June 2011
Issue 31 Volume 1

AGOSCI

in focus

30 years of AGOSCI Inc.

Liberator

A Prentke Romich Company

Communication without limitations

Liberator has been overwhelmed with interest following the LAMP sessions held in Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide during May. John Halloran's engaging presentation style along with the demonstrated effectiveness of **LANGUAGE ACQUISITION** through **MOTOR PLANNING** served to fire-up many of the attendees. If you work with children & adults on The Spectrum & would like to learn more about LAMP please ring (08) 8362 5655. More extensive trainings are *coming soon!!!!!* Those who missed John at the AGOSCI Conference can find out about this ASD intervention approach at:

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AGOSCI *In Focus* is the National Magazine of the AGOSCI Inc. (formerly Australian Group on Severe Communication Impairment). AGOSCI *In Focus* is a bi-annual magazine and is available to members of AGOSCI. It contains information from and about national seminars, research, new communication technology, resources in the AAC field, news from overseas, and contributions from people who use AAC.

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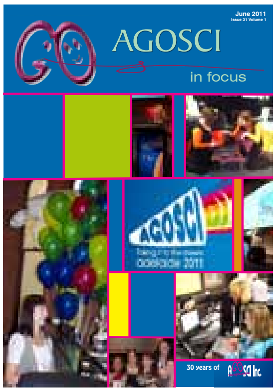
Cover Photos Left to right



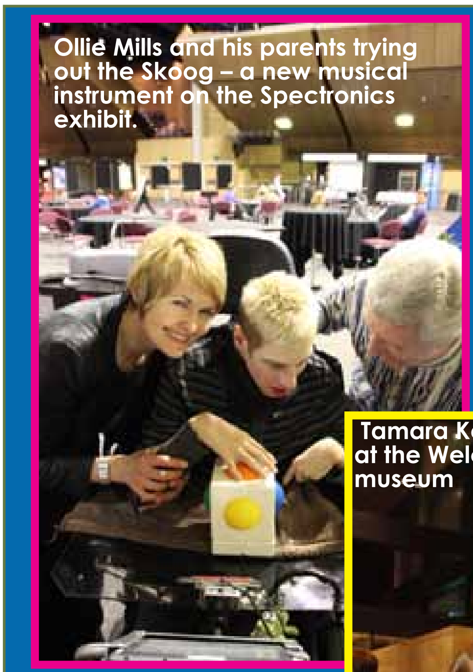
Janelle Sampson at the conference opening; Tracey Bode and Karyn Muscat at the Zytec display, Rachael Virgo at the museum opening, Pammi Raghavendra, Emma Grace, Julie McMillan, Karen McGregor and Amy Furze, part of the conference organising committee; Rachel Maher enjoying checking out the DynaVox VMax with EyeMax on the Spectronics display with Lori Geist visiting from DynaVox Mayer-Johnson in the USA

Editorial

Hello and welcome to this edition of AGOSCI in Focus. This conference edition brings you some of the presentations from the recent AGOSCI National conference in Adelaide, as well as articles from around Australia..... and the world. That's right the world. In what I believe may be an AGOSCI first we have had a couple of articles which come to us by the medium of Twitter. The first is by Tanya Coyle, a Canadian SLP who explains how we can use the world of social media for our professional development – I believe this is where I should plug that AGOSCI now has a Facebook page, as well as a Twitter account - he second is by Marlena Katane who responded to a Tweet requesting an article. I'm sure you can agree that social media is proving its' worth already.

Next edition of AGOSCI in Focus we are going to delve into the rapidly changing world of Apps. Apple, Android and beyond. If you have a view please consider contributing. Otherwise look forward to the next edition "The Expanding World of AAC". An edition so new that it will be out of date before it is even published!

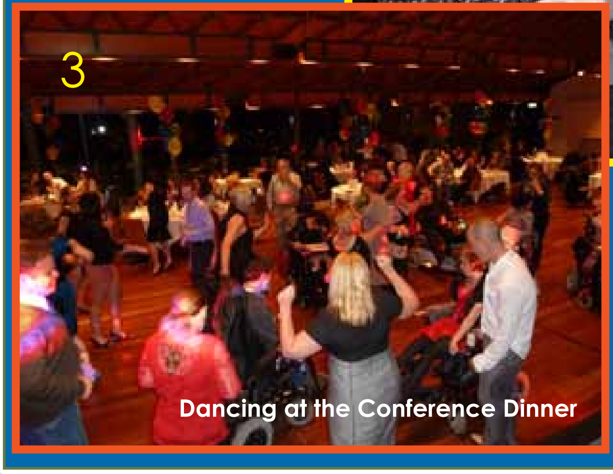
Kirsty


Ollie Mills and his parents trying out the Skoog – a new musical instrument on the Spectronics exhibit.


Denise West, Hank Wyllie, Barbara Solarsh, Ron Moray and Hilary Johnson


Sue Owen at the Museum Opening


Tamara Kelly and Carla Bischoff at the Welcome Reception at the museum



Dancing at the Conference Dinner


Barbara Collier (Executive Director ACCPC), Robbi Williams (CEO Julia Farr), Meredith Allen, Hon Kelly Vincent, MLC, David Caudrey (Executive Director, Disability, Aging and Carers, Community Home Support SA) and Karen Bloomberg

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Chairperson's Report

Sue Owen

The past year has been one of change and challenge and progress for me personally and for AGSOCI. Our long serving Chairperson Wendy Webster stepped down and is sadly missed. I retired as a practising speech pathologist in November 2010 and am still in the process of moving my life to Melbourne. Much of the records and archival material passed on to me by Wendy is now sitting in an impenetrable array of boxes in a house in Melbourne. So please accept my apologies for any inaccuracies in this report.

Welcome to our committee members who are attending for the first time, including Johanna Korkalainen from NSW, and Gabrielle Kelly from the NT. It is very good to have a full complement on the committee and our aim is to recruit more people to support key roles on the executive.

Executive committee

My thanks first of all to our indefatigable Treasurer, our long serving and assiduous Secretary and our talented and ever alert Web Mistress. Thanks to their efforts we now have books ready for audit and an up to date membership list, a functional list serve and electronic contact for all committee members.

Reps

We also now have the full complement of representatives for all states. We rely heavily on State Reps to keep the communication channels open for members and to promote our national tour speakers. Those states that organise events for AGOSCI outside the conference and the national tour contribute not only money to the organisation but also increase numbers and diversity in new membership.

List serve

If one thing can be said to have improved our networks among people living and working with AAC it has to be the list serve. It provides instant help and information for anyone with a problem in the area of AAC and generous amounts of new, useful information. Regular input from some of our more experienced AAC users adds credibility in a way nothing else could.

AGOSCI in Focus

The other most important tool for promoting AGOSCI and its aims and goals is AGOSCI in Focus. The Dynamic Duo from Brisbane, Kirsty Holcombe and Dominic van Bruschot joined Sheridan Forster to publish two editions which were outstanding in both content and layout. Since Sheridan resigned at the end of 2010 we have had contacts from a range of people who are interested in taking on a role this year, both therapists, AAC users and parents of AAC users. I feel that it will be important to maintain the link with universities and current research that Sheridan was able to provide and am hopeful that we will be able to create a balanced and committed editing team.

Employers and Distributers

When AGOSCI was first created, employers were generous with the time they allowed their employees to spend on activities to set the idea in motion. Nowadays fewer organisations have the flexibility to allow this sort of time and more people donate their time over and above their workload. I think it is worth acknowledging those organisations that do support AGOSCI by freeing up staff members to contribute and I would particularly like to also mention those distributors and manufacturers in Australia who publicise AAC and donate time and money each year. Novitatech, Liberator, Zyteq, Spectronics, Technical Solutions, Technability and Link AT.

Archivist

As part of our birthday celebrations this year we also accepted an offer from Judi Lipp, archivist with the Northcott Disability Services society, to help us collate a history of AGOSCI. She will be talking with people during the conference and we hope to provide her with the information to create a significant body of information around AGOSCI and AAC in Australia.

National tour in 2012

Caroline Musselwhite has been booked as speaker for the National tour in 2012 and will be arriving in Australia in August to do a tour that will take in Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Melbourne. Thank you to Jane for helping to book this eminent speaker for us.

Adelaide conference

What a fantastic programme we have lined up for us this week. Once more we have been able to award scholarships to AAC users to attend the conference in Adelaide Thank you to Di Symons for her work in this portfolio. Another good example of generous voluntary work.

The theme for the Adelaide conference is "Taking it to the streets" and this is an important aspect for acceptance in the wider community. Now I think we need to add "Taking it to the top" We need better informed Judges, Lawyers, Police, Doctors, School Principals, Heads of Departments, Ministers and Managers.

Australia wide

A heartening aspect for people with CCN in Australia is the increase of online disability sites and the number of innovative and effective interventions being carried out in all states. Mention what you working on to a teacher or therapist from another state and the odds are they will reply with information on a programme they know about in their state. Talk about the problems your child is having in school to another parent and the odds are they will have been there and already found a solution. Sharing your experiences on the list serve or in AIF benefits everyone so please continue to tell us what you are doing with AAC. It may shine a light for someone in another part of Australia.

Sue Owen

Money Matters

Treasurer's report

Jane Farrall

As per our incorporation requirements, our books for 2010 were prepared and audited in preparation for our AGM in May.

Unfortunately, for the second year in a row we made a loss – for the 2010 financial year this loss was $17,539.57.

However, this isn't as bad as it would seem as we had to pre-pay a large number of the 2011 conference expenses in 2010 with no income at that point.

At this stage, AGOSCI still has quite a stable financial base. At the end of 2010, we had $85,762.26 in our bank accounts, including $10,000 in a trust account which is kept aside as an emergency reserve.

Our major income activity for 2010 was the National Tour. This event made a very small profit. Reasons for why attendance for this event were down, which in turn produced the great reduced profit, have already been discussed. The Literacy Intensive also took place in 2010 and this made a greater profit.

If any member has questions about our financial status please feel free to contact me directly - *Jane*

Notations ...

Secretary's report

Melissa Bakes

Hi Everyone,

It was a busy start to the year with the Conference and with many memberships coming in. Just the usual Secretary jobs for now- banking cheques, forwarding information, answering enquiries etc. etc. I'd first like to congratulate the Adelaide conference committee for an absolutely FANTASTIC conference. I had such a great time and picked up more really great ideas. It was great to catch up with many members and the new and past executive committee members.

I have included the minutes from the recent AGM at the conference in this copy of AGOSCI In Focus.

Following the AGM we have had to farewell Sue Owen our Chairperson for the last few years who has stepped down and welcome Sally Hunter who has stepped up from the WA State Reps position. Thanks Sue for your dedication over the last few years and enjoy your retirement. Sally has been the Rep for a number of years and has great insight into the organisation so AGOSCI is in good hands. We also welcomed Kelly Moore to the WA State Reps position and Gabrielle Kelly to the NT Reps position. Also, welcome to Johanna Korkalainen who is helping out in the NSW Reps position.

All I really have to report on for the moment are the membership numbers. At the moment we have around 260 members. I have seen some new names again this time around. So the word continues to get out there. Thanks again to all of those who have rejoined. Your continued membership is appreciated and valued. We continue to grow each year.

Well that's it from me this time around so until next time - *Mel*

Every AGOSCI Conference is a big event and requres a lthe support of a number of AGOSCI members.

The following people gave up their time in a voluntary capacity to ensure this conference and associated events were a success.

Janelle Sampson
Abi Thirumanickam
Amy Furze
B-J Price
Carla Bischoff
Cassandra Manuell
Catherine Olsson
Cheryl McGill
Claire Della Torre
Dr Pammi
Raghavendra
Dr Julie McMillan
Emma Grace
Helen Parkyn
Karen McGregor
Laurence Byrne
Lorna Fenech
Lynda Hutchinson
Maureen Casey
Peita Petersen
Rachael Virgo
Sandra Stewart
Tara Comas
Victoria Bigge

THANK YOU ALL FOR A FANTASTIC CONFERENCE!

State Reports

NEW SOUTH WALES

Sheila Salunke and Johanna Korkalainen

AGOSCI NSW hosted a networking afternoon tea for NSW members. The purpose of the event was to gain feedback and to gather ideas from the NSW members on how they would like to promote AGOSCI in their own professional capacity in their fields of expertise and how they could better contribute to AGOSCI NSW. 9 NSW AGOSCI members came along and had a most inspiring and enthusiastic conversation around promoting and contributing to AGOSCI. Ideas such as getting the NSW Department of Education actively involved and organising more networking opportunities were eagerly received.

We also had two speakers for the afternoon. Leigha Dark presented her PhD work on grief and loss and how that relates to communication and AAC. Laura McGee, an author and an AAC user shared her personal experiences in growing up without an adequate AAC system. She also talked about her great experiences and encouragement that she had received from AGOSCI.

AAC Voice, a group of young AAC users began meeting early this year. The purpose of the group is to meet socially and to raise awareness to the general public about people with complex communication needs, in other words, demonstrating their voice! AGOSCI NSW supporting the group to get started. Those who would like to attend their meetings can contact them on their Facebook "AAC Voice"

NSW AGOSCI linked with Northcott for PODD workshops in Canberra. ILC, Northcott and AGOSCI NSW collaboratively worked together to run a PODD workshop (presenter Gail Porter, with assistance from Harriet Korner and Nichola Midgley) in Sydney late last year. Over 50 people attended the workshop. Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, parents and early childhood educators had attended. The Workshop was a resounding success such that a follow up session was held earlier this year for PODD attendants to discuss their experiences in using PODD since the workshop as well as to problem solve.

AGOSCI NSW has been very busy organising AGOSCGI Conference 2013. The planning committee which has now linked with All Occasions is definitely moving ahead with a clear plan in place. The theme for the conference is Connct2Communicate. For the rest of the NSW AGOSCI it is business as usual with more networking opportunities and other local events.

TASMANIA

Diane Symons

While AGOSCI in Tasmania has been fairly quiet, we had a mix of people from around the state attending the conference in Adelaide. It was great catching up with other AGOSCI members at the conference and I look forward to inviting those who attended to continue sharing their feedback with others in the state.

State issues that are of interest to Tasmanian AGOSCI members include the ongoing review of Assistive Technology provision. Following the parliamentary review conducted a few years ago now, a report was tabled with Parliament in February this year. A working party has been involved but no detail has been publically released. Overall the review, which recommends removing the ceiling on funding for speech generating devices, sounds very promising and I am keenly awaiting the details!

On a related matter most people are probably aware by now of the proposal for a National Disability Insurance Scheme. I encourage all of you to look at the website at www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au for further information and encourage all your friends and family to read the information and join the campaign.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Gabrielle Kelly

Hi from the Northern Territory,

It is with great enthusiasm that I take on the role of NT representative with AGOSCI and wish Marion all the best with the new addition to her family! As we move into the gorgeous dry season, the NT is abuzz with preparation for the upcoming Speech Pathology Australia Conference to be held in Darwin from the 26-29 June. We look forward to welcoming many Speech Pathologists to the Top End for this event and note many relevant presentations for AGOSCI members.

A small interest group has also been formed in recent months to explore the exciting technology of iPads and the myriad of applications out there relevant for children and adults with additional communication needs. We are fortunate to have local OT and technology extraordinaire Greg Wills in the group to guide those of us who are less tech-savvy! Watch this space…

WESTERN AUSTRALIA BRANCH REPORT

Sally Hunter

WA has enjoyed a stable although smaller membership this year which is typical during the non national tour year. Whilst there have been no particular AGOSCI events we have played a role in and celebrated the inaugural Variety WA Motor Mouth Camp held at Point Walter. The camp was a resounding success with 15 new families participating and many volunteers. The AAC interest group continues very successfully, hosted by The Centre for Cerebral Palsy.

Website and the ListServ have been the major time consumer for this state rep! the website and list serve were ported to a new host recently, however there have been issues with email volumes due to the success of the list and a new host is to be sources asap. Thankyou to all for your patience during this transition it has been tricky to sort out and will hopefully be on track in the next couple of months.

The content of the discussions on the list have been excellent and reflective of the respectful and supportive community we are.

State Reports (cont)

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY BRANCH REPORT

Cathy Hurman

Hello from the ACT

I am very pleased to report that there is a lot of enthusiasm and energy around the areas of AAC and CCN in Canberra at the moment. A group of us travelled to Adelaide for the conference and returned buzzing with ideas. We are going to have a local conference feedback session to keep the discussions started at the conference alive. I will advertise the time and place on the list serve and using local email networks so keep an eye out.

We have also been lucky enough to have Gayle Porter and Harriet Korner present a two day introductory PODD workshop. I know how much the participants enjoyed this workshop and I have already seen evidence of the information shared being taken back to workplaces to be put into practice.

Our small ACT membership is slowly growing and I hope to see that trend continue. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions for local events please let me know.

QUEENSLAND

Paula Hartwig & Melanie Waalder

The Queensland spirit came alive at the beginning of this year to support the local communities during a time of devastation and heartache. The January floods and cyclone impacted on a range of people and in a range of places. We would like to take this opportunity to send our best wishes to those who were impacted on by the floods and cyclone and to thank those people who helped out the many people in need.

Considering the challenging start to 2011 AGOSCI Queensland continued to respond to queries about the Adelaide conference and commence organization of events for the 2011 year. In term 1, AGOSCI Queensland had the pleasure of inviting Gayle Porter back to Queensland to run Introductory Pragmatic Organizational Dynamic Display workshops in Brisbane and Townsville. PODD workshops have been very popular in Queensland and the term 1 workshops were no different. 70 people across the state completed the two day workshop but unfortunately many others missed out on this popular event. As a result we have been very lucky to get Gayle Porter back in November for another two day workshop in Brisbane.

In term 2 a number of AGOSCI Queensland members made the journey to Adelaide for a fantastic conference that inspired all those who attended. Currently the AGOSCI Queensland reps are putting together an online newsletter for the AGOSCI Queensland members in order to advertise upcoming events. If you have any ideas or suggestions for upcoming events, please contact Melanie or Paula at agosciqldrep@hotmail.com

VICTORIAN BRANCH REPORT

Katie Lyon

Naomi Rezzani

Hello to all of the Victorian AGOSCI Members! You may be thinking that things have been a little quiet from your state representatives lately - and you would be right! I had a little girl (Olive) on the 2nd March and am slowly getting my head around motherhood and Stacey Cohen got married, also in March - so Congratulations to Stacey! Stacey has also decided to step down as the co-respresenative for Victoria and I'm sure I speak on behalf of all of the Victorian members when I say a BIG thank you for all of your voluntary time and efforts. I am thrilled to introduce Naomi Rezzani as the new co-representative for Victoria. Naomi works at the Communication Resource Centre, Scope and is looking forward to meeting many of you.

I was lucky enough to recently attend the AGOSCI Conference in Adelaide (very briefly - only for one day!). It was great to see so many Victorians there as delegates and presenters. From all reports the rest of the Conference was a huge success so CONGRATULATIONS to Janelle and the organising committee! Naomi and I will be organising a feedback session for our Victorian AGOSCI members sometime in early August - so keep posted for details.

Victoria also hosted the second AGOSCI Literacy Intensive 5 day course which was coordinated by Jane Farrall and presented by Karen Erikson and David Koppenhaver. Stacey reported both were very engaging and knowledgeable presenters who shared many practical ideas and strategies to support literacy development with children with complex communication needs. There were about 15 people attend the week course - a mix of therapists, teachers and parents.

As always, please keep posted for future Victorian events, and if you have any ideas for events and would like to help organise these, please let us know.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Amy Fuse

Janelle Sampson

It has been quite a start to the year in SA, with a great amount of energy directed to the 2011 AGOSCI 10th Biennial Conference. This event brought together a diverse and hard working group of SA based AGOSCI members through the organizing committee. The dedication of this group contributed to the success of the conference, for which we are continuing to receive positive feedback. It was a particular highlight to have the historical AAC museum display at the South Australian Museum for the month of May. With such a strong focus on the conference there have not been any other AGOSCI events in SA in the first half of the year. If you are in SA and would like to be kept up to date re: future events and activities relevant to the AAC community in SA (even if you aren't currently a member) please make sure that I have your current email address.

Member Talk

SANDRA STEWART

Member talk is a new initiative of AGOSCI In Focus. The purpose is to tell people about members of AGOSCI who come from a diverse backgrounds and have different interests. We could be contacting you next!

How long have you been a member of AGOSCI?

I first joined in 1988.

How are you involved with people with complex communication needs?

I am a Speech Pathologist. I have worked with people with physical disabilities since 1984.

Why do you like about being a member of AGOSCI?

AGOSCI is directly relevant to my area of work and interest. The members are a wonderful group of people. The conferences, magazine and listserv are great.

What do you think have been the best things in AAC in the past 10 years?

The general public's familiarity with word prediction thanks to mobile phones and their willingness and ability to adjust parameters on Speech Generating Devices.

The ease of programming and backing up data from Speech Generating Devices.

The integration of features on Speech Generating Devices such as using the phone and an environmental control unit.

The increasing affordability of AAC systems.

The improvement in electronic eye gaze systems.

The acceptance and "ownership" of AAC Apps by families including those of young children.

What do you think we need to learn more about in the next 10 years in AAC?

How to increase executive's/funder's/manager's awareness of the complexity of communication.

How to select and organise vocabularies to facilitate efficient, seamless retrieval.

How to best make use of "smart" technologies to facilitate vocabulary selection to suit partners, location, environment, topics.

How to integrate AAC into mainstream culture to the extent that all who could benefit from AAC have ready access to it and to appropriate support.

MEMOIR SENSES

I remember seeing the mainstream kids at Kidman Park Primary School because it was special.
I remember wanting to taste pizza and food that everyone else was eating.
I remember listening to Mum and Dad telling our helpers that I was not well enough to do the patterning program. I was pretending to be sick because I didn't want to do it.
I remember loving the nice smell of Mum when I was resting with her.
I remember feeling the sticky feet of Nick' pet mouse called "Max" when it ran up my legs.

by Oliver Mills

Historical display of AAC and AGSOCI at the SA Museum

By Victoria Bigge

The month of May 2011 saw the first ever historical display of alternative and augmentative communication at the South Australian museum. The display was run in conjunction with the 10th AGSOCI biennial National Conference held in Adelaide 11th-14th May and to celebrate 30 years of AGSOCI. What a fantastic milestone. The display was aimed at educating and increasing public awareness of AAC, and, increasing public awareness of AGOSCI. The display was organized to tie in to the conference theme "taking it to the streets". The aim of the display was to highlight the incredible journey AAC has taken in the past 30 years and the importance of AGOSCI for people who have, work or live with CCN. The display was opened by Hilary Johnson and Karen Bloomberg , original members of AGOSCI, on the 11th May and was overall a great success with many people from the conference attending the opening night.

The display aimed to show case the history of prominent speech generating devices that AGSOCI members felt had made the most impact over the last 30 or so years. The display also aimed to highlight the importance of low tech devices, written media and different access methods.

It was great to be able to view a range of speech generating devices and see how these have changed over the years. The world of AAC has come so far in terms of size, portability and voices. It was amazing to see the early devices with the very slow and tinny computerized voices such as 8 utterance box, compared to the modern devices of today such as the Dynavox Maestro or those devices that support Loquendo software and allow users to choose their own dialect or language. Picking up an old Dynavox made you realize how heavy those old devices were and how hard this would have made mounting the device and taking it everywhere you went. Another interesting change over the years is the size of batteries. Some of the batteries in the display are as big as devices are now. These would have been taken everywhere and would have made for very heavy cargo indeed. It was interesting to see what a revolution a device like the wolf must have been, as it was so light!

Golden oldies included Canon Communicator - still with paper, touch talker, Epsom Real Voice, Liberator , Lighttalker, Vocaid and yes/no box. It was great to see home made scanning devices such a clock scanners and scanning box with lights. In this fast paced world of consumerism we tend not to make things anymore much to our loss. There were many creative people out there making devices to suit specific needs. Modern devices displayed included Step by Steps, Alpha Talker and Lightwriter. iPads and iPhones were also mentioned as an exciting new addition to the AAC world.

The low technology section and symbol section showed how these areas have change dramatically over the years. Bliss symbols were very prevalent in Australia in the early years of AGOSCI. Many members sent in books, and displays that were developed with bliss symbols. Other symbols that were used were Rebus, Makaton and PCS. There were numerous hand drawn hand coloured boards in the display which remind us who have grown up with colour printers how much effort and time went into developing these boards for clients/families. Now using

HISTORICAL DISPLAY OF AAC AND AGOSCI (cont).....

Board maker and other programs, developing communication boards is a quick and simple process.

The AGSOCI section highlighted the changes in the past 30 years that AGOSCI has been through. The original name for the group stood for Australian Group on Severe Communication Impairment. The named changed in 2003 to coincide with the changing terms used to by people with little or no speech. The term severe communication impairment was no longer considered acceptable and instead terms such as complex communication needs were adopted. Even today the terminology appears to be changing again with terms such as little or no speech being deemed as more appropriate. It was great seeing a display of the AGSOCI in focus magazines from the first one printed in 1982 to current issues. The magazine was originally called the AGOSCI –National Newsletter. It was typed and photocopied and sent to members. In 1992 the magazine was printed – a much more professional looking production and the name changed to AGOSCI News. The first AGSOCI conference was held in Sydney in 1994 and topics included the following topics:

Alternative and Augmentative Communication

Pre-intentional communication

Use of technology

Advocacy issues

Mealtime assistance

Saliva control

In 2005 the magazine changed names to AGSOCI in Focus.

The display also highlighted those that have paved the way in promoting AAC including Anne McDonald who sadly passed away in 2010. Anne was a pioneer for people who use AAC and have complex communication needs. She is well known for her inspirational story Annie's Coming Out. In 2008 she was awarded the National Disability Award. The display also highlighted input research articles and personal stories of AAC users.

A big thank you to the organizing committee Rachael Virgo and Maureen Casey who put in many endless hours to get the display up and running. It was a such a memorable event and it wouldn't have possible with out the committee's hard work. The museum committee would also like to thank all those who have sent items to be displayed in the museum, it was great to see so much history all in one place. It is hoped that other states will pick up the display and allow AAC to be "taken to the streets" in other Australian States.

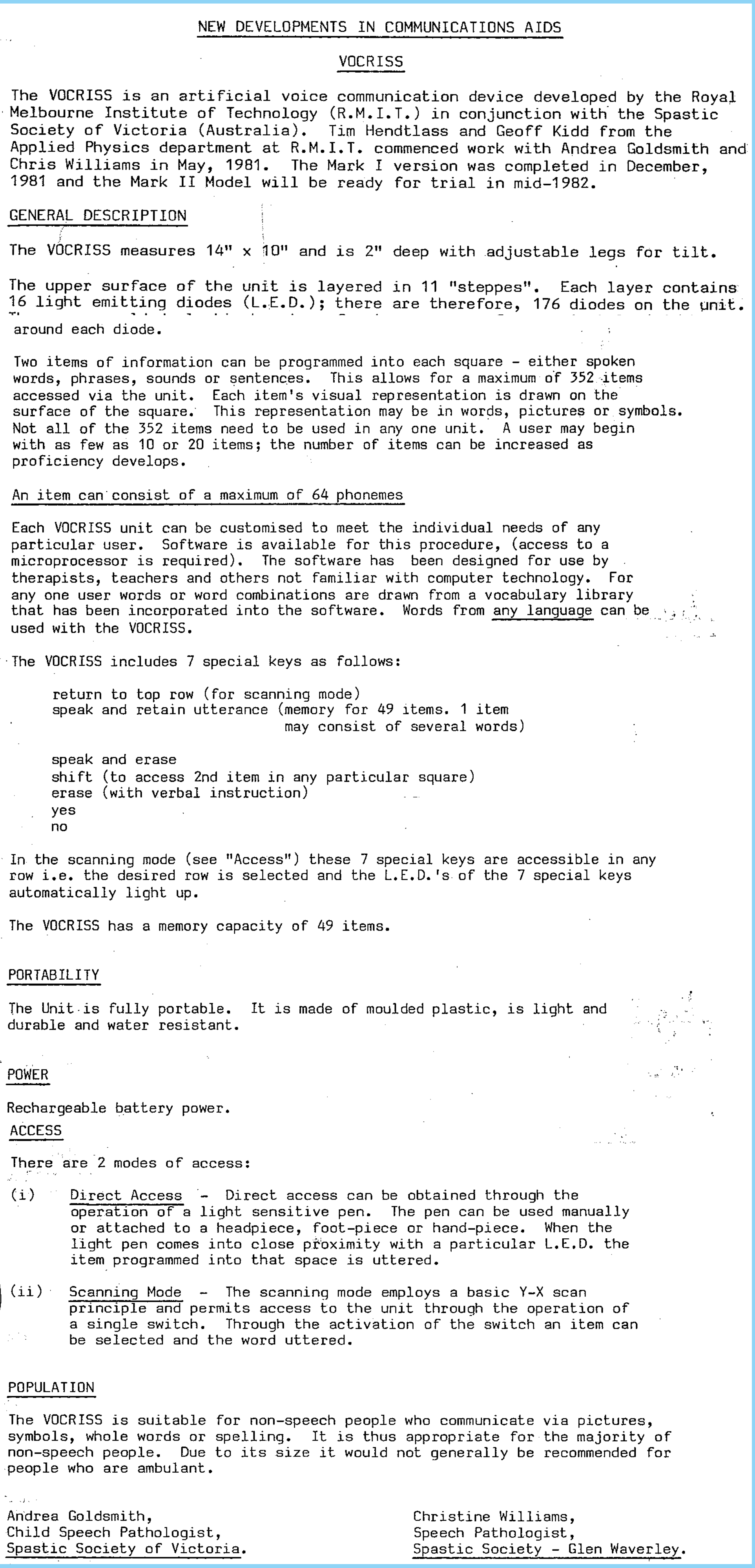
30 Years of......

Meredith

AUSTRALIAN GROUP ON SEVERE COMMUNICATION IMPAIRMENT

AGOSCI Inc.
www.agosci.org.au

This year we celebrate 30 years of AGOSCI as an organisation. This article was published in the first AGOSCI newsletter in 1982. I hope you enjoy this step back in time.



NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN COMMUNICATIONS AIDS

VOCRISS

The VOCRISS is an artificial voice communication device developed by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (R.M.I.T.) in conjunction with the Spastic Society of Victoria (Australia). Tim Hendtlass and Geoff Kidd from the Applied Physics department at R.M.I.T. commenced work with Andrea Goldsmith and Chris Williams in May, 1981. The Mark I version was completed in December, 1981 and the Mark II Model will be ready for trial in mid-1982.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The VOCRISS measures 14" x 10" and is 2" deep with adjustable legs for tilt.

The upper surface of the unit is layered in 11 "steppes". Each layer contains 16 light emitting diodes (L.E.D.); there are therefore, 176 diodes on the unit.

around each diode.

Two items of information can be programmed into each square - either spoken words, phrases, sounds or sentences. This allows for a maximum of 352 items accessed via the unit. Each item's visual representation is drawn on the surface of the square. This representation may be in words, pictures or symbols. Not all of the 352 items need to be used in any one unit. A user may begin with as few as 10 or 20 items; the number of items can be increased as proficiency develops.

An item can consist of a maximum of 64 phonemes

Each VOCRISS unit can be customised to meet the individual needs of any particular user. Software is available for this procedure, (access to a microprocessor is required). The software has been designed for use by therapists, teachers and others not familiar with computer technology. For any one user words or word combinations are drawn from a vocabulary library that has been incorporated into the software. Words from any language can be used with the VOCRISS.

The VOCRISS includes 7 special keys as follows:

return to top row (for scanning mode)
speak and retain utterance (memory for 49 items. 1 item may consist of several words)

speak and erase
shift (to access 2nd item in any particular square)
erase (with verbal instruction)
yes
no

In the scanning mode (see "Access") these 7 special keys are accessible in any row i.e. the desired row is selected and the L.E.D.'s of the 7 special keys automatically light up.

The VOCRISS has a memory capacity of 49 items.

PORTABILITY

The Unit is fully portable. It is made of moulded plastic, is light and durable and water resistant.

POWER

Rechargeable battery power.

ACCESS

There are 2 modes of access:

(i) Direct Access - Direct access can be obtained through the operation of a light sensitive pen. The pen can be used manually or attached to a headpiece, foot-piece or hand-piece. When the light pen comes into close proximity with a particular L.E.D. the item programmed into that space is uttered.

(ii) Scanning Mode - The scanning mode employs a basic Y-X scan principle and permits access to the unit through the operation of a single switch. Through the activation of the switch an item can be selected and the word uttered.

POPULATION

The VOCRISS is suitable for non-speech people who communicate via pictures, symbols, whole words or spelling. It is thus appropriate for the majority of non-speech people. Due to its size it would not generally be recommended for people who are ambulant.

Andrea Goldsmith,
Child Speech Pathologist,
Spastic Society of Victoria.

Christine Williams,
Speech Pathologist,
Spastic Society - Glen Waverley.

Fig 1. Cross Section

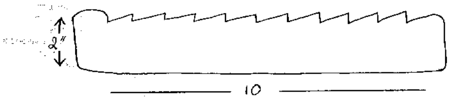


Fig 2. Anterior View

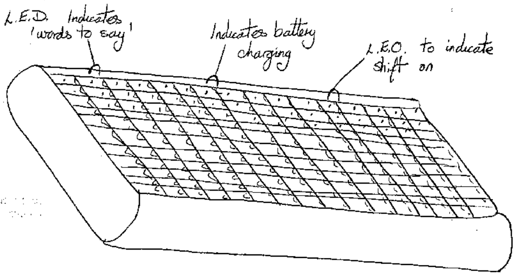
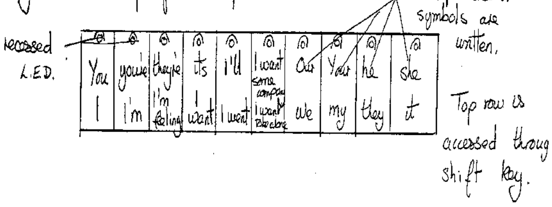


Fig 3. Close Up Of A Sample Row



Communication Technology for the Ageing Population

By Angela Guidera – Assistive Technology Consultant/Speech Pathologist

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With the increasing ageing population, more Australians are likely to find themselves with complex communication needs. Their communication difficulties may be a result of cerebrovascular accidents, cancer or degenerative conditions such as Motor Neuron Disease or Parkinson's Disease.

Older people face particular challenges finding communication solutions that meet their needs. As well as communication difficulties, they may have other limitations associated with ageing such as vision impairments, hearing impairments or reduced mobility. They may be less familiar than younger people with using computers, mobile phones and other mainstream technology. Their significant others are more likely to have hearing impairments, further increasing the chances of communication breakdowns occurring. These challenges are likely to impact on their ability to effectively use communication technology.

It can be difficult to find suitable technology to meet the needs and preferences of older users. Some of the device features that may be particularly relevant to this group are outlined below.

hummingbird

Portability and Simplicity

While some older users of devices need more capable devices, others may not want to be seen with something they feel is too bulky, looks too "high tech" or makes them look different from their peers. Examples of discreet, user-friendly, portable speech generating devices are the Hummingbird (Unlimiter), the GoTalk Pocket (Attainment) and the Lingo (AbleNet).

Dual Screens

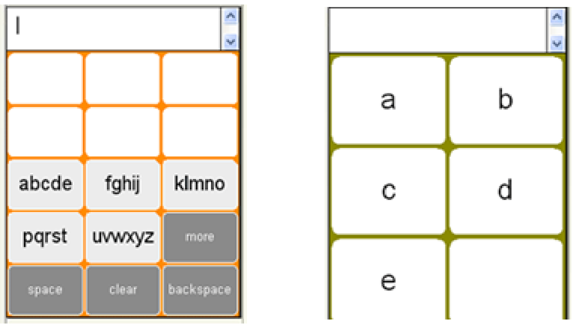
Lightwriter SL40

Older communication partners may have difficulty hearing or understanding the voice output from a speech generating device. The LightWRITER SL40 (Toby Churchill) and the SpeakOut (Permobil) have dual screens. This enables the communication partner to read the user's message, instead of relying solely on hearing it. The second screen makes it easier for them to maintain eye contact with the device user, since they don't need to look at the user's screen to see the text output.

Another helpful feature when interacting with communication partners with hearing impairments is 'Silent Mode'. This is an option on the Say-it! SAM (Words Plus). Instead of the message being spoken aloud, when the user generates a message it is displayed in large text on the screen, taking up the whole screen. The communication partner can read the message, instead of relying on hearing it. This feature is also useful for private conversations.

Say it Sam silent mode

Alternative Keyboard Layouts



Tellus Smart 2

Older people may not be experienced with computers and may find it difficult to relate to the "QWERTY" layout on text-to-speech devices. An "ABC" layout may be more suitable. The LightWRITER SL40 (Toby Churchill) and Allora (Jabbla) are available with "ABC" layout. Some dynamic display devices also come with pre-programmed "ABC" keyboard layout options.

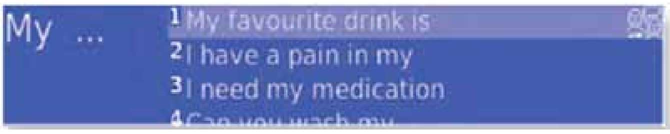
Some dynamic display devices provide different onscreen keyboard options to accommodate for vision impairment or physical access difficulties. For example, the Tellus Smart 2 (Jabbla), which has a small screen, allows the user to access an individual letter via two selections.

Speak Out

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR THE AGING POPULATION (cont)...

Adjustable Font Size

Older people may struggle to read small text. The size of text output on some devices may be too small for them. Some devices allow font size to be adjusted. For example, font size can be set to large or small on the SpeakOut (Permobil) and a range of dynamic display devices.



My ...
1 My favourite drink is
2 I have a pain in my
3 I need my medication
4 Can you wash my

Lightwriter SL40

Rate Enhancement Features

Smart rate enhancement features can help to speed up communication and reduce memory load. Intelligent word prediction is available on the Allora (Jabbla), LightWRITER SL40 (Toby Churchill), SpeakOut (Permobil) and DynaWrite (DynaVox Technologies) - the next word predicted is based on which words are likely to come next in a sentence. Some devices allow pre-stored phrases to be viewed on the screen.

If the user selects the 'Pick' key before typing anything on the LightWRITER SL40 (Toby Churchill) all pre-stored phrases are displayed. The user can scroll through a list of phrases using arrow keys. They do not need to remember a large number of codes in order to recall pre-stored phrases. Another option is to type a word, then choose from a range of pre-stored phrases containing that word. If a word is typed before selecting the 'Pick' key only phrases containing that word are displayed on the screen.

Speak Out Scan

Simple Scanning

Vision impairments may make it difficult for users to manage scanning on some devices. The scanning array may be too small or too complex. Unlike some other text-to-speech devices, the SpeakOut Scan (Permobil) clearly illuminates keys on the static keyboard as it scans. Most dynamic display devices allow scanning setups to be customised to accommodate for vision impairments. Suitable setups are more easily achieved on devices with larger screens.

People with degenerative conditions may initially be able to access a device via direct touch but need to swap to another access method at some stage. A device which has multiple access options enables the user to keep the same device when their needs change.

The Allora (Jabbla) and DynaWrite (DynaVox Technologies) can be accessed via direct touch or scanning. Portable dynamic display devices that allow for both scanning and direct access include the Zingui (Jabbla), Tellus Smart 2 (Jabbla), DynaVox Xpress (DynaVox Technologies), ALT-Chat (Liberator) and Springboard Lite (Liberator).

Adult-appropriate Images

Picture Master Language Software

Some older people may be unsuited to a text-based AAC system but may be put off by picture symbols that appear to be aimed at children. They may prefer photos or more adult-appropriate illustrations/ images. Picture Master Language Software (Unlimiter) allows realistic illustrations to be used as an alternative to line drawings for low-tech communication resources or dynamic onscreen pages.

Memory Prompts

Verbal prompts can be stored in some devices to assist users who have memory difficulties. The VoiceCue (Attainment) is a simple, portable device designed specifically for providing verbal reminders at specified times.

The Step-by-Step Communicator (AbleNet) can be used a simple memory aid. A series of verbal prompts can be recorded so the user can listen to prompts for daily living activities (eg. to recall the steps involved in making a cup of coffee).

Verbal reminders can be stored in the SpeakOut (Permobil). At a designated time the reminder is spoken aloud and displayed on the screen. One-off or daily reminders can be used. The DynaWrite (DynaVox Technologies) allows for reminders to be programmed to appear on the screen at set times.

While one person's needs will differ from another's, the device features described above are likely to help accommodate for some of the limitations commonly experienced by older AAC users.

Voice Banking

Something else to consider is "voice banking". Many people with degenerative conditions, given the choice, would prefer to use their own voice over synthesised speech. "Voice banking" allows a person to use his/her own voice on a speech generating device. Recordings are made while the person is still able to use his/her own voice. This requires considerable forward planning.

One option is to save messages as .wav files. This can be done on a Windows computer by connecting a microphone to the computer and going into: Programs/Accessories/Entertainment/ Sound Recorder. Alternatively, recorded messages can be saved directly into a specific AAC software program or a speech generating device.

TAKING IT TO THE PLAYGROUND: The Queensland All Abilities Playground Project - Communication in Play

By Darren Trentepohl, Discipline Senior SLP, Department of Communities (Disability Services), QLD and Lisa Stafford, Research Fellow, Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland

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This paper was presented at the 2011 AGOSCI Conference. It highlights AAC in action in the real world – symbols and signing in playgrounds that are used by the general community including people with complex communication needs (CCN).

Playgrounds and Disability

Play is a fundamental right of any child (UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child) and society is responsible for ensuring that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participate in play (UN Convention on the Rights of Person with a Disability, Article 30 5d, 2006). However, a child with a disability's right to participate in play has been prevented by barriers imposed by the designs of these environments. These barriers belonging to three areas: 1) limited accessibility; 2) limited play value, and 3) lack of understanding by planning and other professionals about designing playgrounds for the diversity of children (Hudson et.al., 2000). When attempts have been made to be more accessible, it has often resulted in the addition of a ramp with little attention paid to play value and interaction within the space (Hudson et.al., 2000, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003; Christensen, & Morgan, 2003)

QAAPP History

In 2003, Lisa commenced her PhD (part time) into children with a physical disability and environmental relationships around the home, school and community. Accessible play was one such environment of interest, that emerged from her work with families who have a child/children with a disability. From 2004 until 2006, Lisa worked to develop the concept and feasibility of creating an All Abilities Playground and went on to create the first one at Pioneer Park in Landsborough on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Pioneer Park was very successful and is still highly used by the Sunshine coast community. In late 2006, $5m was granted as part of an election commitment to expand the project across Queensland and in 2007, Lisa commenced work on developing the concept into the statewide project, QAAPP. Sixteen local council sites were selected to participate, ranging from New Mapoon in the far north, to Texas in the south. In 2007, Darren began working on the Communication in Play elements. At the end of 2010, the QAAPP team lead by Lisa was disbanded. Twelve playgrounds were completed, 4 were in construction and all had a range of Communication in Play resources installed.

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring that all children, including those with a disability, have equal access to playgrounds so they can learn, grow and develop during play. It recognises the pivotal role that play has in the lives of young Queenslanders.

Project Commitment and Benefits

The project was built upon important foundations:

Enabling Play - removing barriers found in traditional and contemporary play environments; not just traditional physical access but also experiential for a range of disabilities, including communication impairment.

Strengthening Families - by establishing a safe and free community resource that enables families to relax and enjoy respite that has all the facilities available to make it an easy experience to be there (such as perimeter fencing, and large sturdy changing tables).

Meet User Needs – involving the community in the decision-making and planning process of each unique site through the application of a user participation design framework. Think ownership and connectedness with the playgrounds!

Shifting Design Practice - engendering understanding, new knowledge and skills in the industry and local councils in designing for children of all abilities so they could apply these to projects beyond QAAPP. The design framework was a mechanism to aid learning and skill development. The learning was then reinforced through the support and knowledge sharing provided by the project team and other professionals.

Products and Outputs

The Project achieved the overall goal of enhancing play experiences for children of all abilities well beyond the 16 playgrounds. The outputs of the project are in the form of five products, these are:

17 All Abilities Playgrounds

All Abilities ePlayground

Communication in Play resources

Design Framework and engagement tools

Informative web site for current and future use

Communication in Play

The aim of the Communication in Play element was to provide

TAKING IT TO THE PLAYGROUND (cont)....

access to communication. Not only was it an element in its own right, it also had to cut across the other 3 elements (physical, sensory and cognitive) and provide children with access to AAC in as many parts of the playground as possible.

Broadly we were looking to cater to best practice in AAC:

> The use of multi-modal systems that use a range of AAC resources such as signing and pictorial based aids (Beukelman & Mirenda 2005).
>
> Interactive communication using a range of language functions such as comments, negation, agreement and requests.
>
> Incorporating modern forms of communication via technology (use of the internet) which was important to allow children exposure to AAC so that they could familiarise themselves with the systems before they arrived. Additionally, it provided an opportunity for children to be able to reflect and share upon their experiences when returning to their home or school. We wanted to see the AAC tools breaking down AAC barriers, providing broad AAC exposure and giving children further AAC opportunities in their life.

Signing Resources

A 1.2 x 0.9 metre billboard with 27 Auslan images was designed. This resource was modeled on the national park walking track concept so that some information about CCN could be given to people on arrival into the playground. It provided basic information on how to use the Key Signing strategy as well as directions on where to go for more support. For ease of use the billboards focus was the request function. We were fortunate to receive the professional support from Bilby Australia in the design of this board. www.bilby.net

Visual Communication Tools

Despite this useful tool located at the entrance, we still wanted to have AAC tools around the playground and we wanted to recreate true 'playground' talk. The tools had to be easy to understand, user friendly and be able to support both receptive and expressive language. The answer was simple – an Engineered Language Environment (Goossens', Crain & Elder, 1992), aka Aided Language Stimulation.

Five communication boards were finalised to be used in multiple places by different playgrounds where appropriate:

> Active play – to be used in open spaces for ball play, sliding, climbing and spinning
>
> Creative play – to be used for sand play and dirt play
>
> Pretend play – to be used in shops and cafes that were popular at playgrounds
>
> Sensory play – to be used along walking tracks for garden talk (smelling, touching, exploring)
>
> Picnic table – to be used in conversation over food

Design the Tools

It was not practical to design 50 boards for all the possible activities across the state's playgrounds. Five boards were created to be used across all activities. Firstly, an evaluation of the activities planned for each playground was required followed by the collection of language samples from real playgrounds. Draft versions were given to all stakeholders and ongoing revisions were completed. We were fortunate to receive support from Dynavox-Mayer-Johnson to use the PCS symbols on the boards.

Practical Considerations

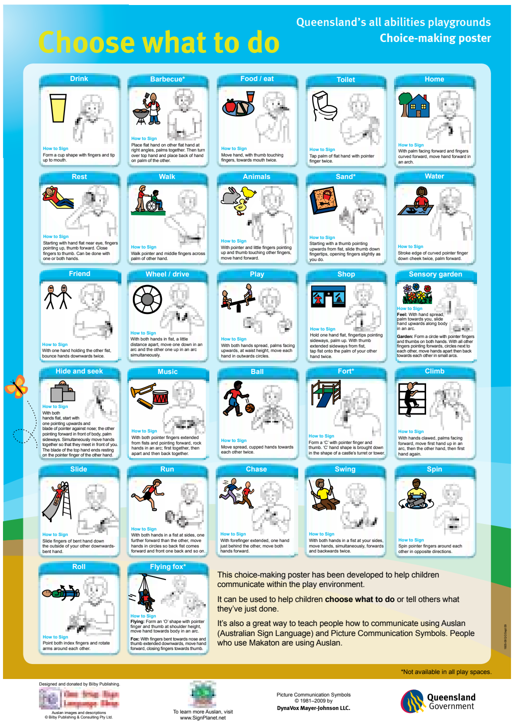
The vocabulary was limited to 28 items on all but one board. This was considered important to enable successful conversation between unfamiliar communication partners as it did not look overwhelming, but had enough vocabulary for some novel utterances.

The size of boards was made to 600 x 400mm which was big enough to see and therefore use, and not too big that it got in the way.

Durability factors and construction materials were in the hands of the construction team but it had to withstand the Queensland weather – rain, hail and shine.

Safety factors were considered. Boards were unable to be installed with a height above 500mm as this meant we would need to create a fall zone. In addition, the boards could not be

TAKING IT TO THE PLAYGROUND (cont)....



Queensland's all abilities playgrounds
Choice-making poster

Choose what to do

Drink
How to Sign
Form a cup shape with fingers and tip up to mouth.

Barbecue*
How to Sign
Place flat hand on other flat hand at right angles, palms together. Then turn over top hand and place back of hand on palm of the other.

Food / eat
How to Sign
Move hand, with thumb touching fingers, towards mouth twice.

Toilet
How to Sign
Tap palm of flat hand with pointer finger twice.

Home
How to Sign
With palm facing forward and fingers curved forward, move hand forward in an arch.

Rest
How to Sign
Starting with hand flat near eye, fingers pointing up, thumb forward. Close fingers to thumb. Can be done with one or both hands.

Walk
How to Sign
Walk pointer and middle fingers across palm of other hand.

Animals
How to Sign
With pointer and little fingers pointing up and thumb touching other fingers, move hand forward.

Sand*
How to Sign
Starting with a thumb pointing upwards from fist, slide thumb down fingertips, opening fingers slightly as you do.

Water
How to Sign
Stroke edge of curved pointer finger down cheek twice, palm forward.

Friend
How to Sign
With one hand holding the other fist, bounce hands downwards twice.

Wheel / drive
How to Sign
With both hands in fist, a little distance apart, move one down in an arc and the other one up in an arc simultaneously.

Play
How to Sign
With both hands spread, palms facing upwards, at waist height, move each hand in outwards circles.

Shop
How to Sign
Hold one hand flat, fingertips pointing sideways, palm up. With thumb extended sideways from fist, tap fist onto the palm of your other hand twice.

Sensory garden
How to Sign
Feel: With hand spread, palm towards you, slide hand upwards along body in an arc.
Garden: Form a circle with pointer fingers and thumbs on both hands. With all other fingers pointing forwards, circles next to each other, move hands apart then back towards each other in small arcs.

Hide and seek
How to Sign
With both hands flat, start with one pointing upwards and blade of pointer against nose; the other pointing forward in front of body, palm sideways. Simultaneously move hands together so that they meet in front of you. The blade of the top hand ends resting on the pointer finger of the other hand.

Music
How to Sign
With both pointer fingers extended from fists and pointing forward, rock hands in an arc; first together, then apart and then back together.

Ball
How to Sign
Move spread, cupped hands towards each other twice.

Fort*
How to Sign
Form a 'C' with pointer finger and thumb. 'C' hand shape is brought down in the shape of a castle's turret or tower.

Climb
How to Sign
With hands clawed, palms facing forward, move first hand up in an arc, then the other hand, then first hand again.

Slide
How to Sign
Slide fingers of bent hand down the outside of your other downwards-bent hand.

Run
How to Sign
With both hands in a fist at sides, one further forward than the other, move hands in circles so back fist comes forward and front one back and so on.

Chase
How to Sign
With forefinger extended, one hand just behind the other, move both hands forward.

Swing
How to Sign
With both hands in a fist at your sides, move hands, simultaneously, forwards and backwards twice.

Spin
How to Sign
Spin pointer fingers around each other in opposite directions.

Roll
How to Sign
Point both index fingers and rotate arms around each other.

Flying fox*
How to Sign
Flying: Form an 'O' shape with pointer finger and thumb at shoulder height, move hand towards body in an arc.
Fox: With fingers bent towards nose and thumb extended downwards, move hand forward, closing fingers towards thumb.

This choice-making poster has been developed to help children communicate within the play environment.

It can be used to help children **choose what to do** or tell others what they've just done.

It's also a great way to teach people how to communicate using Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and Picture Communication Symbols. People who use Makaton are using Auslan.

*Not available in all play spaces.

Designed and donated by Bilby Publishing.
Auslan images and descriptions © Bilby Publishing & Consulting Pty Ltd.

To learn more Auslan, visit www.SignPlanet.net

Picture Communication Symbols © 1981–2009 by DynaVox Mayer-Johnson LLC.

Queensland Government

placed within a fall zone of play equipment. For example, the sand play board could not be placed right in the sandpit but nearby to the side (but there is nothing stopping a family bringing their own printed sheet from home!).

A user friendly look was important too and so a decision was made to not use a colour key system. Instead symbols were coloured and the boards were corporatized.

Nouns were used selectively. We knew not to use too many nouns on our boards as a means to focus on interactive language but this had to be balanced with the need to use nouns to give communication partners a feeling that they can use the board easily.

Electronic Supports

Originally we had a 'pie in the sky' idea of putting touch screens into playgrounds which could act like speech generating devices. Unfortunately, this didn't evolve however we were able to use the Departmental website to create public access to our communication tools.

On the QAAPP website's *Communication in Play* section there are PDF documents of all the communication resources created. Additionally, important information about the value of communicating in play, how to use the AAC resources and suggestions on where to go for further support are all included. Links to other supports are listed as well. All this can be found at: http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/disability/community-involvement/queensland-all-abilities-playground-project/communication-in-play

Created at the same time was an All Abilities ePlayground. It was designed by Sonakids Australia, a not-for-profit IT company on the Gold Coast, to coincide with the opening of their local AAP. This site is a free online space offering fun and games for children of all abilities. It reflects the values and aims of the outdoor All Abilities Playgrounds (enabling participation in play) and is linked from the QAAPP website. For more info see:

http://www.allabilitiesplayground.net.au/

Where to from here?

Although the project is nearing completion, the physical parks and website with the online resources will remain. Local councils are responsible for the maintenance of the parks and resources. If any council decides to retrofit playgrounds the AAC templates will still be available, although further copyright will need to be sought. The QAAPP received national recognition when Pioneer Park won the 2006 Parks and Leisure Play Space Innovative Award and a Certificate of Commendation for Innovation in Industrial Design of Playground Elements from the 2006 Kidsafe NSW National Playspace Design Awards.

For more information please feel free to contact the authors.

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Access to Justice for People with Complex Communication Needs

By Brandon Tomlin, Eden Parris (Communication Rights Australia) and Roxanne Maule (Speech Pathologist – Calvary Health Care Bethlehem)

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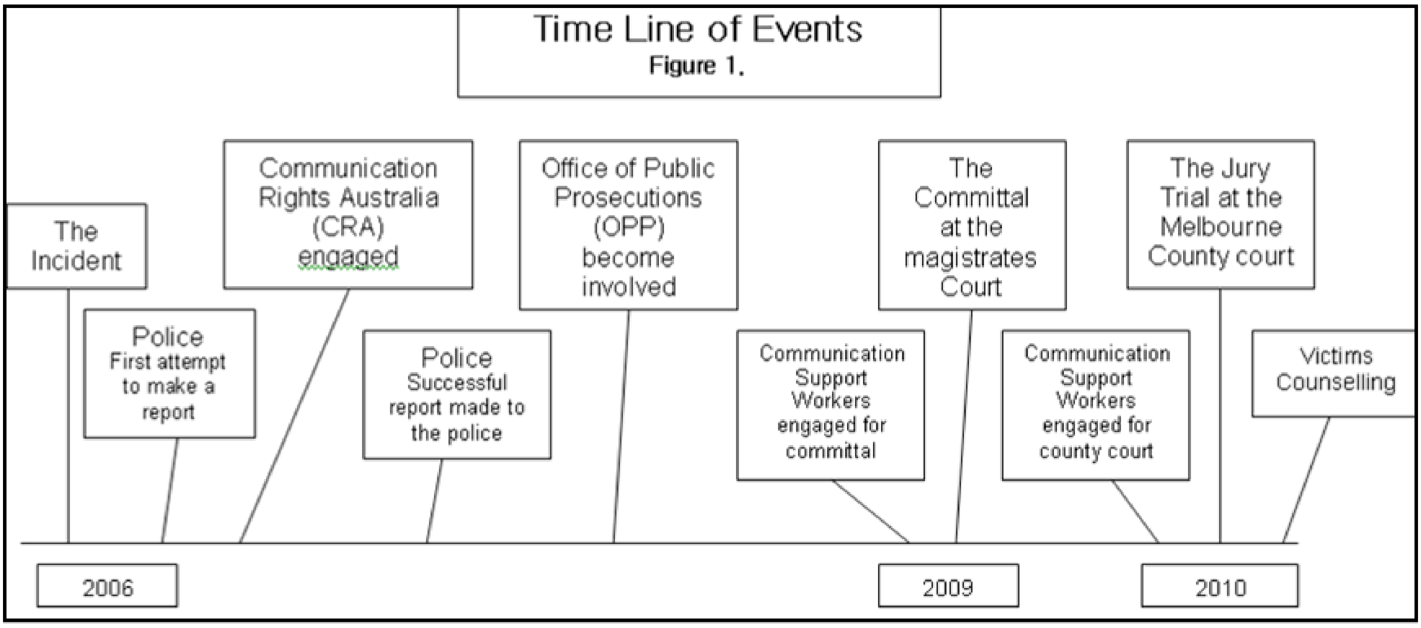

Time Line of Events

Figure 1.

Introduction:

For most people, going to court is difficult, even at the best times. Imagine for a moment how daunting this could be for someone without speech. Imagine the feelings of someone who relies on alternative means of communication and all the associated issues.

Brandon is a young man with Cerebral Palsy who lives and works independently in Melbourne. Brandon has Complex Communication Needs (CCN) and uses an Etran (or eye gaze) communication board to augment his communication. Significant disability means that he uses a motorised wheelchair for mobility, and is reliant on support to participate in many daily activities. Brandon is no stranger to having to fight for his rights and is hoping others can benefit from his experiences when he pursued a legal matter through the Victorian Judicial System.

This paper will discuss some of the many barriers experienced and accommodations made as Brandon sought to have his claim, understood, investigated and then followed up through the Australian Criminal Justice System. Although the details of the case will not be discussed, an overview of the process will be presented. The focus will be the communication experience for someone with CCN within the traditionally spoken communication context of the Australian judicial system and county court.

The Background to the Case:

In 2006 Brandon had an experience that resulted in him attempting to contact the police to make a report about a criminal offence. His first decision was to share this knowledge with a friend. A friend who also used communication other than speech and who also has some movement challenges. So, although Brandon was successful in getting his friend to understand broadly what had occurred, he was not so successful in conveying the detail. As a result Brandon's version of events did not match the version of events that his friend reported and this discrepancy became an issue during the trial which had to be addressed during the case.

When unsuccessful in making his first report to the police Brandon contacted Communication Rights Australia (Communication Rights) to advocate on his behalf and facilitate his reporting to the police. Communication Rights is a not-for-profit agency funded jointly through the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Planning and Community Development. Communication Rights is a human rights advocacy and information service for people with CCN. Eden Parris joined Communication Rights in March 2007 as a part-time Human Rights Advocate. Eden had previous training in law and an interest in human rights,. In 2009, Eden became Communication Rights's Advocacy and Outreach co-ordinator. Eden brought several years experience working in the community sector as a support worker and advocate for those

ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX COMMUNICATION NEEDS (cont)....

Environmental Barriers:

Court Security involved everyday checks through metal detectors. Although not a barrier, this definitely posed a hurdle for someone in a metal wheelchair. Whilst process dictated the continuation of this arduous task Brandon quickly charmed members of court security who appeared to enjoy their interactions with him.

An environmental barrier encountered was within the court room itself. Witness boxes are primarily designed for one able bodied person not a person in a wheelchair and their Communication Support Worker.

An amiable Tipstaff (an officer of the court who functions like a personal assistant to the Judge), assisted with padding over sharp corners, and mobile ramps overcame, which some of the limitations of the court environment.

Individual Barriers

For Brandon these included the extended time of the hearings (7-8 days at each hearing), fatigue and the emotional trauma of cross examination, being compounded by his CCN.

Challenges for the CSW pool:

Throughout the time of the committal and the county court case there was significant attrition of the Communication Support Worker pool. This attrition has been linked to several factors:

> Variable opportunity for rapport establishment – while there was an initial opportunity for education and rapport establishment for the initial pool of Communication Support Workers's, several CSW did not have this opportunity. For these Communication Support Workers the first contact with Brandon was in the half hour before the court session commenced for the day, or during the lunch break between sessions. Opportunity for rapport establishment during these times were compromised by other tasks being the focus of these time slots, which increased the challenge for the respective Communication Support Worker.
>
> Confronting nature of the conversation - this was difficult even when rapport was well established,.
>
> Legal processes could be counterproductive. For example the intimidating environment of court and court processes appeared to contribute to the Communication Support Worker decline. Especially when , subsequent sessions were scheduled often with late notice. For example, it was not uncommon for the court, late one day to decide that a further session was required the subsequent day. This was difficult for many Communication Support Worker's who were maintaining a case load in their regular job, especially if they were attached to sole positions (i.e. no one else available to assist them to manage their caseloads).

Conclusion:

Of his experience, Brandon had the following to say:

When I went through with pursuing a matter through the Victorian Court system, I wanted to be on a ''normal'' and even playing ground to the accused. Now I communicate with an eye gaze board. It takes time to communicate. This became an issue for the court system in Victoria because for the first time they had to accept my way of communication. I wasn't giving up until that eye gaze board was in that court room. The eye gaze board is the most effective way for me to give an accurate answer within a reasonably quick time frame.

At first, the Office of Public Prosecutions (OPP) and the courts appeared fearful of the interpreting by the Communication Support Workers. After fighting with the system over this, I won. This wouldn't have been a success without Communication Rights Australia, especially Eden Parris who pushed this.

When it came to the court room, I suppose, I wanted to show that I wasn't worried about the accused or their lawyers. To be honest with you, the lawyers didn't take advantage of this much. It still surprises' me because I thought they would use the fact my communication was so much slower to the advantage of the person who has no issues of speech, the accused. However having said that, the Defence lawyer did try, at first, but I soon fixed that problem by just looking at him. He learnt very fast that I was no fool. We had heard that the Defence lawyer had a reputation for being a bully in the courts. To me, he was just doing his job.

The jury appeared quite dumb founded at the way I communicate.

Key Learnings:

> Advocacy, when it comes to the justice system, is multi-layered and multi-levelled, and requires a creative approach and different skills on the part of the advocate.
>
> This experience clearly identifies the need for someone to be adequately resourced to provide a Communication Support Worker booking service. Whether this should be DHS, , Communication Rights or the Department of Justice itself remains unclear.
>
> This process can be difficult, but access to justice is an inalienable human right
>
> Yes there were barriers, but with determination, and some support, they were broken down
>
> The process achieved Vindication for the individual, Empowerment, Educating of the legal system and Broader publicity for the associated issues
>
> Each achievement contributed to new strength and improvements to perceptions of self worth *(at the start I believed that no-one had the right to do what was done to me and I was right)*

ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX COMMUNICATION NEEDS (cont)....

affected by homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse. Eden appreciated the opportunity to learn from the community members and drew upon his experience in service of those with little or no speech.

Despite initial challenges, Brandon remained firm in his conviction to pursue justice. For Brandon and for Communication Rights, this resulted in a four year journey through the Victorian Judicial System. Eden from Communication Rights promoted awareness of Brandon's individual communication needs, rights and responsibilities as he interacted with a range of organizations and people in his pursuit of justice. The entire process required extensive advocacy, which was a challenge in itself for Communication Rights that gets the same funding per per episode of advocacy, regardless of whether that is a single phone call or multiple contacts over years – as in Brandon's case. The justice system is only accessible for someone with little or no speech if they are really prepared to fight. In this case Brandon was. Even then, it was a grueling, exhausting process.

For Communication Rights this involved some level of interaction with all of the following key players:

- The individual - Brandon
- Local police
- Area Command
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Specialist
- General Practitioner
- Family
- Communication Support Workers
- Speech Pathologists
- Office of Public Prosecutions – solicitors
- Office of Public Prosecutions – social workers
- Crown Prosecutor
- Judge
- Other witnesses
- Jury
- Hospital
- Victim Support Assistance Scheme
- Counsellor
- Carers and their employers
- Department of Human Services
- Service Providers
- Yooralla Comtec
- DEAL Communication Centre
- Communication Rights Australia

Some Key Barriers Overcome by Brandon included:

"Old School" attitudes towards disability / minimal experience of people with disability within the Judiciary:

Eden (Communication Rights) supported Brandon to access the police and make several statements, then liaised with police over an extensive period to ensure an adequate investigation proceeded, without compromise due to Brandon's communication disability or assumptions concerning his capacity. Eden attended meetings, wrote letters and also sourced letters of support regarding the Brandon's communication method. On two occasions complaints to Area Commands in two different regions were submitted to ensure the investigation continued.

Eden also liaised extensively with the Office of Public Prosecutions, helping to educate the solicitors, barrister, social worker and judge about the Brandon's method of communication. Eden assisted Brandon to investigate and attend an appointment for a new communication technology with a view to it being used in court. The education of the judiciary included special mention before the judge at the county court. This involved expert witnesses, video footage of an individual using an Etran, development of a phrase board and successfully arguing for the Communication Support Worker to be allowed to complete words (during the committal this was viewed as prediction and not allowed). As a result Brandon had to spell every letter of every word during the committal hearing.

During the four year period of the case Communication Rights had regularly meetings with Brandon to relay information from the police and solicitors and to help answer questions and address concerns, liaise with DHS and attendant care providers to ensure Brandon had adequate attendant care on court days

No Communication Support Worker Booking Service:

A lack of an independent Communication Support Worker (CSW) booking service meant that initial statements to the police were compromised due to Brandon having to use a family member and therefore not giving all the details of the incident. A key difficulty for Communication Rights was providing, a tailored CSW booking service, for the Department of Justice, particularly when the court wanted qualified Speech Pathologists who required higher rates of pay. Communication Rights identified, employed, trained and coordinated a team of six speech pathologists who acted in court as communication support workers for the person (who was cross-examined for seven days during committal and eight days during the trial in the County Court). To do this Communication Rights had to ensure the Office of Public Prosecutions would pay for this service, which set a new precedent for the Department of Justice.

The outcome was a successful committal hearing in 2009, and a full jury trial in 2010. Communication Rights have subsequently been involved in organising access to Victim Support, counselling and a compensation tribunal for the individual. The Department of Justice considers this case to be ground-breaking in terms of access to the justice system for a person with complex communication needs.

Communication Rights are not a service provider and yet there is no one else providing such a service to the community, so Communication Rights continue to have to do this. Such a service, modelled on the Auslan interpreter booking service, is really something that DHS needs to take responsibility for. It should be the right of individuals with little or no speech to access such a service on the same footing as the deaf community or anyone else who requires an interpreter.

Taking it to the Stables

The challenges of communicating in an equestrian environment - a parents perspective

Merrell Liddle
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Tell me it can't be done, and I will do it.
Tell me the goal is too high, and I will reach it.
Place an obstacle in front of me and I will soar over it.
Challenge me, Dare me, or even Defy me.
But do NOT underestimate me.
For on the back of my horse ANYTHING is possible.
Anon

Staff and volunteers at Riding for the Disabled (RDA) centres across the country are usually very experienced in working with a range of riders with different abilities and often complex physical, intellectual and communication needs. In this environment, communication goals and the use of AAC strategies can be integrated into the individual program developed for the rider.

Last year Morgan moved from this environment within RDA to the very different world of high-performance para-equestrian dressage where she is involved in coaching, other training or competing four days each week as well as cross-training in the gym four days. Riders undergo a detailed physical assessment by an internationally accredited Classifier, and are assigned a Profile and a Grade at which they will compete for State, National and International competition. There are five Grades of physical impairment, ranging from Grade 4, for least impaired riders, to Grade IA for most severely impaired riders and Compensating Aides allowed for individual riders are documented. Morgan is classified as a Grade IA rider. Her compensating aides include modifications to the saddle, looped reins, bands holding her feet in stirrups and velcro on her gloves and whips.

Para-Equestrian dressage is part of the Equestrian Australia High Performance Program. For Morgan, the challenges of communicating in this type of equestrian environment are many. Training is usually outdoors and often in difficult weather conditions and the coach and support people are usually some distance from the rider. Morgan has difficulty responding to the coach from a distance as she is unable to speak loudly and clearly or respond quickly and when riding she is not allowed to turn toward the coach to listen to instruction or to respond as the subtle change of weight and movement upset the balance and direction of the horse.

Morgan also has difficulty with sequencing and motor planning so responding to multiple and often complex instructions and remembering the elements of the dressage test are very demanding for her. In addition, the language of dressage is difficult and the use of relative terms such as *the outside rein* and *the inside leg* require significant amounts of processing. When combined with the apparently random letters at designated places on the arena where movements are to be executed, the task of riding complex movements and not falling off becomes extremely complicated. Morgan is also severely ataxic and has problems maintaining balance, poor proprioception , myoclonus, tremors in her hands and the concentration required for the coordination of hands, legs and trunk results in reduced ability to speak and respond. I frequently need to relay instructions and communicate Morgan's issues for her in what can be a high pressure and time critical situation.

Even when not mounted on her horse, Morgan often does not have her communication device attached to her wheelchair as there are issues around safety with the risk of reins becoming entangled around the device or mount with the horse. There are also logistics around managing Morgan and the horses and the large amount of equipment necessary as at times she might be competing up to three horses at a competition. Competitions usually run over three days and are hugely demanding for everyone involved and the immense amount of preparation for both the horse and rider means that using AAC strategies becomes a secondary objective. As a result, Morgan frequently does not have access to her AAC device and she resorts to asking me to repeating or clarify. It is far from ideal, and while I try as I can to avoid speaking for her, the demands of the environment are such that at times it is the only reasonable option. In this situation having a communication assistant is sound strategy as part of her overall communication support.

As a sport for people with disabilities, Para-Equestrian is very different to a sport such as boccia which is designed for people with disabilities and where coaches are experienced in working with and communicating with people with complex communication needs. Para-equestrian is managed as part

TAKING IT TO THE STABLES (cont)...

of mainstream high-level equestrian sport where there is no experience in working with people with CCN. Morgan is the only communication device user competing in para-equestrian dressage in Australia and I am not aware of any in overseas teams. In fact, most of the riders are para-equestrians as a result of injury, illness, limb deficiency or amputation and their speech is unimpaired.

So, what are the reasons to support Morgan's continued interest and participation in a sport that presents enormous communication challenges for her, is very difficult, highly competitive, extremely expensive, time consuming, labour intensive and has significant risk of injury?

Young people with disabilities have often not experienced the demands and expectations of high level competition. They are used to being spoken to gently, nicely, reassuringly. Learning to cope with a fast paced and demanding environment, realising that they and the coach are on the same side and have the same goals, and accepting that it will be difficult and not always fun is important. Morgan initially had difficulty with this but soon she learnt not to take things personally, not to react to a raised voice, not to argue when something does not suit her or when what she is asked to do is very hard, and that criticism of her performance during coaching was not a criticism of her. In essence, she has learnt to be coachable. She was told to 'toughen up' and now her coach can say 'that was awful do it again' and instead of reacting badly Morgan has the mental strength to simply get on with the job and enjoy her achievements.

It has also provided an opportunity to be involved in an activity at a high level as her sisters have done in other areas and to feel that she is very good at something. This gives her an enormous sense of personal achievement, but, for me, who has spent way too much time around speech pathologists, I keep looking for the communication opportunities to be happening, and they are not. While Morgan is training with her coach or riding at home, if she talks, she is told to stop talking and focus. Once she rides into the arena she is told she must not talk about or think about anything else.

Outside the horse world she rarely has a conversation about her riding. Since many people are not familiar with dressage, beyond being asked what her horses' names are and what colour they are, it does not provide a great conversation piece. Someone recently asked her what she found hardest in riding and she responded, *doing three-loop serpentines to the quarter-lines.* Without her Lightwriter it took some time to understand the reply and even longer for Morgan to explain what it meant.

Morgan doesn't worry too much about the difficulties of communicating in the equestrian environment, in fact, for her that is the least challenging aspect of riding. It is an obstacle, but one that she overcomes and there are other very useful 'real world' communication lessons, beyond riding that she has learnt, and they are about how to respond to criticism, deal with pressure and deal with imperfect situations, all very useful for open employment. People in the equestrian area have generally been good at allowing Morgan time to get her message ready or to repeat or clarify, but she does not communicate much voluntarily and clearly feels the difficulty. She has never been a great advocate for the use of AAC, she simply gets bored by discussions of how she communicates and always prefers to be doing things rather than talking about things. Other than in social equestrian situations she tends not to communicate much directly to others. Morgan is expected to be involved in fundraising, seeking donations and sponsorship and her communication skills in this area will have to be developed and without the challenges of the riding at the same time she is well placed to do this.

In this context, communication for Morgan is difficult but it is adequate and she seems to be managing the training just as well as the other riders, enjoying the journey, and developing strengths in other ways. Although the communication is not optimal, she is still doing what she wants to do and achieving what she wants to achieve and in the next few months she is hoping to begin international competition. Morgan enjoys the competition, the challenges and the successes but most of all she loves the horses. Fortunately her horses respond extremely well to her non-verbal communication and the relationship there is strong. She works hard to manage her horses as independently as possible.

When Morgan started training for high-performance competition, her coach told her to find some words that inspired her. There are many obstacles that are placed in front of her. Morgan can't walk and can't talk but she can ride and is certainly going places on her horse.

For more information go to: teammorgan.com.au

AGOSCI MEMBERS
TAKE IT TO THE STREETS

TAKING IT TO THE COUNCIL:

On March 1st, 2011, Rosie Smith decided she was not satisfied that the council had fully considered the impact of a building development next door to her house. She decided to let them know herself. Rosie organised a meeting with the council. Although she was extremely nervous, she overcame her fears and pre-programmed her opinions into her Pathfinder. She met with the planning officer and expressed her concerns that the location of the windows next door impinge on her privacy. We're not sure of the outcome as yet but at least Rosie can feel like she has done all she can. Well done Rosie for 'Taking it to the Council'

When I thought about this theme of 'Taking It To The Streets', I imagined a large group of people gathered in a busy public place. They were taking a message to the community, to the education system and the government. It was like a civil rights demo, with speakers and banners. Most of these people were AAC users. The others were family, friends and other supporters. They were demanding rights to inclusion and education for all non-verbal people, they were proclaiming their place in society and some were saying through amplified devices and any ways that they were 'proud and loud'.

Of course it doesn't really exist...it hasn't happened yet...or maybe only in the UK...or maybe in a dream.

Here's a photo of Kingsley and I 'Taking It To The Streets' in our own little everyday way. Using AAC in public places attracts more attention to his disability, but we don't mind. I love the honesty when people (usually kids) say, "What's wrong with him?" I push Kingsley to interact with people, for eg. shop workers are sitting ducks, the Subway girl was confused when he used his device to order a cookie and coffee. With me as his advocate, we can make people understand because it's just human to human (there's no politics, policies, hierarchies or bureaucracies to contend with). But what about in future when I'm not there, will society be kind? Even now, the 'special education system' can't manage to support his AAC. I think we've got a lot of work to do!

TAKING IT TO THE COUNTRY:

President Brian welcomed members and guests to the District 4 Combined Dinner.Guests were from the Rotary Clubs of Encounter Bay, Goolwa, and Yankalilla. Guests of the Club were Laurence Byrne, Ingrid Birgden, and Tom Byrne.” –Rotary Club of Victor Harbor, Bulletin 45.

Still in the spirit of the AGOSCI Conference, Laurence and his parents travelled to Victor Harbor, a coastal town about 85 kilometres south of Adelaide at the invitation of its Rotary Club. After dinner, Ingrid took to the podium and gave a quick lesson in Minspeak and AAC. People were amazed to hear of the cost and capabilities of some of the equipment. She spoke about the need to identify people with Complex Communication Needs (CCN) and in this context AGOSCI and its role was described. Then Laurence commandeered his speech device and we gave a joint powerpoint presentation about young adult AAC getting together in Barcelona for the 2010 ISAAC conference. We received some heart-felt comments from the audience and Laurence answered questions from the floor.

Then the biggest surprise of all – a generous donation of $1000 to AGOSCI !

Augmentative Communication - The Story of My Life

By Marlena Katene

I have been using communication devices and techniques other than words to communicate for as long as I can remember. You see I was born with Cerebral Palsy which limits my ability to speak verbally, as the wider world is generally accustomed to. Throughout my life, how I communicate has been vital in my happiness. Getting the message out has, and always will be, the most important part in me fulfilling the many roles I have within my community. Roles which are constantly changing and developing in the new environments in which I choose to engage in. The different stages in my life called for different technologies to be used if I was to equally participate. In my younger years it was not expected that I give a detailed analysis of the *"Restorative Justice in Maori culture"*, as is expected of me as a second year journalism student at university. I would have given up on the whole communication process back then if they requested I reference according to the Harvard style. This still frustrates me but back then the communication was simple in its nature, identifying colours and numbers. On a social level I used to even get away with a simple nod of the head or a flutter of the eyelids. This was a skill I picked up especially when I wanted something, unfortunately a technique which no longer is effective. So began the Journey... one I am still on and will stay on until the day I kick the bucket.

When I started informal education (preschool) my mother's priority was getting me reading and writing, despite the fact I could never turn a page or grasp a pencil in my hand. The physical aspect of my disability pretty much ruled the writing part out, but the brain was (and hopefully still is) ticking over and needed to be taught. My very first "low tech" board was a simple but effective yes no board, which I soon outgrew. Next was a Picture Exchange Communication (PEC) board followed by a QWERTY letter board. As my preschool peers began writing their name and reading books, so did I. God knows how many ripped books I was personally responsible for! My mother used to sticky tape them up and replace it discreetly back on the bookshelves hoping that no one saw the damage. I used to have hand over hand help in writing my name. I believe a very meaningful activity despite my athetosis. In this day and age I probably would have been deemed a work health and safety risk with that pencil going everywhere. I didn't give anyone lead poisoning but I think a few aides came close to getting their noses and other body parts unintentionally pierced. The point of the story is literacy at this age is vital and the tools required for this to be achieved differ for all people. After attending preschool for awhile I recall getting my first computer. It was absolute rubbish by today's standards but even at an early age I was introduced to both low tech and high tech equipment, which ultimately has allowed me to be where I am today. Without having the basis of both forms of technology I most likely could not access my current technology.

Fast forward to the year 2011 and this young preschooler is now attending University studying Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, runs a business and needs communication for social interaction and many more roles. My needs and roles have changed quite a lot and are continuing to develop and evolve all the time. The only constant I really have is the need for me to communicate non-verbally in a verbal world. Sometimes this presents a huge challenge. I won't bore you with the validation process that has popped up occasionally in the university environment, one I accept and is necessary part in my studies. Currently I have many roles which require me to communicate on many different levels. In my university life the need for the academics to explore what is in my brain requires a trained facilitation partner and an ABC board, which is my quickest communication method. For this they grade me alongside my peers and help me in areas I wish to excel in. The benefit of this is the speed in which I can

AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION - THE STORY OF MY LIFE

communicate and the content which I can put out in a respectable timeframe. The flip side to this however the validation is harder to show. To compensate for this we have created a low tech board, which is colour coded. This that allows me to ball up my fist independently and use same communication technique using my low tech board. While my low tech board works it only does in certain situations.

The use of high tech equipment is equally important in my world. Currently I use an iPad and a DynaVox DV4. The DV4 is about to be replaced with the Maestro, which I am excited about. You see a goal I am currently working on is to become a TAFE teacher so the low tech stuff just won't work in this environment. My future students will have to be a little patient and I will have to be able to independently walk into a class and run the show. Using the iPad at the moment is fantastic in my workplace. Using prolo2go is so simple yet effective. I own and run a jumping castle business and the size of the iPad allows me to easily communicate to my customers. When I approach them there are only a few sentences I usually say. How are you? Would you like a jump? The price is $4 or Shoes off please. The iPad's size and weight works in my favour and I recently I have got a new wheelchair tray which it fits into. The beauty of this is the speed in which I can transfer from low tech to high tech communication. While I love the iPad so much even it has limitations. I believe the Maestro is going to be the most important piece of communication technology in achieving my big goals. It will allow me to be paid for training people and open up my world where the iPad cannot. I will achieve the role of paying to present on a regular basis. The Maestro is required for open employment to become a reality. I will still use the iPad and I will still use my low tech ABC board. The trick will be identifying what works best for each of my many roles then using the communication aide which works best.

My life is continually going to change and if I am to keep up with these changes, and give myself the best chance at success, I need to constantly be aware of what is out there. The first "test" for the maestro will be an interview I am doing in a few weeks. I have an interview lined up with a coach and CEO of a national sports team, the Gold Coast Suns. The journalist in me will see how my technology works in my questioning of them. Will I be able to flick from my list questions to ones that may just pop up? I hope so and am planning a series of interviews to refine my skills before I graduate. No matter how good we think technology is we need to use what is best in each situation. Going to conferences (such as ISAAC and AGOSCI) I am gob smacked by what is out there by seeing the trade displays. When I think of my communication journey it really amazes me how far we have come. I am only 20 years old and I feel weird saying "when I was a kid...." but the journey has been interesting. I believe in 20 years time technology will even further blow my mind. In the mean time I will continue shifting from my low tech to high tech and then back again. I will use what is at my disposal and what works best for me in each role I have and am going to have in my future.

Check out my website www.marlena.com.au, or subscribe to theaacjournalist on YouTube to see some of my video entries. My upcoming celebrity interviews will be broadcast on here as well. Always looking for interview subjects so any ideas / feedback welcome marlena_katene@hotmail.com

DATE CLAIMER

2012 National Tour
Dr Caroline Musselwhite

Sydney - 20th August 2012
Brisbane - 22nd August 2012
Perth - 24th August 2012
Adelaide - 27th August 2012
Melbourne - 29th August 2012
half day webinar - 30th of August 2012

Caroline is a Speech Language Pathologist and assistive technology specialist with more than 25 years experience working with children and adolescents with severe disabilities. She is an inspirational speaker and a leading expert on AAC. She is also a founding member of the board of Directors for the International Society for Augementative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC). She has a strong emphasis on fun and on building social networks for AAC users. You can learn more about Caroline at her website www.aacintervention.com

AAC Apps – Speaking APPropriately

By Jane Farrall, Speech Pathologist, Spectronics
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Today on the iTunes store, there are around 100 Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Apps. These are specifically designed to be used by people who have complex communication needs, for people who want to use their iPhone or iPad to communicate face-to-face with others. Many of these AAC Apps are among the highest priced Apps in the App Store, but are they worth the cost? And what do they offer that more traditional speech generating devices don't?

The answer to those questions depends on a large number of variables including the App itself, the needs of the user, other communication options available to the user and how the user can physically access the iPad or iPhone. Let's start by discussing the Apps.

As mentioned earlier there are around 100 AAC Apps currently in the iTunes store. Proloquo2Go (www.proloquo2go.com), the first AAC App, developed jointly by Samuel Sennott and AssistiveWare, remains one of the best options available. It offers a range of vocabulary, a comprehensive symbol set ,Symbolstix, and allows users to string together symbols to speak sentences or phrases. Users can also pull up a keyboard and type what they want to say. Proloquo2Go reflects good practice in AAC and is used by thousands of people worldwide. Numerous articles have been written in newspapers and magazines about how Proloquo2Go has been successful in giving children and adults a voice while harnessing the "cool" factor of the iPad and iPod touch. Many examples can be found just by Googling "iPads and autism".

If you read any of these articles, it becomes quickly apparent that the iPad (along with Proloquo2Go) has been a game changer for children and adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in particular. So much so that Apple featured the use of the iPad with children with ASD in their launch of the iPad2.

Following on from this success, a number of other AAC Apps have been released upon the world. These vary enormously in quality and price, and some of them fill a different niche to the one carved out by Proloquo2Go. Many of them do not reflect good practice in AAC, and are incredibly overpriced for what they offer. They may not include any symbols, or don't let the user string together words to create novel sentences. Some of them crash frequently, or have very poor quality speech despite their comparatively high price tag.

Of course, some of the new Apps are good quality. Predictable from Therapy Box, an AAC App released earlier this year, is well designed and well thought out. It is designed for literate end users and offers customisation, control and alternative access options. Similarly, Verbally, another AAC App released only a few weeks ago, is a high quality AAC App that is free of charge to the end user. Unfortunately though, these high quality Apps tend to be in a minority rather than a majority- definitely a case of user beware! (And to assist potential users, I maintain a regularly updated list of AAC Apps, along with ratings, at http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/article/iphoneipad-apps-for-aac)

Moving on from the Apps, we need to look at the hardware. I am, I must admit, completely addicted to my iPad. I love it. I can understand why many users and families want this cool, elegant and easy to use piece of technology as their speech generating device. And I hope that the ease of use and "cool" factor of this technology is providing many traditional speech generating device manufacturers with ideas for their next generation of devices. I really look forward to seeing what impact this consumer technology has on speech generating devices as a whole.

Just as I can understand why families want this technology, I can also understand why many professionals are worried about the

AAC APPS - SPEAKING APPROPRIATELY (cont)....

iPad being used as a speech generating device. The volume isn't sufficient for many situations, the hardware is a lot more fragile than many of the dedicated speech generating devices and the access options for people with physical disabilities are limited. At this stage, if I need to use a head switch or foot switch, I have only very limited control of a small number of Apps on my iPad. For this group of users, a dedicated speech generating device is still the only option which gives complete control and flexibility. As a therapist, I could spend a lot of time trying to "make" this technology work for someone when there is a piece of specifically designed technology that will work straight away and with a range of well designed page sets which only need minimal customisation for the user. Of course, this doesn't apply to everyone. Some people fly with their iPad from day one, while others are still trying hard to get to the first step a year later. Sometimes, this is because the hardware and/or App are an inappropriate match for the end user. Sometimes, however, it is due to poor setup and support.

And that brings me to my next point – expertise. Because this technology is cool, widely accessed and relatively cheap, suddenly we have a huge turn around in AAC recommendations. Historically, speech generating devices have been recommended primarily by speech pathologists, many of whom have specialised in AAC for years. We know the technologies available and what they can do. Furthermore, once a device has been recommended we can provide support to ensure the best possible outcomes for an individual. This model of expert assessment and recommendation, however, is now being consistently bypassed when recommending AAC Apps and iPads or iPhones. People with little or no knowledge of AAC are suggesting this option as a solution. The best App for the individual isn't necessarily being considered and the setup of the communication pages for best outcomes isn't always happening. In addition, once an individual or family receives the App and hardware, no expertise is provided to ensure good outcomes for the user. Modeling the user's AAC pages frequently doesn't happen and in many cases the vocabulary design does not reflect good practice in AAC. As a result, nearly every day we hear stories of people who received an iPad and an AAC App that they haven't been able to use or of a person who received an iPad for AAC but only uses it for game playing or for watching videos.

This technology is great and some of the Apps are great too but we need to use our usual selection and consideration principles and make an educated decision about whether this is the best option for each user or whether some of the other AAC technology currently available might suit their needs better. Or, in fact, whether a combination of technologies might have the best possible outcomes for a user. An iPad with an appropriate App with well designed vocabulary and appropriate support can be amazing but we need to ensure that all our usual selection processes are used for each and every individual to ensure the best outcomes for them, whether this includes an iPad or not.

And to illustrate this point, I'd like to tell you about Crystal. Crystal is a 16 year old with complex communication needs. She has been using low tech communication books and high tech speech generating devices since she was very young. Currently she has a low tech PODD and a DynaVox MT4 with a PODD page set on it.

Crystal is independently mobile but walking can be difficult for her and carrying her DynaVox MT4 hasn't always been possible due to weight and size. Last year, her mother purchased an iPad and Proloquo2Go for her to use. Her mother's initial plan was for this to be for her use at social events where her MT4 was too heavy for Crystal to carry.

Her school was delighted to hear that an iPad was coming. They suggested to her mother that the iPad was sent every day to school and her MT4 stop coming. Crystal's mother spent around 40 hours trying to program all the vocabulary from her PODD page set into the iPad and in the end she wasn't able to do this completely as she had fewer symbol choices and reduced page layout options.

After several weeks her school suggested that the iPad didn't need to come to school any more and asked for her speech generating device to start coming again. They reported that it was much harder for Crystal to find vocabulary on her iPad and that it was slower for her to use to complete school work. The decision for school has been that her DynaVox MT4 remains the most appropriate tool for this situation. In fact, they are now upgrading to a DynaVox Maestro as they feel the bigger screen and increased portability of that unit might be an even better option for school.

However, in social situations the iPad and Proloquo2Go has taken on a life of its own. It breaks the ice. People who wouldn't normally chat to Crystal with her low tech book or her Speech Generating Device are happy to walk up and start chatting. The iPad itself has become an incredible conversation starter as total strangers ask her how she likes it. Crystal can carry it independently and is enjoying chatting with as many people as she can.

The iPad and Proloquo2Go alone wouldn't meet her needs but combining her DynaVox MT4 and her iPad has led to a communication system for Crystal that has had outcomes that no other communication options have given her. Each device is used in the most appropriate situation, leading to fewer communication breakdowns and much better outcomes for Crystal.

Crystal with both her iPad and MT4 at the ready

The Social Media Band-Wagon: Learning Together Online

ByTanya Colye

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I consider myself a life-long learner – meaning I have spent considerable time learning about various things that interest me by reading books, taking extra courses, going to conferences, and so on. I have built a decent personal learning network (PLN) of people around me so that I can discuss and debate my current passions. Hopefully you have some sort of PLN in your life too. This doesn't have to be professional learning, it could be learning about anything you're interested in. Maybe you learn from work-mates, students, teachers, friends, clubs, magazines, journal articles, newspapers, or books. I still learn lots from these kinds of sources, but when I began creating a PLN for myself on the internet, it changed my life.

Tweet Tweet

A little over a year ago my husband, an educator, told me how I should be using Twitter to network with other SLPs. I was skeptical. "Isn't that just where celebrities tell us about their coffee and compete to see how many followers they can amass?" I asked. Then he showed me how teachers were using Twitter. They were sharing links to great resources, asking questions, and discussing topics that were important to them. I thought that was interesting, but figured there wouldn't be any SLPs on Twitter doing that; we're a small group, relatively speaking. After searching I actually found a few SLPs worth following, then I looked at who they were following and found more people. Soon, I'd connected myself to a small, but growing, network of colleagues and I was hooked. I've also made some close friendships along the way. After some time I began following not just SLPs but audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, and many others in related professions.

As our Twitter community grew we became known as the SLPeeps which we turned into a hashtag (a searchable keyword you add to tweets to make them easier for others to find). So, even though I don't always follow every SLP on Twitter, I can still see many of their contributions by searching for #SLPeeps. Recently, some audiologists have begun using the hashtag #AUDPeeps and there are many others.

One of the most surprising connections I made on Twitter was with my Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA), known on Twitter as @CASLPA. I have been a long time member and I viewed them as an organization that allowed me potential parity with the US (I live on a border town), and gave me occasional resources. Once I began to connect with CASLPA via Twitter my view of them changed dramatically because I finally had a relationship with them. I get tons of information from them (they also provide this information via Facebook), am able to ask them questions and became friends with some 'names on emails'. I've also made surprisingly helpful and beneficial connections with companies I buy from and agencies I work with.

Just over a year ago there were 12-18 SLPs actively connecting through Twitter. Now there are more than 200 speech and language professionals from around the world interacting and sharing information and ideas. New professionals are joining all the time. We use twitter to share great resources we've found, tweet from conferences, and to tell others about a great therapy or assessment idea we have. Crowdsourcing is popular too, where we throw out a question or problem we've encountered to get ideas and feedback from others.

Reading up on Facebook

People are also beginning to use Facebook for more than just sharing family pictures and catching up with old and new friends: it has become a place for big and small businesses to share information and connect with their customers, patients, members, and employees. Many people have professional Facebook pages that you can "like" to get posts on what they are doing or information they share. Many speech pathologists/therapists are creating pages for themselves and also groups such as the SLPeeps, Dysphagia Therapy, Assistive Technology, and Special Education groups, to name a few. Here, members can post links, questions, or thoughts and discuss them on Facebook.

Sharing Bookmarks

The problem with Twitter and Facebook was getting too many resources from the professionals I followed. I couldn't keep up with the information flow, especially from Twitter. Then I learned about Diigo.com, a social bookmarking site that allows me to bookmark webpages from any computer and access them anywhere. I'm also able to 'tag' bookmarks with keywords and create lists for others to see the bookmarks I've saved. This has allowed me to provide ONE website address for teachers and parents with the links I might recommend to them to help with information sharing, home practice, and carryover. Diigo is also linked to my Twitter account so that I can save links directly to Diigo with one click.

Not-So-Boring Blogs

I have also begun reading many blogs with information on old and new technology related to speech and language assessment and intervention, the newest technologies for people with disabilities, what people are doing for literacy, hearing difficulties, and so on. Like with Twitter, the information overload became a problem and the time involved in reading these blogs became too much. Google Reader has helped me tremendously with this feat. It is a way to subscribe to multiple blogs and be updated with new posts and have the ability to read posts in one, convenient location. You can find a list of speech and language related blogs in the SLP Blogs Bundle created by @SpeechTechie at speechtechie.com.

Googling Your Docs

At various times, we SLPs were often sharing written resources via email in a cumbersome process of constantly emailing each other. To make sharing easier, we created the SLPeeps Resource Share folder in Google Docs. Google Docs works like Microsoft Office but allows you to upload your files to "the cloud" (into the Google server) and then share those files with anyone or everyone on the internet. We now have various files that people have shared as well as a bank of our favourite goals. If I want to give a program for a student or find new therapy resources, I often check the Resource Share folder and find great resources for free. My department has also been using Google Docs to create and maintain our meeting agendas so that no one has to be 'in charge' of meeting agenda creation. Everyone can add their own items in their own time. I've also used Google Docs to collaborate with colleagues across the country on various projects.

Learning Together by Chatting

Finally, the most recent addition to Twitter for speech and language has been #slpchat, an international discussion group, via Twitter, on various topics of interest to SLPs such as using Cycles in therapy, assessment and treatment of dysphagia and feeding, oral-motor therapy, selecting early vocabulary in language delayed children, and a discussion on fluency assessment and therapy The next slpchat will be about the role of SLPs in literacy. You can read archived chats, or find out about dates, topics, and how to participate in future chats through the SLPChat blog: slpchat.wordpress.com.

This has by no means been an exhaustive list of ways you can extend your own PLN through social media on the internet, but it's a good start. Since creating an online PLN, mainly through Twitter, my professional skills and resume have grown exponentially. So come join the network of professionals and families who are collaborating daily! Please come connect with me on Twitter where I'm known as @SLPTanya. You can find out more information about using social media professionally by reading my blog at LexicalLinguist.wordpress.com.

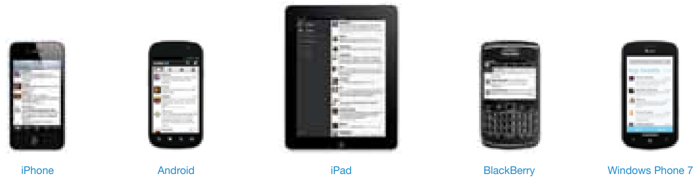
Tanya Coyle is an Canadian SLP. She was a guest International Twitterer at the AGOSCI Conference 2011 "Tweet Up" Tanya's blog about uisng social media professionally can be found at LexicalLinguist.wordpress.com.

Easy-Start Guide to using Twitter

at the AGOSCI 2011 Conference and after!

Take Twitter with you. Get the app.

Visit m.twitter.com on your mobile device.



What do you need to join in the Twitter discussions at AGOSCI 2011?

- A Twitter Account (free to set up)
- A PC laptop, Mac Laptop, iPad, iPhone, Blackberry or a Windows Phone 7
- Internet access
- If using a mobile device, download the free mobile Twitter App which you are prompted to do on visiting www.twitter.com

How do you set up a Twitter Account?

1. Just visit www. twitter.com and fill in your name, email address and setup a password and Sign up!

New to Twitter? Join today!

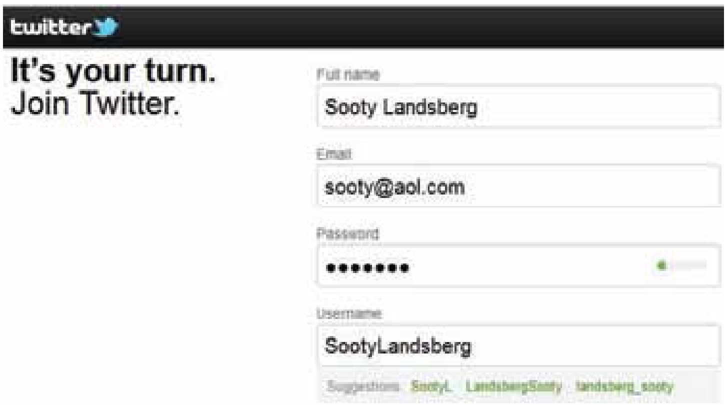
Full name

Email

Password

Sign up

2. One more step to go as Twitter suggests a Username for you. Hint!! Pick as short a name as possible!



twitter

It's your turn. Join Twitter.

Full name: Sooty Landsberg

Email: sooty@aol.com

Password: •••••••

Username: SootyLandsberg

Suggestions: SootyL LandsbergSooty landsberg_sooty

Why would you want to join in the Twitter discussions about the Conference?

- Follow news of what is happening in other sessions that you are not able to attend
- Comment on the sessions you are attending or anything else you think valuable to share
- Read comments from around the globe about the conference-related tweets
- Practise in a supportive environment before going on to tweeting and building your Personal Learning Network (PLN) after the conference!

How do you join in conversations started at the conference?

- Find the Username @agosci and "Follow" so you will see messages from AGOSCI
- Find the Username @tweetAAC and "Follow" so that you will see messages from the Tweetup session on Saturday at the Conference
- If you are sending tweets about the conference and stuff happening there simply add #agosci2011 somewhere in your tweet and others will be able to track all conversations with this "hashtag" included
- Adding #tweetAAC into your tweets will allow all to see the live conversations started at the conference and continuing still!

Want to learn more about Twitter?

Valuable links for "newbies" to the world of Twitter - compiled with simple explanations in mind.

- **Mom this is how Twitter works** - *http://www.jhische.com/twitter/*
- **Nomenclature and basic functions of Twitter** by @SLPTanja - *http://bit.ly/l214k3*
- **Etiquette Exists Everywhere (and Twitter's no exception)** by @SLPTanja - *http://bit.ly/maeBQv*
- **Tips to make Twitter easier** by @SLPTanja - *http://bit.ly/j8lxNx*
- **Why all SLPs should be #SLPeeps on Twitter** - *http://chirpstory.com/li/1122*

All too much! Would you prefer help to set yourself up on Twitter?

Send your questions via tweet to @tweetAAC, email the listserv or any of us individually for assistance.

- Bronwyn Hemsley on *b.hemsley@uq.edu.au*
- Barbara Landsberg on *barbaral@spectronics.com.au*
- Jane Farrall on *janef@spectronics.com.au*
- Charlene Cullen on *charlenec@spectronics.com.au*
- Greg O'Connor on *grego@spectronics.com.au*

Without AAC in the Evacuation Centre: A Skilled Volunteer's Observations

By Bronwyn Hemsley and Sue Owen

Contact: Bronwyn Hemsley b.hemsley@uq.edu.au The University of Queensland

The recent natural disasters in Australia, of flood, fire, and cyclone, have highlighted several issues arising during emergency situations for people with complex communication needs that we think relate to the theme of this issue of the AGOSCI In Focus magazine, 'Taking it To The Streets'. In January 2011 in Brisbane, Sue Owen – a speech pathologist with a special interest in AAC and at that time the Chairperson of AGOSCI - witnessed first-hand what happened for a large number of adults with complex communication needs who were taken to safety during natural disaster, when she volunteered to provide assistance at the local evacuation centre. After the waters receded, on a road trip with Sue to Ipswich and surrounds to deliver books donated from all of Australia to children affected by flood (courtesy of the Queensland Rural Women's Network Children's Book Appeal), Bronwyn Hemsley asked her what the first few days of evacuation involved for adults evacuated from group homes in the community and what her role had been in supporting communication while volunteering at an evacuation centre in Brisbane.

Evacuating to safety during floods: Without AAC

As we drove along the Ipswich motorway, Sue recounted that *"on the evening of the flood, very suddenly without warning, many adults with disability living in the community had to leave their homes. They were taken quite late at night to the evacuation centre and told that they were going to be sleeping there. There were thousands of evacuees at what was a very large evacuation centre, including a lot of new migrants, who did not necessarily have local family links to get help, and many older people who were managing at home in wheelchairs or with walking frames but found the unfamiliar environment confronting and confusing."* Sue said that, fortunately, most of the adults with disability were evacuated in the company of familiar staff who knew how to communicate with them.

Like many other evacuees, *"most people with disability arrived at the evacuation centre with the bare essentials - clothes, bedding, medication … but those who used AAC at home did not bring their AAC systems with them to the evacuation centre*." Sue suggested that the reason AAC was left behind was because "*perhaps AAC was not a priority to bring because the staff who knew them well did not use the AAC very much at home, so did not think to bring it with them."* However, Sue observed that the people who used AAC at home but did not have their systems with them in the evacuation centre *"were the most distressed. Also, for some people who rely on AAC for understanding spoken language as well as expressing it was very difficult."*

Sue's report that people with complex communication needs did not take their AAC systems with them to an evacuation centre echoes earlier reports on people with CCN entering hospital and leaving their AAC systems at home, for fear of loss or damage of a valuable system or staff not knowing how to use the system (Hemsley & Balandin, 2004). Evacuation during flood might be similar to the sudden departure from home experienced during an emergency admission to hospital, when there is little time for planning or packing items that might be useful once safe and settled. Nonetheless, leaving an AAC system behind during evacuation from flood zones might pose an increased risk to the system through loss or water damage.

Communication Needs in the Evacuation Centre

Sue said that the first night and the next day were *"probably the hardest times"* for people with disability, who had to cope with a dramatic change in their routine and circumstances, along with changes in staff, environment, and an uncertain future. In addition, people who knew some sign and gesture could get some of their messages across but "*it was not easy*" as staff and volunteers at the evacuation centre were not used to signing, so Sue stepped in to provide assistance for this: *"I ended up really spending a lot of time with the people who needed signing. So I was translating and teaching volunteers and staff key words. There were lots of people keen to get the information, but it was really just me that knew the signs."*

"When I arrived there the first morning the staff who'd spent overnight were ragged because they'd spent the whole night with wakeful clients saying 'I don't want to be here, why are we here?' We had no shortage of staff and we had good volunteers coming in saying 'we want to help we want to help, how do we communicate with them?' Unfortunately, there

was nothing there to give them any information about how the adults communicated. Information arrived the next day, later on, but for most of them it was word of mouth for that first 24 hours."

"Often it was quite simple – you just needed to be able to say reassuring things to them using AAC, to really defuse the situation. When they say 'I want to go home!' and if you can say to people 'yes you will, later, not now, later', so that they don't think they have to stay there for the rest of their life, they know they are going to get back eventually. There was a large-screen television reporting on what was going on [with the floods] so it was possible to sit and get people to look at that, it didn't seem to frighten them, it was more of "why am I here? I don't want to be here ..." We saw some good tantrums happening - and that was worrying for the volunteers - but it was probably hardest of all on the night staff who were just awake all night trying to calm people down and reassure them that everything was alright."

Sue's account of the most common communication needs for all in the evacuation centre reflected a focus upon basic needs of toilet, medication, food, and comfort (for similar needs in the hospital setting, see Hemsley, Balandin, & Worrall, 2010). Sue said: "*it was difficult for people who were in a routine [at home] and usually know when they need to go to the bathroom and when they need to have their medication, and all of a sudden that routine was completely lost*." As has been reported previously to occur in hospital, exchange of information about techniques for assisting people with disability in daily activities was problematic even when written information was taken in a standard folder. Sue said that people needed to communicate about how clients could eat and drink safely – "*that information may have been there, buried in a lot of other information ... People were giving out medication who didn't know how the clients should be given them, and we had lots of coughing and spluttering going on as people were given their medication in very inappropriate ways. Some people who really needed to have thickened fluids were assisted by staff or volunteers who had not previously worked with them, and the choking episodes were distressing*." As well as communicating about assistance techniques, paid staff and volunteers also needed to communicate to reduce any anxiety and provide comfort: "*Reassurance was a big one, especially about 'time' - that was asked again and again, 'what is happening?' and 'when will I go home*?'"

5 Implications for Improving Communication in Evacuation Centres

Sue's experiences at the evacuation centre and observations of what occurred there for people with disability and complex communication needs might be used to help others who are preparing for what might be more common natural disasters in Australia.

> People need to be prepared to take their usual AAC system, or else an alternative AAC system with them when they go to an evacuation centre. A communication aid supporting basic needs communication, reassurance, and including information on basic assistance techniques might help those who are traumatised by evacuation to settle in more quickly and to be assisted safely.
>
> As Sue noted, not many staff or volunteers in the evacuation centre knew the meanings of signs or gestures. Interpreting and teaching some signs might be a useful volunteer resource to develop and encourage in all communities. People who know sign and gesture systems could make this known to volunteer co-ordinators. Provision of sign and gesture dictionaries or posters for prominent display in evacuation centres, along with websites for disseminating information on sign and gesture, might also be helpful.
>
> Resources designed for use in hospital covering basic needs and assistance information might be useful in disaster environments. However, evacuation centres might pose a higher demand upon communication for regular updates on information about the current disaster events, social interaction, reassurance, and emotional support. Engagement and distraction through participation in enjoyable activities also helps to pass the time 'waiting to go home' while in evacuation centres.
>
> People working in the field of AAC could provide low technology communication aids to share online and help stock evacuation centres with basic generic communication aids. This might promote interaction for people who struggle to get their message across and increase visual cues for older people with short-term memory impairments. Making AAC resources available as apps (for smart phones or other mobile devices), PDF, or Word Doc downloads will promote dissemination through the social media to Emergency Service personnel and volunteer co-ordinators in disaster areas.
>
> People skilled in the use of AAC could engage in local networks for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, including engagement in online networks using social media for information about AAC and dissemination of ready resources.

5 Quick Resources for Further Information

> The Australian Government website includes resources on disaster management and preparedness, including leaflets 'preparing for the unexpected' and 'survival checklist': http://www.ema.gov.au/www/emaweb/emaweb.nsf/Page/Publications_CommunityAwareness-Publications_PreparingfortheUnexpected and http://www.naa.gov.au/images/disaster%20manual_tcm2-4789.pdf
>
> Dr. Sarah Blackstone (AAC-RERC) Emergency Com-

munication: Disaster Preparation, Response and Recovery for People with CCN at http://aac-rerc.psu.edu/index.php/pages/show/id/4

June Kailes (Disability Policy Consultant, USA). Disaster Resources for People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs, Emergency Managers & Planners & Disability-focused Organizations http://www.jik.com/disaster.html

The Patient Provider Communication Website (www.patientprovidercommunication.org). This website already serves as a repository of information relating to communication between people who are vulnerable for communication difficulty and healthcare providers, and will soon have a section dedicated to communication in natural disasters.

Local government and non-government and print and radio media presence on social media sites (e.g., Twitter and Facebook). Authorities now urge residents in disaster zones to reduce use of mobile phones for calling and switch to sms or other online communication, including twitter updates and facebook posts, to ease the telecommunication load for emergency communication and those who have lost landlines or power. Social media is now used by government and non-government agencies, including volunteering groups, for communicating and disseminating information during natural disasters.

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Hemsley, B. & Balandin, S. (2004) Without AAC: The stories of unpaid carers of adults with cerebral palsy and complex communication needs in hospital. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication,* 20, 243-258.

Hemsley, B., Balandin, S., & Worrall, L. (2010 early view online). The 'Big 5' and Beyond: Nurses, Paid Carers, and Adults with Developmental Disability Discuss Communication Needs in Hospital. *Applied Nursing Research.*

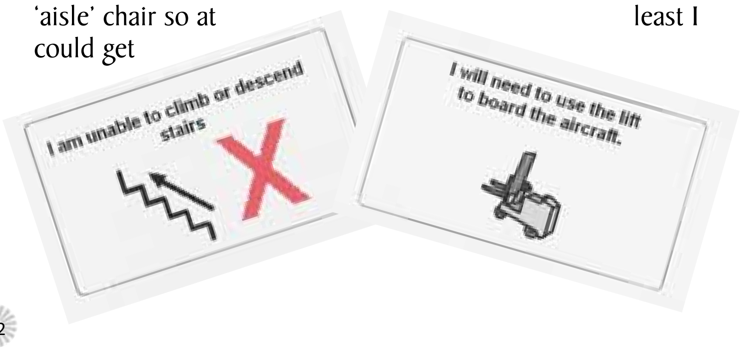
Taking it to the Skies

By Hank Wylie

Normally, due to my speech impairment and other disabilities, I am averse to travel alone, but as I had to fly from Avalon (an airport near Geelong) to Sydney for a meeting and neither a friend nor a Support Worker was not available, I decided to go it alone.

Having flown many, many times before, the routine did not faze me at all, but simply that I was a tad worried that I would be would find it hard to communicate, but I need not have worried. I had my Community Access Cards (pictured for airport use), my alphabet board, as well as my AAC – a Polyana, to back me up.

I rolled up in my motorised wheelchair to the check in, produced my e-ticket, showed them ID, etc and after a few initial questions, was given a manual wheelchair to get around the terminal. Although this was HUGE and not what I was used to, it was far better than an 'aisle' chair so at least I could get around for the hour users for reasons be



I am unable to climb or descend stairs

I will need to use the lift to board the aircraft.

Transferring into an aisle chair, I was wheeled to the waiting aircraft and lift to my seat. The trip went extremely well thanks to the excellent Jetstar crew. I booked into the hotel, again using my CAC and limited speech no problems.

The return trip was the most eventful. As I carry a set of Allen Keys in my backpack in case I need to tighten something loose on my motorised wheelchair. Although these were not picked up at Avalon, they were at the Sydney airport radar.

They were going to confiscate them, but after a bit of a dispute regarding their necessity, what they were for and the expense of replacing them, they agreed to put them in the hold for me to pick up at Avalon.

From that experience, I am glad that I had my alphabet board and CACs with me thanks to NECAS. I am far more confident travelling now and will not bother with the need for a friend, Support Worker or anyone else.

I encourage people who have little or no speech, if they are able to understand and follow instructions, to "go it alone" as it not only helps yourself, but creates community awareness that people who have little or no speech **can communicate**!

Seeing New Horizons – Mounting an Eye-tracking System on to a Powered Wheelchair

By Justin Ware, Occupational Terapist, TASC, Cerebral Palsy Alliance
tasc@cerebralpalsy.org.au

Background

Technology solutions for computer Access, Seating and Communications (TASC) has had significant experience with mounting devices on to wheelchairs and TASC has a close relationship with Technability, the Australian supplier and distributor of DAESSY mounting products. Regardless of this level of experience, mounting such a heavy device such as an eye tracking system on such a long pole presented many issues that TASC have learned from. It is hoped that this article can help to share our experiences and mistakes to avoid others having to face the same problems.

Angie McReynolds is 31 years old and she has cerebral palsy (CP). For Angie, this means that she has very limited control over any single part of her body. She has uncontrolled movements in her arms, legs, head and torso that make everyday life pretty challenging. CP also affects Angie's voice to the point that she really struggles to vocalise, and when she does, she isn't able to articulate any words at all.

All of these difficulties haven't stopped Angie though. Angie has represented NSW in the sport of Boccia and she has recently started using some new equipment that is anticipated will support her in being a contender at even higher levels of competition.

Furthermore, Angie has been using a Liberator 14 (now ECO2) with Minspeak (Unity 144 page set) for over 2 years now and prior to this she accessed Minspeak (Unity 84) on a Vanguard. With the support of a few speech pathologists, she was able to teach herself the Minspeak language system in her early 20s. Angie volunteers her time to mentor young users of high tech speech generating devices and she is has also featured in TV commercials for www.carecareers.com.au

Angie has always been a skilled user of technology and she has always pushed the boundaries of available technology to try to achieve independence. Angie was the first client within the Cerebral Palsy Alliance (formerly The Spastic Centre of NSW) to have an "air card" installed in her communication device. This air card enables Angie to make and receive phone calls and to send and receive text messages using her speech generating device, which she was previously accessing using only a single switch.

Using the same single switch, Angie has been using her device for years to send emails, browse the web and access environmental control, such as controlling ceiling fans, lights, television and the stereo. Angie is also independent in controlling her powered wheelchair using an ASL head array.

Angie used a single switch because, until recently, no other access method would work for her. A variety of options were tried over the years with the support of specialist technology services, but nothing would allow her enough accuracy to access any of the complex tasks that she needs to perform using technology.

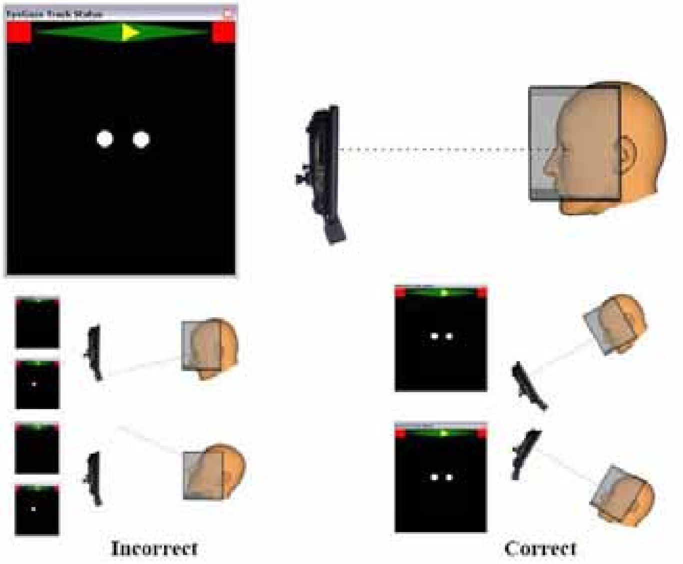
Knowing Angie's character, there was no surprise that when it was announced that the "ECOPoint", an eye tracking access option became available for her Liberator 14, she asked to try it before anyone else.

The initial mounting process

Angie tried the ECOPoint in September 2008 and sourced funding for the accessory (since she already had the Liberator 14) that was approved in April 2009. The plan was always to mount the device to Angie's powered wheelchair so that she would be able to use it wherever she went.

The first challenge was simply positioning the device. The nature of all eye tracking systems is that they work best when at eye level when the user's head is in a neutral position. See diagrams below, taken from the ECOPoint User manual.

In order to achieve this position and mount the device to Angie's powered wheelchair, a stainless steel pole of over a metre in length was required. DEASSY do not supply standard poles any longer than 60cm, so custom poles had to be ordered.



During the initial trial, Angie reported that the device tended to bounce around when she was trying to use it. This movement

SEEING NEW HORIZONS - MOUNTING AN EYE TRACKING SYSTEM ON TO A POWERED WHEELCHAIR

impacted on her accuracy in using the device, so a solution was sought as to how this movement could be minimised or eliminated.

Following consultation with Adam Lynn from Technability, a second pole, on the opposite side of the wheelchair was recommended. This pole had a special piece on it that allowed the horizontal pole to rest in a groove. This piece is called the SMS Stem Mounted Support. The second pole is pictured above.

A special bracket was also custom made by the TASC workshop in order to prevent the horizontal pole slipping out of the SMS receiver.

Taking mounting beyond its limits

Following three months of use on her powered wheelchair, Angie contacted TASC and reported that the mounting arms seemed to have sagged and that the bolts attaching the mounting arms to the wheelchair seemed to have come loose. TASC was able to inspect the mounting almost immediately and it was found that the standard mild steel bolts that were supplied with the DAESSY mount had become brittle due to the amount of tension that they were under and due to the dynamic forces they had to withstand when Angie used her powered wheelchair on uneven surfaces. During the appointment, pressure was placed on the mounting pole in a controlled environment and the bolts were made to fail. TASC Workshop team leader, Neil Harris recommended that all the bolts be replaced with matching ones that have a higher sheer resistance than the standard mild steel bolts. No special bolts were available at the time of the appointment, so stainless steel bolts were used to replace all the bolts in the mounting system and Loctite threadlocking glue was applied to secure the bolts so that there was no chance of them rattling loose.

After another 9 months of use, Angie again reported that things seemed to have become loose. Following the previous experience, she was seen immediately and the bolts of the mounting system were inspected.

To the amazement of all people involved, when the bolts were removed from the mounting system it was discovered that two of the bolts had stretched inside the system due to the force that they were under.

Following discovery of this second bolt failure, a review appointment was made with Angie to have all of the bolts on her mounting system replaced after 6 months.

Recently it has been discovered by TASC that stainless steel bolts are not the most failure resistant In consultation with a number of technicians, a plan has been made to trial some other bolts that will hopefully be more resistant to failing.

Mounting eye tracking on a manual wheelchair

Since implementation of mounting of the eye tracking system on Angie's powered wheelchair, she has also had a manual wheelchair custom built to enhance her ability to perform in the sport of Boccia. Custom brackets had to be made on the manual wheelchair to allow the mounting system to be transferred to her manual wheelchair and extensive static and dynamic stability testing of the wheelchair and mounting set-up was conducted using the WRAMP (Wheelchair Risk Assessment Mounting Procedure) that was developed by the NHS Communication Aid Centre in North Bristol.

Left - bolt from Angie's mounting after 9 months use. Note the elongation of the bolt and the thinning around the neck of the bolt.
Right – bolt as new

Outcomes

Angie was the first person in NSW to have her own eye-tracking system mounted to her powered wheelchair and she may have been the first person in Australia. From the experience of following the whole process, TASC and Technability have learned:

(i) Aesthetically and practically, with the challenges and ongoing cost and maintenance involved in addressing the issues involved

SEEING NEW HORIZONS - MOUNTING EYE TRACKING TO A POWERED WHEELCHAIR Cont...

with mounting an eye tracking system to a powered wheelchair, TASC would recommend only considering mounting an eye-tracking system to a client's wheelchair if it will truly enable a significant level of independence, and ongoing support and maintenance is available for the mounting system;

(ii) It is essential that a specialist technology and/or mounting service is closely involved in the assessment, trial and implementation of such a mounting system;

(iii) Although the ECO2 with ECOPoint is within the stated load limits of a DAESSY mounting system, the length of the pole required for positioning the unit puts an enormous amount of mechanical advantage load on the bolts that hold the mounting to the wheelchair;

(iv) Angie's lifestyle and level of independence means that she often crosses rugged terrain on her wheelchair. This rugged terrain places additional dynamic forces on the mounting system as it bounces around, leading to increased risk of the mounting system breaking. Clients who tend to stay on smooth and/or level surfaces may not face the same challenges with mounting as Angie; and (v) TASC is considering the investigation of fully customised mounting systems for attachment of eye tracking units to wheelchairs. This type of system would be likely to be very expensive due to the nature of customisation involved. Please contact TASC if you would like to discuss this.

Conclusions

In spite of the challenges and ongoing problem solving required, the use of eye tracking has made an enormous difference in Angie's life. Angie says "The eye gaze has made my conversations with people more flowing. Before, I had a switch and I used to take a half hour to respond to a question, but when with the eye gaze I can respond to a question within a couple of seconds". Having the system portable has made an amazing difference to Angie as well. "Before I could have my Liberator with the eye gaze mounted on my chair, I just put my Liberator with eye gaze on a table."

Using the Liberator on a table meant that positioning of the device was not as precise, so her accuracy suffered. Furthermore, everything Angie mobilised, the system would need to be re-positioned and set up again, which was very time consuming. It also meant that the device was not accessible whenever Angie needed it.

Angie continues to be an amazing user of technology and her ability to achieve more than anyone could possibly have imagined is an inspiration to all of those around her.

For a background on what eye tracking is and a brief look at some of the clinical considerations that need to be assessed before trialling eye tracking, have a look at the Article in TechnoTalk April 2011, available online at http://www.cerebralpalsy.org.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/6376/2011-TechnoTalk-AprilNewsletter.pdf. This article will only be available online for a limited time, so contact TASC for a copy if you find that it is no longer online.

ISAAC Membership

What is ISAAC?

ISAAC stands for International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

ISAAC is an international organisation that focuses on Augmentative and Alternative Communication

What is Augmentative and Alternative Communication?

AAC is any communication system that supports people who have a severe communication impairment.

ISAAC'S Vision

AAC will be recognised, valued and used throughout the world.

ISAAC'S Mission

To promote the best possible communication for people with complex communication needs.

MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN TO EVERYONE INTERESTED IN AAC.
If you want to become a member, you can join online via our secure website at www.isaac-online.org
or contact: the ISAAC Secretariat, 49 The Donway West, Suite 308, Toronto M3C 3M9, Canada
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AGOSCI In Focus

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Affiliated Publication: ISAAC Israel Journal. Published, annually in the spring, in Hebrew with English abstracts. Special ISAAC rate: AIR MAIL delivery $33. CDN

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Affiliated Publication: Unterstützte Kommunikation. Published in German by ISAAC-GSC four times per year, March, June

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is the official journal of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC), published quarterly by Inform healthcare, United Kingdom. AAC publishes original articles with direct application to the communication needs of persons with severe speech and/or communication impairments for whom augmentative and alternative communication techniques and systems may be of assistance.

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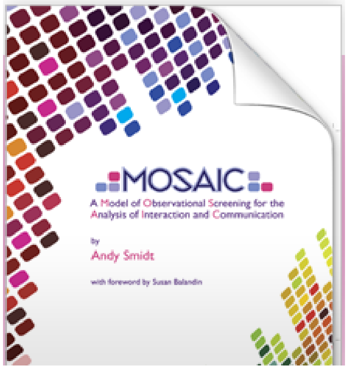
ASSESSMENT REVIEW: Mosaic a Model of Observational Screening for the Analysis of Interaction and Communication by Andy Smidt

Review by Karen Bloomberg, Speech Pathologist, Communication Resource Centre (Scope Vic) 03 9843 2003 kbloomberg.crc@scopevic.org.au

The MOSAIC is a tool designed for use primarily by speech pathologists. It is recommended that direct care staff, teachers, classroom assistants and other professional staff start to use MOSAIC with the support of a speech pathologist who is confident at using MOSAIC.



After videotaping an interaction, the MOSAIC observational forms provide a framework for collecting information about the communication process. It appears that video-taping needs to occur in a familiar environment with familiar communication partners. Time needs to be set aside to:

- video-tape the interactions
- learn how to complete observational forms
- analyse the filmed samples of staff members and transfer this information to the MOSAIC forms
- discuss and agree on communication guidelines.

The MOSAIC form is divided into different areas including conversation, partner interaction, and environmental observation.

Section one addresses the conversation forms used by the communication partner and the person with the disability referred to as the focus person. The aim is for the partner to note what he or she says and what supports he or she uses to augment their speech. For example is speech accompanied by the use of gesture or sign or some form of picture based communication (conversation form A1). This analysis is extended to the focus person. The communication partner is asked to note down what the focus person says or does and what mode of communication he or she uses (conversation form A2).

The type of interaction is also noted. This identifies whether the communication partner varies their use of language eg. use of commenting, questions, instructions or conversation. (form B)

The capability section addresses what the focus person uses their communication for. The communication partner is asked to identify whether the focus person uses their communication skills to get basic needs met, for joint attention and/or for social interaction. (Capability form C).

It is suggested that this section is completed last. This is because the communication partner may be able to look at what the focus person currently does and determine whether there may be another way of communicating that might be more efficient and more effective. This would then form the basis of intervention.

The environment observation form asks the communication partner to identify factors that may impact on communication eg. the place the interaction occurs, other activities taking place, the physical features of the room such as noise, temperature and visual distractions. (Environment Observation form D).

The next section addresses behaviour recognizing that most behaviour is communicative. The aim is to determine what is being communicated. This is an optional form but it may be a useful addition to the communication observation. Particularly as the communication partner is asked to hypothesize as to why the behaviour may be occurring.

The MOSAIC can help communication partners recognize and analyse their role in the interaction. Access to video equipment and a willingness on the part of the communication partner and the focus person to be videoed is fundamental. However, the most important and, often the most difficult to achieve is finding the time to make it happen. Time is needed to:

- video tape all staff engaging with the focus person or person(s)
- to meet with staff as a group
- to view the video taped material
- to complete the paperwork
- to identify possible communication strategies
- to put these strategies in place eg. make communication aids, learn to use key word sign

In the end, it is time well spent. Speech pathologists, particularly those working in the area of behaviour support, will find this a useful addition to their assessment tool kit.

MOSAIC is available from Andy Smidt – 106 Military Road, Dover Heights NSW 2030 or check the website www.mosaiccommunication.com.au

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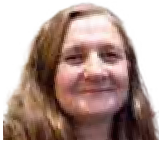

Gayle Porter (Australia)
Senior Clinician Speech Pathology
Cerebral Palsy Education Centre (CPEC)
Developer of the PODD communication system
(Like we really needed to tell you that?)

Ian Bean (UK)
Consultancy and Training Manager at Inclusive Technology in the UK
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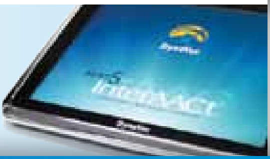

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what's new?

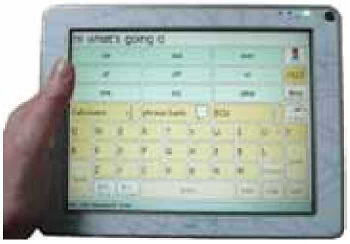
Zyteq

Tellus 4 and Mind Express 4

Tellus 4 is a new and very robust, wheelchair mountable dynamic display, speech generating device. It is a powerful Windows 7 computer-based device (Intel Core i5, 2.4 GHz) with a bright and clear 13.3" touchscreen display. Presenting the new Mind Express 4, the system offers multiple access methods and feature rich, attractive software.

jabbla

Zingui plus



The ZIngui is a light-weight dynamic display speech generating device with Mind Express. It is gaining in popularity due to its attractive design, simple and flexible operation and programming. Page sets are available for symbol selection, text-to-speech including word prediction and all combinations.

Predictable for the iPad

Predictable is an App for an iPad. When installed on the iPad and set-up for use with selected accessories, a functional and attractive speech generating system is created.

Zyteq is offering components of the system either with or without support packages. A most popular peripheral is the Therapy Box Switch box which provides switch connection via Bluetooth.

Bespoke

Bespoke is now upgraded to Windows 7, with 2 GB RAM solid state drive. This is compatible with The Grid 2, V2.7; a 1 kg device in carry bag.

Proxtalker

The Proxtalker is an innovative speech generating device with moveable picture tags that actually talk! A 'speak' key encourages sentence construction. Each tag is programmed with a word or phrase from the supplied core vocabulary or you can record messages as required. This device is robust and will survive the heaviest use. It makes a useful tool for classroom teaching, early intervention, therapy activities for a group or individual and for communication.

Equipment demonstrations

Sessions are planned in major centres Australia wide, to provide detailed information about our products. To attend these sessions please sign up to the e-news. Email ZYTEQ or keep a watch on the website calendar for sessions near you. Feel free to express interest in holding a session at your facility

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