylvania State University

- 1985-1986, Robert G. Hale, coordinator, Learning Resources and Educational Technology, Connecticut state education department

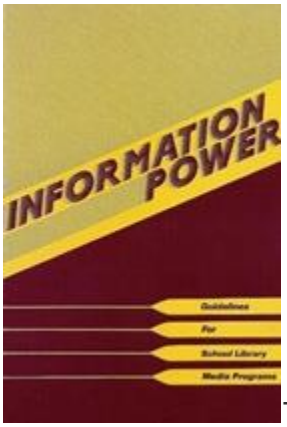
- 1987, Elaine K. Didier, library director, School of Business, University of Michigan

- 1988, Don C. Smellie, professor of education and chair, Department of Instructional Technology, Utah State University

New Journal Lineup

In an economy move in 1988, it was decided to merge the Journal of Instructional Development (JID) and Educational Communication and Technology (ECTJ) under the new name of Educational Technology Research and Development (ETR&D)(pdf), beginning in 1989. The intention was to broaden the scholarly journal's scope to encompass the scholarship of instructional development as well as the scholarship of research and theory. To do this, the journal was divided into two sections, Research and Development, each with its own editor and editorial board. The first editors were Howard Sullivan (for Research) and Norman Higgins (for Development), both of Arizona State University.

TechTrends also underwent change, incorporating more content from AECT Divisions, as an alternative to having divisions produce their own periodical publications. It also became peer-reviewed at this time, making it a more attractive publishing venue for college professors, whose scholarly productivity is measured in part by their success in activities that are reviewed by peers.



The non-periodic publications program focused on providing materials directed within the profession, such as standards for community college and university learning resources programs and guidebooks for division presidents and convention planners. A major accomplishment was the publication in 1988 of Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs, the latest in the series of collaborations with AASL on professional standards for school library media programs. The publication was announced by means of a teleconference that was downlinked to every state in the U.S. plus sites in Canada.

At the urging of Don C. Smellie, president in 1988, the board approved the concept of local chapters. The purpose was to promote local activity and affiliation among individuals who were members of AECT but not members of the one of the constituent state affiliates (mainly oriented toward K-12 school interests). Three experimental chapters were authorized: Utah State University, West Central Wisconsin, and Southwest Virginia.

By the end of 1988 the association was out of debt and had begun to build a cash

reserve fund. Zenor's title was changed in 1989 to executive director. A strategic plan was also adopted, the result of committee work conducted under three consecutive presidents and boards of directors between 1987 and 1989.

In April 1990 the association moved to a new location for only the second time in its history, from 1126 Sixteenth Street, NW to 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW, in Washington DC. It also took the occasion to replace its antiquated computer system with a new one. For the first time, the staff and the board members were subscribed to the same computer network, Bitnet, which had become the common denominator for university e-mail systems.

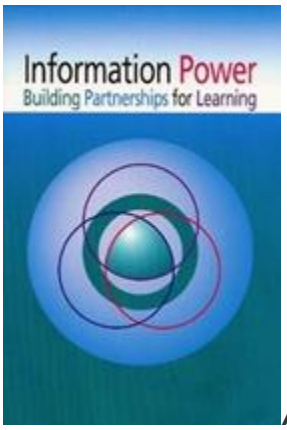
Stabilization in Early and Mid 1990s

Through the early and mid 1990s AECT enjoyed a period of stability under the fiscal management of executive director Stan Zenor. Membership hovered around 4000 (pdf); the conventions, with the INFOCOMM exhibition, continued to be successful; and the association regularly conducted two summertime programs: a Professional Development Seminar at a university campus and a Summer Leadership Conference at a resort setting. The latter provided an important opportunity for division and committee heads to meet face-to-face with members of their units and with other association leaders. A good deal of the work of the organization was accomplished during these conferences.

In 1994 the board of directors adopted a strategic plan, the Vision 2000 Strategic Plan. It helped to set goals and priorities for the next few years. That year also saw the publication of the association's most recent effort to define the field and its terminology, Instructional Technology: The Definition and Domains of the Field. It was the result of three years' deliberations by the Committee on Definition and Terminology, led by Barbara B. Seels, University of Pittsburgh, and Rita Richey, Wayne State University. It proposed this shorthand definition of the field:

Instructional Technology is the theory and practice of design, development, utilization, management and evaluation of processes and resources for learning.

That is, the definition virtually equated instructional technology with the instructional design process, indicating that by this time instructional design had become the central focus of the field, as opposed to the association's earlier focus on audiovisual media (1963) and then on problem-solving processes (1977).



Another Collaboration with AASL

In 1969, 1975, and 1988 AECT had partnered with AASL to produce a set of professional standards (later "guidelines") for school media centers. This partnership was revived again between 1995 and 1997 when committees from the two associations worked again to chart the future of the media center. This most recent vision, published in 1998 (Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning), put special emphasis on students' attainment of "information literacy" as an essential ingredient in their overall curriculum.

Despite these positive developments, troublesome issues lurked just beneath the surface. A primary one was potential membership growth. What was becoming clear by this time was that AECT was not likely to win into its constituency the great numbers of educators serving as computer coordinators at the school building and district level. These were the successors to the audiovisual coordinators of an earlier generation, those who were in the vanguard of the latest technology.

Another organization, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), founded in 1989, had become the professional home for this constituency. Although AECT and ISTE held merger talks during this period, they did not come to fruition.

Presidents during this period: 

- 1989, Robert E. Holloway, associate professor of education, Northern Arizona University

- 1990, Lucy Ainsley, director, Instructional Technology, Birmingham MI public schools (She suffered an aneurysm while she was president-elect and spent most of her presidential year recuperating. Holloway, who preceded as president, Tipling, who followed, and the other executive committee members filled in as needed to execute the presidential duties.)

- 1991, Roger Tipling, professor, Instructional Media Technology, Southwest Missouri State Unversity (He served six consecutive years on the executive committee, from secretary-treasurer-elect through past-president.)

- 1992, Larry Kitchens, director, Instructional Services, Texas Christian University

- 1993-1994, Addie Kinsinger, KAET-TV and Arizona State University (Since the convention was moved to February, she served 13 months; later presidents' terms again overlapped over two calendar years.)

- 1994-1995, Kent Gustafson, professor and chair, Instructional Technology, University of Georgia 

Convention Restructure

After the 1993 convention in New Orleans, AECT ended its eleven-year partnership with ICIA and the INFOCOMM trade show by mutual consent. ICIA wanted to partner with a larger association, and AECT was dissatisfied with the revenue sharing arrangement with ICIA, including ICIA's accounting practices. From the 1994 through 1999 conventions (pdf) AECT organized its own trade show, known as InCITE. However, the number of exhibitors tailed off sharply after 1996…from 156 to 121, to 66, and finally to only 26 in 1999.

Evolution of Divisions

The division structure established in the 1970 constitution and by-laws continued to serve members' interests, with incremental additions over the years, representing the evolution of members' concerns.

Divisions in 1976	
Educational Media Management	Educational Media Manager
Instructional Development	Instructional Development
Industrial Training and Education	Industrial Training and Educa
Information Systems	Interactive Systems and Con
International	International
Media Design and Production	Media Design and Productio
Research and Theory	Research and Theory
Telecommunications	Telecommunications
	Systemic Change in Educatio

Erosion in the Late 1990s

As revenue from the convention diminished in the late 1990s, so did the AECT budget. For several consecutive years the two main sources of revenue—convention income and membership dues—had fallen below projections and were declining. Early in 1998 it became clear that AECT was in serious financial jeopardy. Pres. Robert A. Harrell appointed a presidential task force, chaired by Lynn Milet, to make recommendations about the association's future. The task force gave its report on July 6, 1998, recommending financial cutbacks, a strategic focus on a smaller audience, collaborative arrangements with other organizations, reorganization of the headquarters office, a return to providing basic member services, and a focus on electronic delivery of services. The Board accepted these recommendations and established an AECT Renewal Implementation Task Force with several subcommittees to carry out the recommendations.

The presidents during this critical period were:

- 1995-1996, Lynn Milet, director, Instructional Technology Services, Lehigh University 

- 1996-1997, William Burns, president, Phoenix Learning Group

- 1997-1998, Franz Frederick, professor, Instructional Technology, Purdue University


- 1998-1999, Robert A. Harrell, dean, Learning Resources, DeKalb College, Georgia

- 1999, Kyle Peck, associate professor, Instructional Systems, Pennsylvania State University

 *Implementation of AECT Renewal, 1999*

Under the leadership of the new president, Kyle Peck, rapid and decisive action was taken on several fronts to relocate and reorganize the headquarters office. First, it was decided to move out of the "high rent" locale of Washington DC, AECT's home since its inception. This precipitated a problem with the unionized members of the headquarters staff, who launched legal action regarding their release. This was settled prior to the binding arbitration hearing, thanks to a financial settlement offer made possible by the contribution of an anonymous donor.

Second, Stan Zenor, the executive director, chose to find a new position in the DC area rather than move to a new location. The subcommittee on Relocation invited proposals for a new headquarters location. After site visits to the top three applicants, the proposal of the Agency for Instructional Technology (AIT) was accepted in April 1999. This meant that AECT's new home would be in Bloomington, Indiana, sharing quarters in the AIT building.

By June 1999 a management agreement was in place, and by July 14 the association's goods and chattels were moved from Washington DC to Bloomington, Indiana and AECT was doing business at 1800 N. Stonelake Drive.

James A. Pershing, a professor of Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University, was asked to take the role of acting executive director, with Carthell Everett, a School of Education staff member, acting as associate executive director of the association. They immediately set to work on the backlog of unanswered e-mail messages, overdue bills, and unpublished issues of TechTrends that had accumulated since the reorganization began. They served in those offices until September 1999. Pershing continued as Editor-in-Chief of TechTrends from May 1999 through March 2000.

 During this transition period, Michael Sullivan, executive director of AIT, served as senior advisor, as AIT had a contract to provide overall management services to the association. Phillip Harris, who had served as associate executive director of Phi Delta Kappa, became executive director in September 1999. Under new leadership, AECT continued as an "umbrella" organization, retaining a core of 2000 to 3000 members (pdf) attracted to its broad scope, bringing together teachers, school and district media specialists, professors and graduate students of instructional technology, corporate instructional designers, military training designers, multimedia developers, and others. By late 1999, professors and graduate students comprised about 60% of the membership, while school media specialists—building, district, and regional—comprised about 30%.

 So, at the end of the 20th century AECT was considerably changed from its original composition of school administrators and school visual instruction coordinators. What remained constant through the years was the mission—helping people learn more efficiently and effectively through the use of the best technologies available at the time.

AECT Legends and Legacies

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