

INSTAGRAM POST: <https://www.instagram.com/slcpl/p/DLqBF7dO57f/?hl=en>

One Small Step: Phone Listening Stations Overview

[One Small Step conversations](#) bring together folks of differing views to have [healthy conversations](#) about their identities, opinions, and shared humanity. These conversations are recorded for the One Small Step podcast/website. [In collaboration with librarians across the country](#), I received a grant to find a way to incorporate One Small Step’s work into library programming. I decided to create a listening station. Users can pick up a phone, dial a number, and hear a snippet of a conversation or story that demonstrates how to have complex conversations about hot topics. For more information about One Small Step, visit their FAQ page here: <https://storycorps.org/discover/onesmallstep/faq/>.

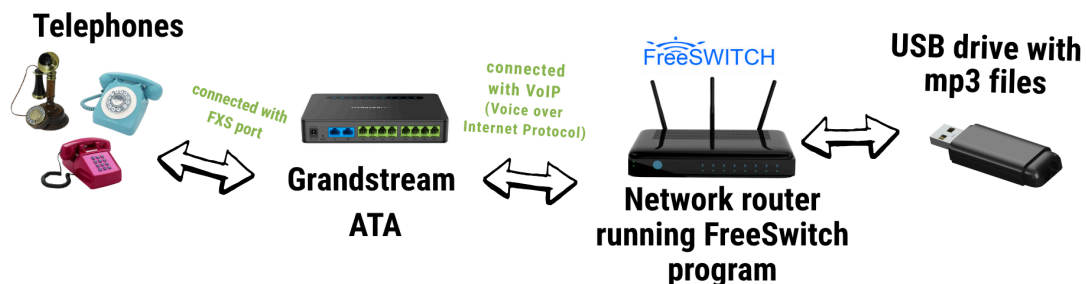
Philosophy:

- Phones engage active listening skills and inspire empathy and open-mindedness
- Vintage/retro look invites users to approach with curiosity. Novelty takes their guard down
- OSS conversations are grounded in “contact theory” research: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/nov01/contact>
- Here is more research demonstrating OSS conversation’s effectiveness: <https://current.org/2023/10/Research-demonstrates-success-of-storycorps-project-that-bridges-political-differences/>



Simple Tech Explanation:

“How do the phones work?”



Complicated tech explanation:

Analog telephone > (connected via FXS port to) [Grandstream ATA](#) (connected via VoIP to) > Local router/server which is running [FreeSWITCH software](#) > SIP call routed via [Dialplan](#) > mp3 playback triggered



Alternative technological setups:

- <https://www.raspberrypi.com/news/listen-to-oral-history-on-an-old-rotary-phone/>
- <https://www.instructables.com/Raspberry-Pi-in-Rotary-Phone/>

Resources Used:

- Telephones (any working landline phone will do but I will link the ones I used below)
 - [azure phone](#)
 - [green opis funkyphone](#)
 - [1921 style phone](#) (model c)
 - [blue slimline phone](#)
 - [pink trimline phone](#)
 - [violet push button phone](#)
 - [hamburger phone](#)
 - [horse phone](#)
- [Grandstream ATA](#)
- Network router
- [FreeSwitch](#) (software)
- USB drive



- Mp3 files from [One Small Step Conversations](#) (I edited conversations from the [Storycorps OSS archives](#))

Optional and/or Decorative:

- [Book-shaped cord management box](#)
- “[Phone book](#)” sign which decodes which numbers play which stories
- “[Dial a number to hear a story](#)” sign designed by Ivy Smith
- [Displays for folks to sign up](#) to have One Small Step conversations if they want
- [Bookmarks](#) with conversation starters
- Optional: [the NRC political conversations bookmark](#)



Acknowledgements:

Thank you to....

Bryan Whiting for his idea to use FreeSwitch software to create my own little phone network rather than hardwiring each individual phone with a Raspberry Pi to play mp3 audio.

Peter Whiting for downloading all the archival mp3s, figuring out how to wire this all together, and helping guide me through the configuration process for the Grandstream ATAs.

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KHOL Radio for their idea to use phones to play OSS audio.



updated 7/29/2025 by Amy Whiting (awhiting@slcpl.org)

