

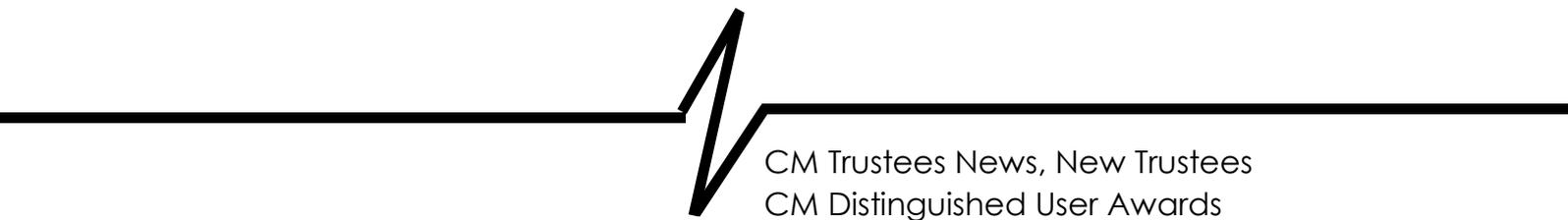
COMMUNICATION MATTERS

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

UK BRANCH

MAY 1998 Vol. 12 No. 1

In
This
Issue



CM Trustees News, New Trustees
CM Distinguished User Awards
Integrated Wheelchair and AAC Device
Young AAC User
AAC User and Parent Groups
Changing from Symbol to Word-based Systems
Equipment DataBase
AAC Interaction with Peers
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Diary Dates

COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Editorial

May 1998 Vol.12 No.1

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Welcome to all new members, and thank you to established members for renewing your *Communication Matters* subscription early in the year.

The international AAC community is looking forward to events in Dublin in the summer: the instructional courses (23 August 1998); the international ISAAC conference (24–27 August 1998), opened each day by a Plenary session in the form of debate on key AAC issues; and the two day Research Symposium (28–29 August 1998). Book up now!

The 1998 *Communication Matters* Symposium will take place on 14–15 September 1998, once again at Lancaster University but this year with an exciting new format that should allow for more in-depth study and discussion of key topics. Read the enclosed leaflet and start thinking about which 'Themes' you might like to sign up for.

This issue of *Communication Matters* once again contains some articles which were first presented at the 1997 CM Symposium, including Hawes and Blenkhorn on moving between symbols and words on computer, Gardiner on managing equipment, and Murphy in AAC users interacting with their peers.

Perks describes an innovative integrated mobility communication and writing system, and an example of impressive coordination between manufacturers and services.

This issue also has a strong 'AAC User flavour', which we are delighted about. Scottish AAC users Sylvia Grant, Kate Ellis and Tina MacLugash share their experiences and views. Dixon paints a graphic picture of the AAC User Group setting up in the NW of England. New Trustee Katie Clarke introduces her young AAC user daughter Nadia, and launches the opening moves of a new CM initiative to put parents of children with severe communication difficulties in touch with each other and to stimulate increased discussion and support for parents. Please encourage any parents you know to get in touch with Katie and try to come along to the CM Parents Workshop in September at Lancaster.

Please keep sending us feedback and contributions – letters, comments and responses to articles, news of AAC events, photos, book reviews, AAC product evaluations, jokes, cartoons, profiles of young AAC users would all be welcome. Oh, and articles, of course!

Front cover: Nadia, young AAC user, with Mum Katie, and family Sean, Nikki & Reay Clarke (see p. 4, 19)

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Newsletter Editors, Artwork & Desktop Publishing :

Sally Millar & Allan Wilson
The CALL Centre, 4 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW
Tel: 0131 650 4268 Fax: 0131 668 4220

Advertising: Patrick Poon, 22 Claremont Rd, Edinburgh EH6 7NE

Overseas Subscriptions: Helen Whittle, ACE/ACCESS,
Broadbent Rd., Watersheddings, Oldham OL1 4HU

Printers: CROWES of Norwich

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Trustees' News

Communication Matters Trustees have been working behind the scenes on your behalf. Some current issues:

New CM Telephone Number

You may have noticed that **CM** recently acquired a new telephone number (if not, please note it now! It is 0870-606-5463) This is one of these 'magic' numbers that can stay the same even when 'moved around' to different phones in different parts of the country. So the work of being a contact point for **CM** and ISAAC, and answering enquiries, can be shared around different people and changed from time to time, without **CM** members being affected and having to note new numbers all the time. The **really** good thing about this telephone number is that it will actually be answered by a real person (some of the time, at least)! This staggering new improvement in 'customer relations' is explained below.

CM Secretariat

Since about 1992 **CM** has run without any paid secretarial or administrative support. All of the work of administering the organisation, its membership, finances, links with ISAAC international, projects and conferences and so on have been carried out voluntarily by the Trustees and coopted members in what is laughingly referred to as their 'spare time'. Some aspects of this work has been becoming very onerous in recent years, especially in combination with ever-increasing work loads in peoples' 'day jobs'. Apart from exhausted Trustees, one result of all this has been that **CM** administration has not always been as efficient as ideally it might be.

Members have been very patient and understanding (for which many thanks) but we are painfully aware that there have been delays and muddles from time to time. Several members have made the point that they would welcome more feedback from **CM** about their membership, journals orders etc., and we know that most people would prefer to be able to speak to someone immediately and directly, instead of leaving a message on an answering machine.

Since **CM** finances have gradually become a little healthier recently, the Trustees have appointed a temporary administrative worker, firstly to enhance the efficiency and public image of **Communication Matters** and secondly to create an informed overview of the administrative work of **CM** (the work has just 'grewed and growed' over a period, and because it is all done by different people in different places, nobody knows exactly what it all is or how long it all takes). This will then be reported on to the Trustees and Members.

Patrick Poon, already honorary Treasurer of **CM**, is working two days per week on **CM** business, for 6 months in the first instance. His first priority is to draw together all the different **CM** databases (for membership, journals, conference registrations) as these have all been operating separately, and in some cases beginning to crack apart under the strain. He will be

The current Board of Trustees of Communication Matters is:

- Katie Clarke
- Alison Futerman
- Caroline Gray
- Tony Jones
- Janet Larcher (Chair)
- Sally Millar
- Liz Panton
- Barnaby Perks
- Anthony Robertson
- Judy Robertson
- Helen Whittle
- Peter Zein

streamlining membership procedures and conference registrations, centralising all financial administration, and dealing with day to day business. At the end of 6 months, Patrick will be in a position to report to **CM** exactly what is involved in administering **CM** efficiently. The issue will be brought up at the AGM in September 1998 for members to discuss and agree on a strategy for the future.

If you have any ideas about jobs that you think a **CM** administrator should be doing, or if you notice any changes in your dealings with **CM** in these next few months we would be most grateful if you would take the trouble to write in to Chair Janet Larcher (3 St. Alban's Avenue, Weybridge KT13 8EW) to report these; members' views

will help the discussion and decision to be made in September about the future.

Resignation of Trustee

Sadly, Tony Jones has recently resigned as a Trustee of **CM** due to pressure of other work. Many thanks for your input, Tony, and good luck with all your other activities!

New Trustees

Due to Tony's resignation and the fact that the Constitution states that a portion of the current Board of Trustees has to stand down each year, there will be elections of Trustees at the AGM in September 1998, at Lancaster. Please start thinking **now** about whether you might like to be a Trustee, or who you might like to nominate as a Trustee.

RESMag

There is a new group called the Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) group, meeting under the umbrella of the Rehabilitation Engineering Service Managers' Group. Those attending recent meetings include engineers, medical consultants, and manufacturers/suppliers. The group may have influence on policy at the DoH. So far there has been little, if any, representation from AAC specialists, therapists/teachers or users of communication aid equipment, which is a matter of some concern to **CM**. The next meeting is on 2 June in Warwick; contact Liz Panton on 0191 219 5640 to coordinate **CM** representation.

AAC Core Curriculum becomes an official City & Guilds Qualification in Effective AAC

Excitingly, this new course for AAC users is currently being piloted at 3 FE Colleges and is due to 'go public' in September 1998. **CM** is funding the City and Guilds fees of £3,000 to make this happen. This is a giant step forward for the recognition of the skills and work of AAC users', and of the field of AAC in general. Many congratulations and thanks to Judy Robertson and all the original authors for all their hard work on this. Colleges wishing to offer this course/ qualification need to be registered with City and Guilds. Contact Janet Larcher at the above address for further details meanwhile, and read more in the next issue of **CM**.

CM Distinguished AAC User Award Apply Now!

Communication Matters now makes an AAC Distinguished User Award each year, at the Symposium. The award was won jointly in 1997 by Sylvia Grant and Kate Ellis. Their presentations were enjoyed by participants at Lancaster last year, and can be read here on Pages 15-17. We would like to encourage AAC users reading this to apply now, for 1998. Please alert any AAC users you know or work with who might be interested. The aims of the award are:

- to give AAC users practice in preparing and delivering presentations
- to encourage AAC users to think of giving presentations at the *Communication Matters* Symposium
- to encourage AAC users to consider the possibility of going to international ISAAC conferences

The 1998 winner of the *Distinguished AAC User Award* will attend the CM Symposium in Lancaster in September free of charge and will deliver their presentation on 14 September 1998. They will also receive £250 prize money and their conference registration fee for the next ISAAC Biennial Conference (Baltimore, USA in 2000). (NB but not travel or accommodation costs, sorry),

To enter, AAC users need to be up-to-date members of CM (remember there are free memberships for AAC users, but you do need to apply for them) and should submit a written copy or a video or audio-tape of a presentation that they would like to make at the *Communication Matters* Symposium. The presentation should be about 15 minutes long and can use slides, video, overhead projector, music etc. Send entries by the 20 of July 1998 to Janet Larcher, 3 St Albans Avenue, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 8EW. Please note: the Award cannot be won by the same person/ people again within five years

New Style Communication Matters '98

Both in AAC content and Social Programme, the conference will be in a new format. Eg. Choice of Themes; longer Workshops; cabaret with performers with disabilities and buffet instead of a Conference Dinner /Barn Dance.

Letters to the Editor

What's the problem? He's got all the time in the world, now...

I read Alison MacDonald's article in the *Communication Matters* December 1997 with interest. It was given to me by my speech therapist, perhaps because she was frustrated with me not progressing with my *Lightwriter*. It was the first time that I had read of someone understanding the physical limitations of disabilities. While not wishing to diminish her message, I would point out that even mild strokes can make the simplest of tasks - like walking, clearing the throat, or even smiling - very time and energy consuming. Her analysis of the social considerations were spot on, and her recommendation for phrasing strategies:

- type first clause ending with a conjugation,
- look up,
- make eye contact,

• precede to type the second, subordinate, clause
will be something I will be following. I will be following her lead in developing telephone strategies. The Dectalk in my *Lightwriter* doesn't allow me to say *Eh?* (seeking confirmation) - I use *hay?* instead - but does allow *Uh huh*. Another factor that Alison might like to consider when dealing with stroke survivors is their loss of self-esteem. For most of us "*the old you has died and now you're dealing with a new and very limited person*"
* Although you have been told that doing something for the first time will help you, you are wary lest it doesn't work out. Today I bought a Walkman and the act of taking it out of the box and trying it out was very stressful, and was put off for a long time.

(*from "*It could be you*" Annette Rawstrone, Scottish Big Issue 166)

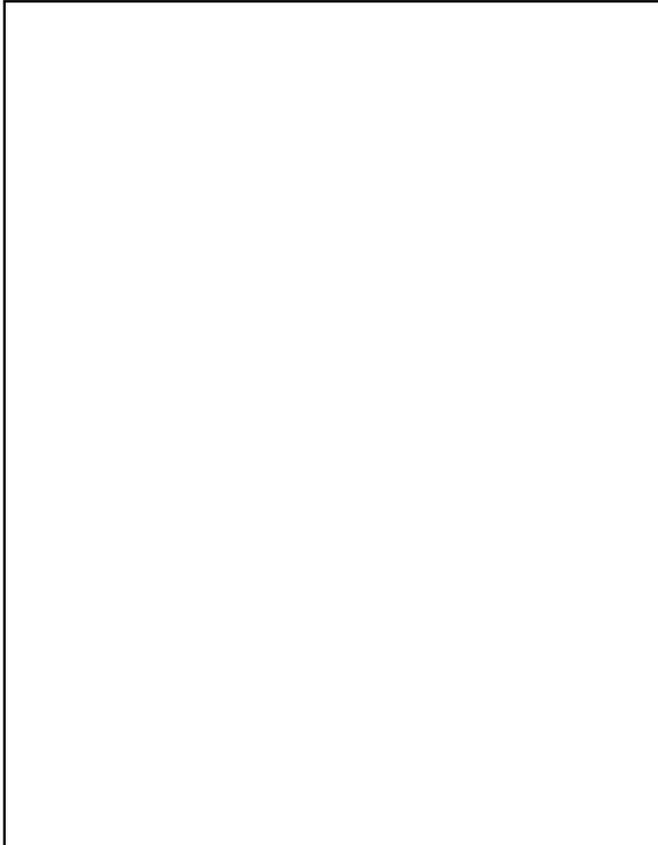
John Angel

Tower House, 10 Main Street, Clackmannan, FK1 4JA

Email: jangel@iee.org

New Trustees

Katie Clarke
(with her daughter Nadia)



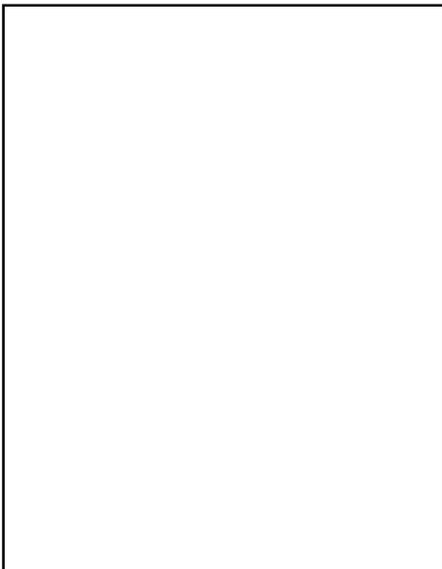
As a parent of a young user of AAC, I feel strongly that parents and carers need to be represented on *Communication Matters*. If our children are to be the next generation of disabled adults who have reached their potential and can communicate to the fullest, then we the parents/carers need to be the catalyst.

As a new trustee I see my role as a link between parents/carers and *Communication Matters*, trying to help parents/carers to gain access to the organisation. Perhaps this link is more easily made through another parent, who offers a different perspective from professionals. Having a family is always hard work, but when you have a child with special needs life is far more complicated. I think it is so important for me to understand my child - to like and accept her; to feel positive enough to be motivated to learn and acquire information that will help my daughter to reach her fullest potential.

I have already gained different levels of expertise in a range of areas: physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and AAC; the use of equipment, including indoor and outdoor electric wheelchairs, as well as communication aids; deaf issues, including sign language, education and profession and cochlear implants; equal rights and disability discrimination. It is endless. I am a member of numerous organisations and support groups. Therefore I feel that although I have no training and, until six years ago, I knew nothing about disability, I now hope that I can make a contribution towards *Communication Matters* as a Trustee.

Barnaby Perks (with his dogs)

I am a bioengineer with a particular interest in integrating assistive technologies such as AAC systems with mobility, seating and environmental control. Many of you will know me from my time with the firm QED Ltd. particularly my work with the CALL Centre Smart Wheelchair.



I now work as an independent consultant in assistive technology providing assistance to companies and individuals. As a new Trustee I have so far have taken over responsibility for the conference budget. You can contact me on 01489 891 999 or write to me at New Villa, The Avenue, Bishops Waltham, Hants SO32 1BN.

Calling All Parents!

On Tuesday 15 September 1998, at the Communication Matters Symposium at Lancaster University, there will be a day especially for people who use and live with augmentative communication on a 24 hour basis. There will be Workshops both for AAC users (led by Anthony Robertson, see opposite page) and for parents of AAC users.

Katie Clarke, CM Trustee and mother of 6 year old AAC user Nadia, is organising and leading the Parents' Workshop and is keen to encourage as many parents as possible to come along.

Katie says "***In my experience, parents often do not get to meet each other, or get to hear about new developments for children with special needs. We need to know about the techniques and approaches professionals use. This is a brilliant chance for parents to get together, share information and experiences (and worries!). talk to AAC specialists, and see the latest communication technology equipment in the exhibition. Do come! Contact me through Communication Matters on 0870 6065463 for further information.***"

Very very new Trustees news!

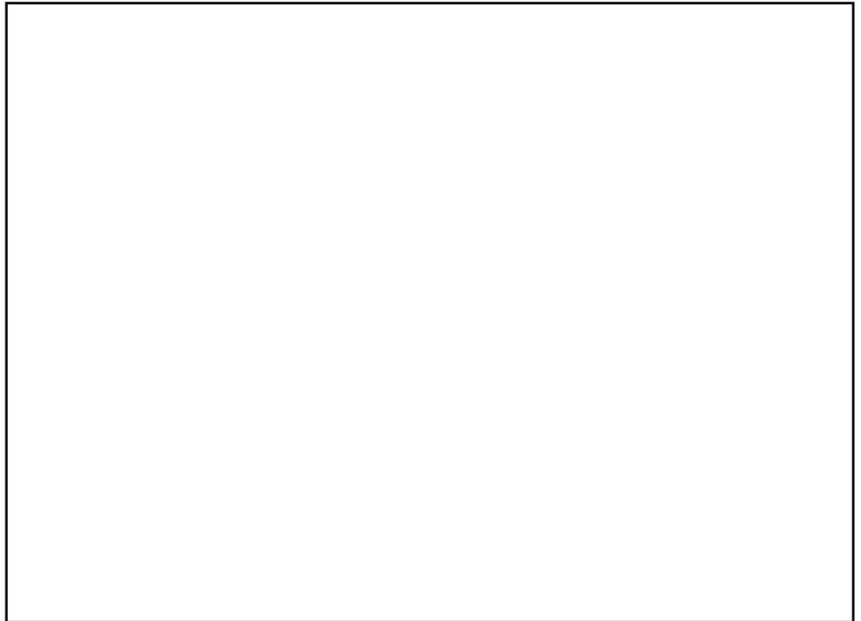
Amy Sarah Robertson

Communication Matters proudly announces the birth of the first ever baby born to two serving CM Trustees!

Seriously though, CM cannot of course take any credit. That goes to the proud parents of this lovely little girl pictured here. Many warm congratulations to Judy and Anthony Robertson whose first baby Amy Sarah Robertson was born on 17 April 1998, in Hertfordshire.

Amy weighed in at 6 lbs 13 ozs. and mother and baby (and Dad!) are doing well.

Anthony says "thank you" to all of those who sent cards.



I'm just giving birth...

When Janet Larcher and Debbie Jans put a 'Three Line Whip' on the *Communication Matters* Advocacy Working Group, saying that final comments had to be in on the last draft of one of the books in the AAC and Advocacy pack within 2 weeks, they were not really expecting to be taken quite as seriously as Gail Dennett took them. Conscientious Working Group member Gail made her comments at the last minute in the Labour Ward of the local hospital! It is rumoured that her scribbled apologies went along the lines of "*Sorry about the wobbly handwriting, I'm just giving birth.*"

When interviewed later about this, Gail said, "*Well, I just took the draft in to the hospital because it was a good chance to get peace and quiet to read it (it was the school holidays and it was chaos at home!)*".

In spite of CM, Gail gave birth to a healthy baby boy, Scott (6lbs 11 ozs), on 16 April 1998 – a little brother for Craig (6 yrs). All well. Many congratulations and well done Gail!

PS....

The CM Advocacy Pack

Speaking Up and Speaking Out! ***Pathways to Self-Advocacy***

is also progressing well and will be 'born' publicly in summer 1998.

Watch out for details in the next issue of this publication, and see copies of it at the CM Symposium in Lancaster in September.

Cambridge Adaptive Communication Honoured by the Smithsonian Institute

Cambridge Adaptive Communication's new tiny Cameleon CV became part of the Smithsonian Institution's Permanent Research Collection on Information Technology Innovation at the National Museum of American History on Monday 6th April 1998. Nominations for inclusion are for individuals and companies that "demonstrate vision and leadership" and "use information technology to improve society".

CAC was nominated by Craig Barrett, Executive Vice President of Intel Corporation. It will be part of a collection that includes 442 of the year's most innovative applications of technology from many countries. Dr. David Allison, Chairman of the National Museum's IT Division said "Cambridge Adaptive Communication is using information technology to make great strides toward remarkable social achievement in science." Dan Morrow, Executive Director of the ComputerWorld Smithsonian Awards Program said "The materials submitted on behalf of Cambridge Adaptive Communication will enrich the Smithsonian's growing permanent collection on the Information Age and help the Institution build an accurate historical record of the truly outstanding achievements being made in these remarkable times."

Visit the Innovation Network Web site from 8th June at: <http://innovate.si.edu>

ISAAC/CM Journals and other AAC Publications

When you join *Communication Matters*, you are joining the UK branch of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC). One of the benefits of membership is access to specialised literature in the field of augmentative and alternative communication (which is not always easy to get hold of otherwise, in 'ordinary' libraries and bookshops), and access to an international network of people involved in the field of AAC.

You automatically get two publications from ISAAC international plus one UK journal as part of your membership subscription. You also have the opportunity, at the time of joining/renewing, to order international journals. The relationship between the North American price for publications and the price you pay in £ sterling through *CM* in the UK varies slightly as the exchange rate varies throughout the year (it is too complicated for us to keep changing the price to members with each change of currency exchange rate!) but it will always be around the same or will usually 'balance out' over a period, or even work out slightly cheaper.

Apart from saving money, you are also saving hassle by ordering journals through *Communication Matters*, because in effect we are offering you a 'one-stop shopping' facility. You *could* order all of these same journals directly from their publishers, but then you would have to deal with 4 different publishers. You would have to try to remember which journal came from which publisher, when subscription renewal was due on each, and have to organise separate credit card payments or international money orders for all four.

Although we think a one-stop shopping facility is worthwhile, there have been some 'hiccups' in the system lately, and a few changes have taken place. First of all, we apologise to members who have not been receiving the publications that they have ordered and paid for, or have been receiving them very late. This is not actually the fault of *CM* at all, but we take responsibility for explaining the delays to you.

If anybody feels particularly strongly about it, please get in touch and we will arrange for a refund of your money. However, that would be complicated; we hope that you may feel less confused and more patient once you have read the review of the current situation, and the explanations below:

International ISAAC Publications

ISAAC Bulletin

You receive 4 copies of this per year directly from ISAAC free of charge, as part of your annual subscription to *CM*. The publication dates are usually around February, May, August and November each year.

ISAAC Membership Directory

This is an annual publication. Again, you receive this directly from ISAAC free of charge, as part of your annual subscription to *CM*. It usually arrives around September each year.

If you wish to be included in the Directory as a member, you have to have joined / renewed early in the year (because the Directory goes to press in about May each year). If you want to

ensure that your entry shows the correct address and other details then it is up to you to check that you have forwarded to *Communication Matters* any changes or updates to your title, address or other details. To check, look at the address label on the envelope that this journal arrived in. If it is not accurate, contact *CM* on 0870 606 5463 and up date your details.

Communication Matters

This is this publication—your own ISAAC UK journal which you have paid for as part of your subscription and which is composed mainly of contributions submitted by UK members. It is partly subsidised by the advertisements it carries from manufacturers/ suppliers of AAC equipment. It has been appearing three times a year, usually late May/June; September; and December/January. Publication dates can be a little shaky (up to a month either way) due to the fact that it is produced by members in their 'spare time' ... We are working on streamlining this from 1999 onwards - look out for details in the next issue.

If you suddenly realise that you have not received any of the above publications lately, (check your back copies to get exact dates and Volume/issue numbers) the most likely reason is that you have inadvertently forgotten to renew your *CM* and journals subscription for the year, or your Finance Department did something odd with your form and payment instead of sending it on to *CM* with a cheque and your name and address clearly marked... Phone *CM* on 0870 606 5463 to check.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

This is an ISAAC publication but it does not come free as part of your subscription. An annual subscription to AAC can be ordered and paid for as an 'extra' through *CM* at the time of subscription / renewal. The current (1998) price through *CM* is £58 per year (\$119 through the publishers in the USA) for quarterly issues appearing regularly starting each year in March. 1998 is an especially good time to order AAC as this year's subscription includes a CD ROM of back issues. AAC is edited by Pat Mirenda who has enormous international credibility in the field. AAC is really *the* academic / research orientated publication in the field of AAC. It is essential reading for specialists in AAC and for reference (though it is not always what you might call an 'easy read'). If you can't afford it, try to get your employer/library to take it.

ISAAC Affiliated Publications

These are publications for which you have to pay, but which offer a special rate to ISAAC members and which are officially supported 'in kind' by ISAAC by administrative facilitation, allowing their purchase to be made in your local currency, alongside ISAAC / *CM* subscription.

Communicating Together

This thoughtful and low cost journal considers the whole person not just AAC systems and technology. It contains many contributions from AAC users and is particularly relevant to AAC users and their families, and perhaps to care and support staff as well as AAC specialists. Ordered alongside your *CM* subscription it costs £15 (or £18 for the electronic 'on-line'

version). Quarterly publication dates can 'slide' slightly from time to time, (like *CM*) but not usually by more than a month or two. Volume 14 (1997) is complete. Since subscription is linked to your *CM* membership, if you overlook renewal or join/renew late in the year, your CommTog will be late too (or several may arrive together)...

Communication Outlook

This long established publication has recently, sadly, ceased to be an ISAAC Affiliated publication. The Editors and publishers of the journal were having trouble meeting their own deadlines and publication dates were slipping so seriously that ISAAC felt it could no longer endorse it to members. Members who ordered and paid for **Communication Outlook** in recent years will have noticed that their copies were coming very late and completely 'dried up' at one point. for a long period of time. The 'missing' copies are being supplied gradually. The last one I've seen is Vol. 18, No. 1 (Summer 1997)

As of this year, **Communication Outlook** can no longer be ordered through *CM*. It can be ordered at \$24 per Volume (I'm not sure if credit cards are accepted) from **Communication Outlook**, Artificial Language Laboratory, Michigan State University, 405 Computer Center, East Lansing , MI 48824-1042 Fax: +1 517 353 4766. Email: co@all.cps.msu.edu

Other Publications

The following publications are not ISAAC Affiliated Publications, but this does *not* mean that they are not 'approved of' by ISAAC - indeed they are published by Sarah Blackstone who is extremely well respected in the field of AAC and who is the current President of ISAAC! It simply means that they are published and marketed independently for various reasons.

It has been possible to order these publications, just like ISAAC affiliated publications, alongside your *CM* subscription/renewal because we have had a special agreement with publisher Sarah Blackstone whereby we ordered ACN and AS in bulk and were able to sell them on to *CM* members at a slightly cheaper rate. However, UK sales were too low to make this arrangement viable, so this agreement is now no longer in force.

We are now in a transition stage, trying to negotiate with Sarah Blackstone a sensible strategy to allow *CM* to be her UK agent so that *CM* members can continue ordering and paying for their ACN along with their *CM* membership, so that it is easier all round. Even though the details are not yet clear, we are confident that as ISAAC 'family members', we will come up with some suitable deal and that the price will not need to go up much/will parallel the prices quoted for direct purchase from Sarah Blackstone in the USA. (If you want to order direct from the USA you are of course free to do so - but do it by credit card as it costs about £10 to buy an international money order!) For this year, *CM* will honour the price quoted on your membership form for ACN and/or AS for 1998.

Augmentative Communication News (ACN)

This is a real gem of a publication although its layout and 'look' is a bit crowded and cramped. Each issue takes a different theme and studies this in some depth. It is different from all of the other publications in that it is not a collection of articles from different sources but a well researched collation of specialist

views from both published and unpublished sources, summarised and presented succinctly and coherently. "*If I could only have one of the publications on offer, as a specialist professional in AAC this is the one I would go for.*" (Ed.).

Publication of ACN has been seriously delayed in the past year or so. You will still be receiving, in the course of 1998, issues of Volume 4 which should have appeared in 1997 (but some of which do not have dates on them!). This may confuse you if you haven't ordered ACN for 1998 but still apparently receive it. Unlike the other publications, there should be 6 issues of ACN per year. Volume 4 = 1997, Volume 5 = 1998.

We have to extend our understanding and forbearance to Sarah Blackstone the author of ACN and the owner of its publisher Augmentative Communication Inc. as it is undoubtedly the many long hours (days, weeks, months, years) of unpaid work she has been doing on our behalf as President of ISAAC that have interfered with her usual efficiency and caused the severe delays in the ACN schedule. Her term of office as President finishes in 1998, so we may hope that publication schedules will gradually return to normal in due course.

Alternatively Speaking (AS)

This publication is also published by Augmentative Communication Inc. although it is written / edited by AAC user Michael Williams. This publication has also been severely delayed. (The first issue of 1997, Vol. 4/1, has only just now appeared, a year behind schedule.) In 1996, the Editor apologised to subscribers for the delays, saying "*I had no idea what (producing this newsletter) would entail, nor was I prepared to handle psychological, social, physical and emotional aspects of the job. It has been a rather large growth experience for me.*"

Speaking as a fellow Editor I can certainly sympathise with Michael Williams and I'm sure that all of us wish to support him in this new and difficult task he has undertaken. If you order ACN and AS together as a 'package' directly from Sarah Blackstone you can get a special rate (maybe also from *CM*, in 1999).

AS offers a unique perspective as it is written by and for AAC users. Recently it has started to include the text of live presentations given by AAC users at conferences etc. which otherwise might never be heard or published. In my view the content and style of this publication is particularly relevant to adult AAC users of good ability / literacy and those concerned with this type of person. It is perhaps slightly less relevant for younger children & their parents or to those concerned with users with complex multiple disabilities.

Parents of AAC Users!

CM is offering small grants (eg. enough to cover postage, refreshments, baby-sitting fees, etc.) to help groups of parents of AAC Users to set up local meetings and get together to discuss issues, swap information and give each other support. Please apply to Katie Clarke at CM on 0870 606 5463 if you are interested.

Advertisement

Jody Simmonds drives her Wheelchair with her AAC Device – and it works!!!

Barnaby Perks

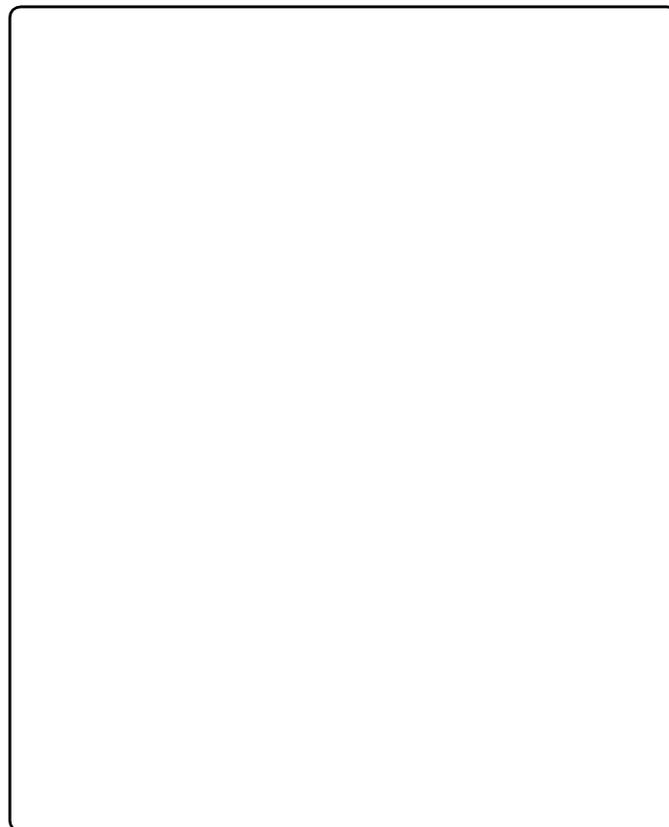
Jody is a bright, enthusiastic and demanding 18 year old, from Romsey in Hampshire. She spends term time at St Roses School in Stroud where she is ably assisted by an army of therapists, teachers and other helpers, notably the school maintenance supervisor Andy Saunders. Jody hopes to move on to the Star Centre in Cheltenham this autumn.

Jody has used an AAC device for 6 years and a powered wheelchair for 8 years. Various systems have been built to combine these technologies, with varying degrees of success. The problem has always been to provide a system which provides all of the functions that Jody requires whilst looking good and working reliably. Jody's old system was on its last legs in early 1997 and so an application was made to Whizz-Kidz to provide a new powered wheelchair, the to be integrated with her *Cameleon* communication device. Jody mostly uses *EZ Keys* text to speech with word prediction. She started with *Talking Screen* some years ago but prefers to write her own sentences. She also uses *MS Works* as a word processor.

A team of experts was assembled to design a new, integrated system combining powered mobility, communication and writing. The team met in Cambridge in late spring to thrash out a design for a new system that was to work and look good. Further discussions over the summer became concrete when Whizz-Kidz announced that funds were available to buy the equipment. An order was placed and various companies began to beaver away at Jody's new integrated system.

Cambridge Adaptive Communication (with assistance from Barnsley Medical Physics) produced the *Barnsley Wheelchair Interface (BWI)*, a device that enables the *Cameleon* to operate a *Dynamic DX* powered wheelchair controller via an on-screen scanner. QED produced a navy blue *Bobcat DX* powered wheelchair compatible with the *BWI*, an attendant control and a switch head-set to operate the new system. Active Designs produced a modular *CAPS II* seat to fit onto the *Bobcat*. Techcess built a mounting system for the *Cameleon* that allowed it to be folded neatly behind the seat for transfers, without the need to disconnect any wires. Delivery of the total system was co-ordinated by QED.

Numerous meetings and phone calls culminated one damp September morning when representatives from all parties converged on St Roses School, each armed with their own piece of the jigsaw. First the *CAPS II* seat was fitted to the *Bobcat DX* and adjusted to give Jody the support she required. Once everyone was happy with the seating, the *Cameleon* was fixed to the chair on its new swing-away mount. Next the switching head-set was fitted and adjusted. The *BWI* was then fitted to the *Bobcat DX* and the *BWI* software was installed onto Jody's *Cameleon*. Finally the *DX* software was tweaked to give optimum performance. Amazingly it all worked almost straight away. Jody was now able to speak, write and get about all with two head switches – and it looked great! All of the planning and



preparation had paid off, apart from a few minor adjustments, no further work was necessary and the system has worked faultlessly ever since.

Akiko, a volunteer helper who works with Jody, says that it was surprise just how good the system was. Andy Saunders said, "*Jody is a typical teenager with all of the drive that you would expect from an eighteen year old. It is crucial that the system is reliable, it is the main means of expression for this very expressive teenager. Jody's previous systems were not as reliable and this often left her frustrated and upset*".

And what does Jody think about her new system? "*It's much better than my old system because I can switch into drive mode by myself. It looks better and drives better. The colour is much nicer. I really need the system*", Jody explained to me. Jody is happy and so I think that we can conclude that the system is a success.

The project showed that it is possible to build an integrated system that works reliably and looks good. You just need funding, a clear goal, organisation and have each task performed by people who know, and are capable of performing, what's expected of them.

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Managing the Change from Symbol Based Communication to Text Based Systems

Paul Hawes and Paul Blenkhorn

Over the last few years, small portable computers have become increasingly attractive as communication aids. This is due to a number of factors, including the increased power of these machines and better software. However, one very common reason for choosing a computer as a communication aid is the hope that the same machine can also be used as a writing aid, or for any other task commonly carried out with a computer.

Clearly, this makes a great deal of sense as it avoids the need to purchase two separate pieces of equipment. More importantly, it saves a great deal of time for helpers who need to assist the user to change between machines. In some setups this can be a significant task, involving the re-connection of switches and possibly mounting a different machine on a wheelchair.

In this paper, we are looking at the use of AAC devices by people who are acquiring literacy, while still being dependent to some degree on the use of symbols. Such people will most certainly wish to use mainstream IT systems for word processing and access to curriculum materials and educational software.

For people in this category, there is a problem with the selection of appropriate software. Programs designed to provide dynamic screen communication are not intended to provide full control of a computer system. In fact, most such programs go to some lengths to ensure that the user does not have the opportunity to run other software and they are normally designed to occupy the entire screen of the computer.

Whilst it is helpful that everyday computer functions and AAC can be carried out on the same piece of hardware, to complete the process of integration it is necessary to ensure that the user may switch freely between these activities.

Our solution

Our approach to this problem was to design an on-screen keyboard program that could also be used for dynamic screen communication. We felt that such program would need to meet two requirements:

Ease of setup

It is important that any grid based software should be very easy for helpers and carers to alter. This is important with dynamic screen software in order to personalise the AAC content. In a program of the type we are now describing it is even more important as keyboards and special purpose grids may need to be created to work effectively with a wide range of computer applications.

Flexible layout

In the early stages, the user may well benefit from a screen layout that looks as much as possible like the dynamic screen system that he has been using. However, as the control of other applications becomes more important, the amount of screen

Not many people know this...

Paul Hawes, as well as being a nice chap and a whizzo programmer of communication aid software, is also a consummately skilful musician. We hear he also makes his own instruments. Here he is shown entertaining participants at the 1997 Communication Matters Symposium with his beautiful clarsach playing.

space dedicated to the grid should reduce, giving the user a better view of the job in hand.

We wanted to meet these two requirements without sacrificing what we saw as the best features of a good dynamic screen program. In our view these are:

- ③ The ability to use any graphics
- ③ Direct scanning of real world images to use as communication symbols
- ③ Support for a good range of synthetic speech as well as digitised recording
- ③ Sensitive and imaginative control of switch input methods
- ③ Fast response when switching screens
- ③ Range of settings to accommodate specific problems (e.g. visual impairment)

The program we have produced is called *HandsOff*. It incorporates all the features listed above. It also includes a number of advanced features to simplify the use of switch controlled systems, although these fall largely outside the range of this discussion.

The only significant feature of a dynamic screen program which has been omitted from *HandsOff* is the sentence bar, or work area, where the user produces sentences. We felt that it was more appropriate to handle this by producing a small application dedicated to this task.

To accompany *HandsOff*, we therefore produced an applet called *Picture Perfect*, which adds additional functionality to the sentence bar of a dynamic screen AAC program.

We see the use of the systems in three stages.

Stage 1 – Symbol based dynamic screen communication

At this stage, the needs of the user have three main characteristics:

- ⑧ Literacy is not a major element of communication
- ⑧ There is heavy reliance on ready made phrases
- ⑧ Dedicated software is always required

Software designed for this purpose is usually made to fill the entire screen so that objects or programs are not accessible, or distracting, to the user. Despite the existence of ready made communication sets, much customisation will be required, and it is important that the helper is given a program which is easy to use and to configure. There are no mainstream computer programs that can be used in this way.

Examples of stage 1 software

<i>Winspeak</i>	-	Sensory Software
<i>Gus</i>	-	The Gus Corporation
<i>Talking Screen</i>	-	Words +

Stage 2 - Intermediate

At this level, the user has moved on from complete dependence on prepared materials and symbols. The typical user would have the following characteristics:

- Partial literacy
- An increasing independence from the input of caretakers
- Use of a keyboard emulator to drive early learning material and an advanced symbol editor

At this stage, an on-screen keyboard can be used as a way of controlling other programs. Unfortunately, existing on-screen keyboards did not allow the flexibility to work properly as a dynamic symbol communication system.

An even more serious problem is that the user is likely to have a large corpus of communication boards, probably created by the customisation and extension of a ready made communications set. The replication of this would represent a huge amount of work, even using an on-screen keyboard that has the necessary features. To overcome this difficulty, we

have designed *HandsOff* to read the communication pages created by our dynamic screen AAC program, *Winspeak*.

Having provided a dynamic screen system that can also drive other programs, we must start to look at suitable software to go with it.

Symbol based sentence editor

This is needed to take place of the sentence bar. As no such program existed, a new one needed to be written, which we have called *Picture Perfect*. This is a sentence editor that can take whole words or single characters from an on-screen keyboard program. The words and symbols are displayed and spoken. Unlike the sentence area of a dynamic screen AAC program, *Picture Perfect* can accommodate a much longer sentence, or even a short story. It has a cursor for editing the sentence, allowing the user to learn the use of standard editing commands at an early stage.

Text editor with symbol support

The best known example of this in the UK is *Writing with Symbols*. This is essentially a word processor, but it can display the symbol for each word as it is typed as an aid to correction recognition. The on-screen keyboard can send either complete words or individual characters to an application of this type.

Early learning writing programs

There are several writing programs for children, which are designed to provide additional support in learning literacy. They incorporate such features as immediate spell checking and commands to read text back in speech. At this stage, predictive typing begins to be important and it is sensible to ensure that the on-screen keyboard includes this feature.

Examples of stage 2 software

On-screen keyboard programs

<i>HandsOff</i>	-	Sensory Software
<i>WiViK</i>	-	Prentke Romich
<i>EZ Keys</i>	-	Words +
With		

<i>Picture Perfect</i>	-	Sensory Software
<i>Writing with the Symbols</i>	-	Widgit Software

Stage 3 - Text based communication

By this stage, the user is largely independent. Effective command and control are now more important to the user than ready-made materials. The typical characteristics of these users are:

- Tasks are based on the assumption of literacy.
- Most phrases are entered as required.
- The user provides his own material.

A user working at this level will frequently switch between various types of application.

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Word processing software

At this stage, the user will have a free choice of any word processing software that is available, rather than looking for specially written programs. The on-screen keyboard is now simply a utility to overcome the hurdle of the keyboard.

Text based AAC software

There is surprisingly little software of this type, as most developers put their effort into symbol based systems. A good AAC program will provide management of the speech output, allowing a wide range of speech systems to be used (thus avoiding a roomful of people with identical voices). It will also allow messages to be stored and retrieved in a variety of ways to permit rapid retrieval. Windbag allows messages to be selected with instant keys, via a hierarchy of topics or by searching. It also allows conversations to be saved for future use and has a utility for speaking text that was written in other applications, such as a word processor.

Environmental control

It is possible to use computer software to interact with environmental control systems. This falls outside the scope of the present paper, but it is worth bearing in mind that *HandsOff* is capable of driving a wide range of such systems.

Examples of stage 3 software

On-screen keyboard programs

HandsOff - Sensory Software

WiViK - Prentke Romich

EZ Keys - Words +

With

Windbag - Sensory Software

Side Talker - Words +

Implementing an integrated system

There are several important points to bear in mind when designing such a system for a user.

Selection of suitable hardware

The ideal desktop workstation would have a large display and multimedia accessories. A printer and possibly a scanner or modem would be permanently connected. On the other hand, the ideal wheelchair mounted computer would be small and have as few wires attached as possible. Some compromise may be needed to be made in order to find a machine that does both jobs adequately. When a laptop is selected, there is little difficulty as these machines are now as powerful as their desktop equivalents. Special purpose computers, such as the Cameleon or Fujitsu are less well equipped. Most portable systems now have an infrared link which may be used to print without a physical connection to a printer. Another simple thing to do is to fit a portable device with a network adapter. This will allow a single connection to link the user to a school system and provide access to all the programs and additional hardware that is available to other children.

One point to be borne in mind is that a dynamic screen program does not require much screen space and a standard VGA (640 x 480) display is adequate. However, a larger screen with a higher resolution is desirable to display an on-screen keyboard and word processor simultaneously.

Selection of suitable software

The whole point of using standard computers is to allow the widest possible choice of computer programs and an on-screen keyboard program will allow any normal computer application to be controlled by the user.

However, some programs are easier to use with switch control than others. In particular, it is more tedious for a switch user to control the mouse than it is to use programs that can be driven by keystrokes. Conversely, people using direct selection with devices such as a trackball or head pointer will find that programs with large toolbars are easier to control than those which require selection from menus where greater precision with the pointer is needed.

In stages two and three, the ease of laying out the screen should be borne in mind. Some programs do not automatically size their window when they are launched, leaving it to the user to resize the window after the program has been run. This can be annoying, especially for switch users. Do try to choose programs which are well behaved, but also be sure that the on-screen keyboard has the built-in commands available to allow the user to rearrange the screen easily.

As for the specialist software used for access, it is helpful if resources generated for one program can later be used with another. Earlier, we gave the example of grids produced for dynamic screen software being used by an on-screen keyboard. It is also possible for these resources to be shared between users with widely differing needs. For example, prediction dictionaries can be produced with specific vocabulary for different lessons. If keyboard users in the same class who require predictive typing to speed up their input can use the same dictionaries, then a teacher will be saved a great deal of time.

Progress and development

No one can fail to notice the breathtaking speed with which computer systems are currently developing. Please remember that new programs, and new versions of old ones, are released regularly. Also, the power and portability of computers is constantly increasing. When specifying a system for a new user, it is wise to check that your information on currently available hardware and software is up-to-date.

Address for correspondence:

Paul Hawes

FCD, Hassel House, Industrial Estate, Malvern, Worcs.

WR14 1UQ

Email: Paul@foundcom.org.uk

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Communication Matters Distinguished AAC User Award 1997

The following two articles, by Sylvia Grant and Kate Ellis, are the joint winning entries to the 1997 Communication Matters Distinguished AAC User Award. They both gave very well-received presentations at the 1997 Communication Matters Symposium in Lancaster. Sylvia and Kate will both be using the award to help them to attend the 1998 ISAAC Conference in Dublin in August. See page 3 for details of the 1998 Award.

Me and Research

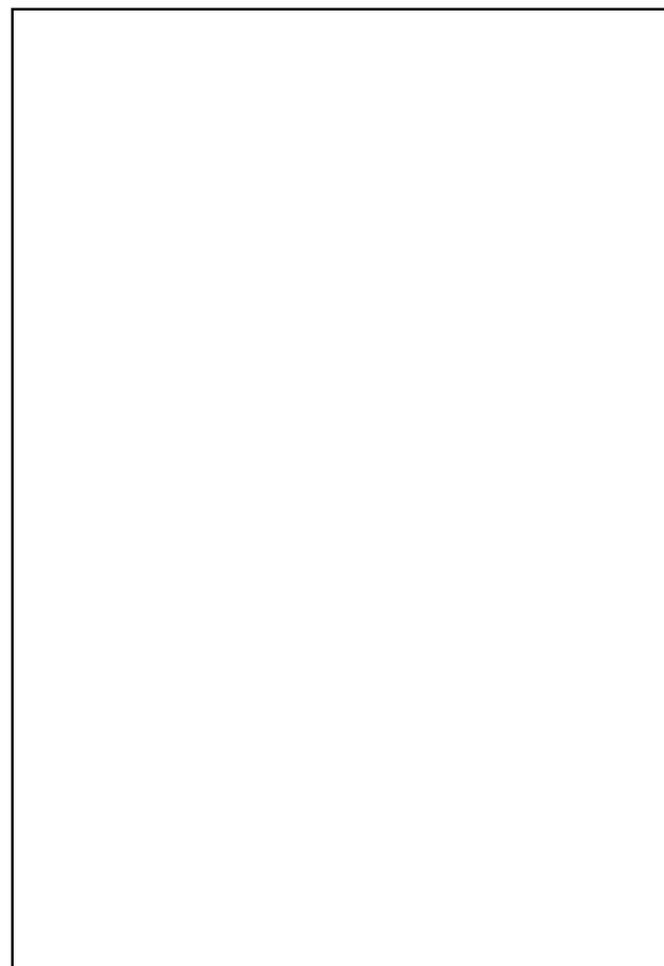
Sylvia Grant

I'm Sylvia. I've never been able to walk or talk due to cerebral palsy. During my lifetime, I've used several methods to communicate, which includes speech aids. For the past three years I've been helping a team at Dundee University to evaluate the *TALK* system. I'd like to tell you today how I got involved in the research and some of my experiences doing it, and how I felt about it.

I suppose the story really starts when my little niece, Emma was born. I really wanted to be able to talk with her, but I couldn't with my *Cannon* communicator. One night I was watching the television and it was a charity show that was on. A lady came on, and she was using a *LightWriter* to communicate, and I thought to myself, '*That's what I need to talk with Emma*'. So I told my mum about it, and she phoned someone and they put her in touch with the people who deal with speech aids in our area. After being assessed and a few months later, I duly got a *LightWriter*. A few months after that, the speech therapist who assessed me for it, phoned me to say that she'd had a phone call from a professor at Dundee University. She said that he was developing a new communication system and he wanted some people to help evaluate it, and she felt that I was an ideal candidate for him, so if I wanted to meet him she would arrange it. And I said, yes, so she fixed up a meeting. So, one day John Todman came to my house and showed me the system and explained a bit about what he wanted me to do if I wanted to help. I liked what I saw and heard, so I agreed to help him. So, it was all down to Emma that I got involved with *TALK*.

The *TALK* system was designed at first to have introductory conversations with new acquaintances. They started with conversations that had a fixed topic, like interviews or holidays, because they felt that the system wouldn't be able to handle more than one topic at a time, but one of the volunteers who had motor neurone disease started talking about her family, and it seemed to work okay, so they decided it may be alright, even if the topic wasn't limited.

That's when I started helping with *TALK*. I started straight away without any restrictions on what my conversations were to be about. As part of the research I had lots of conversations with students which were recorded. *TALK* is basically a pre-stored text communication system, and when I first started having conversations with students, I couldn't enter new text when I was talking to them. So I had to rely entirely on my stored text. I found it quite difficult to put things into the computer at first, but after I'd had a few conversations it became easier. Learning to work the



computer was relatively easy, compared with learning to have a conversation. I had to learn to string my sentences together.

I also had to learn to put things in the right place so I could find them easily. The *TALK* system is organised into perspectives, such as '*Me*' and '*You*'; '*Past*', '*Present*' and '*Future*'; and '*Where*', '*What*', '*When*', '*How*', '*Who*' and '*Why*'. I found it easy to put things into the '*Me*' and '*You*' and the '*Past*', '*Present*' and '*Future*' perspectives. But I found it difficult to put things into the perspectives '*Where*', '*What*', '*When*', '*How*', '*Who*' and '*Why*' because some of my messages could have fitted into several of them.

Although I basically used a lot of the same text for all my introductory conversations, I didn't get bored with it, because all the students had different personalities and they all reacted differently to my questions. Also, I tried to use my

text in a different order each time and of course a lot depended on what questions the students asked me.

It went okay, but there was a gap between my rate of words a minute and other people's rates. I only managed to speak at about 35 words a minute but other people got up to 60 words a minute. The other people who were using *TALK* to have conversations, either they were really able to speak and just trying out *TALK* or had just recently lost their ability to speak. So they didn't know if it was just my physical disabilities or, having never been able to speak, I was lacking in experience of conversation. So they decided to train me in some techniques for having conversations. I had sessions in using turn-around questions, topic shifting and using my general purpose comments to keep the conversation flowing. With the training, my speaking rate improved to about 60 words a minute. What's more, we found that speed was really important, because the quicker I went the more my partners seemed to enjoy the conversation.

For about a year I mostly had introductory conversations, but we wanted to see how *TALK* would work if I had a few conversations with the same person. So I started talking to a psychology student called Sian twice a week, and we became friends in quite a short time. It meant that I had to constantly update my stored text for her, but I found it was easier than when I was entering my text for introductory conversations. Once I got to know her a little bit, I could ask her about things that she was interested in and ask her more about things we'd chatted about previously. And I found I could tell her stories about things that happened in the past. The only problem I found with telling stories; they didn't really fit in very well to the way *TALK* is organized into different perspectives. The whole story really needs to be in one place, so John has devised a couple of things to help with telling stories that I've been trying out.

About the same time that I started talking to Sian, John let me have the on-line facility which meant I could enter new text whilst I was talking to people. John had withheld the 'on-line' entry because he wanted to see how well I could cope using just stored text. I thought it was pretty mean of him. I prefer *TALK* with the on-line entry, because I'm able to answer any questions that people ask me now, but before I had it, if I didn't have an answer in the computer, all that I could say was, 'Sorry, I don't have an answer to that question'. I wish that I could have answered some of the questions, because I felt sometimes it would have made the chat more interesting. I thought I might use the on-line entry a bit more with Sian, but I found I didn't use it all that much more than in my introductory conversations, where I maybe used it once or twice during each chat, and with Sian, I used it maybe five times in a 20 minute chat. Another thing, if Sian asked me a question that I hadn't an answer for in the computer and I thought it would take me a while to type out an answer for her, I'd quite often say that I'd answer her question the next time I saw her.

Another way I quite like using *TALK* is in a presentation. I quite enjoy doing presentations, even though I get a bit nervous just before I do one. It's maybe because I've got a captive audience, or I just like to hear myself talking. Doing a presentation is different from having casual chat, because you need more

precise answers. You can't get away with a vague answer so much in a presentation. But having said that, I found that I didn't need to enter new text all that much when I did my previous talks. I think it's maybe because the topic is fixed, and therefore I'm able to anticipate more of the questions people may ask me. I find the normal layout of *TALK* in perspectives is very helpful when I'm having a chat, but it isn't so helpful when I give a talk. I find it easier when I do a presentation if the layout is in topics.

So, how do I feel about *TALK* now? At first I wasn't very sure how I felt about using stored text. I knew that I could say things quicker using stored text, but on the other hand, could I express myself the way I wanted to? I soon found out I could. In fact, I'd say today, I can express myself better using stored text than when I use the new entry, because I have time to think exactly what I want to say when I'm entering the text, and I feel more relaxed because I don't have the same pressure of thinking what to say, nor how to put it to save time, so I don't keep people waiting too long.

Sometimes, I don't have an exact answer to a question in the computer, but if I think it's alright to answer with something from my stored text, I'll do so. I don't think it matters all that much the way that I say things, as long as my partner can understand me. Politicians very often answer questions the way they want to, so I don't see why I can't do the same.

To end with, I'd just like to say that I've really enjoyed all my new experiences with *TALK*, and I think it's a pretty good communication system. Using it, I feel I can have a real conversation with people now, and I didn't realise how enjoyable conversations could be. I really did love chatting to the students.

A commercial version of *TALK* on Speaking Dynamically is being released this year by the Mayer-Johnson Company. I'm looking forward to the day when *TALK* is in one box and I can take it out into the real world to see how it will work there. With that new development I'm hoping my involvement in the research with *TALK* will become more active by setting my own targets for using *TALK* in different situations at home and keeping a communication diary to monitor how well I manage to meet my own targets and what makes it difficult for me to do so. I also hope that, as I gain more experience, I'll be able to make more of a contribution to the research in different ways. For example, by exploring paired-learning with other users. By doing this I hope that I might be able to help develop a guidance pack to aid other users to learn together effectively. Also, I have begun to take on the role of consultant, trying out and commenting on new prototypes for other researchers. I hope that I'm able to do more of that, as well as continuing to help improve the *TALK* system. I feel I've come a long way in this research business and I'm looking forward to doing more. I really think it's important for users to get actively involved because ultimately we're the ones who have to live with the systems. And it's great fun too!

Sylvia Grant
Department of Psychology
University of Dundee
Dundee

Communication Matters Distinguished AAC User Award 1997

Changing Attitudes

Kate Ellis

My name is Kate Ellis. I would like to tell you about how I was involved in making videos for a training package compiled by my speech therapist, Joan Murphy. It was designed to let able-bodied people and AAC users understand the differences in communication involving both parties. I felt something had to be done about able-bodied people's attitudes towards people with speech problems. I feel because I am in a wheelchair and have a communication difficulty I get looked upon as being both mentally and physically disabled. I am not. I have a mind of my own. I only wish that people would take the time and realise that I am an adult and I think and feel the same way as they do. I'm not talking just for myself I am sure many people in the same position as myself have experienced this.

Before moving into my own house I stayed at a hostel in Stirling. I found the attitudes of most staff deplorable. For instance, I like to have my Liberator available all the time. I found the staff preferred me not to have it at meal times. They thought as I was eating I wouldn't want to talk so they remove it. But one advantage I do have is that I can hold a conversation and eat a meal at the same time. I also found that I wasn't meant to answer back as this often offended some people and would affect when I would get my Liberator, but half the time I didn't get it anyway because the staff were wanting peace and wouldn't take time to listen to me. I don't think they realised how important my Liberator is to me. I put this



down to the lack of knowledge in the community about how to converse with an AAC user.

I then asked Joan what she thought and we discussed what would be the best way to go about it. I suggested an in service training day. I then selected members of staff who I felt would benefit most from it. I felt we got the message across at the time, but to have a more lasting effect on staff this would have to be done on a more regular basis. To get able bodied people to both understand and listened to AAC users. Just before I moved into my own house I did another



training session at the Speech and Language Therapy Department in Stirling. This involved Joan, myself and my new carers. By this time I found it easier to get the message across. The training video that I was involved in was very helpful because not all my carers had experience with AAC users. In the video I was able to portray several situations I have so often found myself in, like able-bodied people talking about me and not to me when I am present. The video shows I can be more involved in conversation if the company I am in would sit down and were all more or less at eye level. This certainly makes a difference. When you have somebody standing behind you or beside you this can be very intimidating and uncomfortable for the AAC user.

Everyone knows their own level of vocabulary, as do I, but I find there is sometimes someone who wants to work my Liberator for me. This is my way to converse with people and I don't like anybody else interfering with it, as they could not only make a very costly mistake with it, they could lose me my voice and because of the position that I am in, I would say it is my most important asset. I am as capable of using my Liberator as they are at holding a conversation. The video is very explanatory and I would say, in a sense, compulsory for able-bodied people and AAC users working together.

I also found it very interesting in the training to hear how able-bodied people felt about communicating with people like myself. Many feel anxiety and fear. I can understand this but I feel if there was more awareness of this in the community, we would not only be accepted more, but we could also play an active role in educating the public.

I am also involved in helping the Psychology Department at Stirling University with their research, which I enjoy very much because it gives me a sense of satisfaction. I realise now that there are many people who are interested in communication. I feel I am more confident within myself now, to start a conversation and to pick up on another conversation. I think being involved in the making of the training package and video, with Joan and everyone else, has helped me.

Kate Ellis

Bridge of Allan, Stirling FK9 4DN

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Nadia Clarke – Young AAC User

Katie Clarke

Nadia Clarke has just celebrated her 6th birthday together with her brothers and sister, Sean (7 years old), Nikki (4 years) and Reay (2 years). Nadia is a bright, happy, attractive little girl with a wicked sense of humour. She is highly motivated and determined, sociable and confident. Home is a busy, fun, loving place to be. There is lots going on. Nadia is part and parcel of everything her family are involved in.

Nadia has complex special needs: she has cerebral palsy and is deaf. She uses a mixture of sign language, gestures, body movement and facial expression to communicate. Nadia uses a low tech symbol system and is starting to use her *Dynavox* more and more. Nadia had two years in a local nursery, and she is now in a special school but her family are moving to another education authority so that Nadia will get the chance of having a mainstream primary school education. Nadia's mum says, "*We don't ask for much. We just want Nadia to be able to be part of the local community, we want Nadia to go to the same school as her siblings, and for her to be an accepted and respected member of society. We want Nadia to like herself, develop friendships and to be able to communicate with those around her.*"

Nadia Clarke with her mother Katie, and Sean, Nikki and Reay

The editors would welcome more articles on young AAC users. Please send any contributions to Sally Millar at the address given on Page 1.

Views and Opinions

Tina MacLugash

Tina answered these questions during her presentation at the Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland Study Day on Advocacy, in November 1997, in Dundee. Print cannot do justice to the panache and effective timing of Tina's delivery in person!

My name is Tina MacLugash. I am twenty five. I have been using my Touch Talker for about 5 years. It is old. When I was small I used a Bliss symbol board and a T-Bar pointer to communicate. I feel my Touch Talker is good for my future. I would like to be a Liberator Ambassador.

Do you feel you are always consulted properly for your views and opinions?

I would always like to be asked for my views and opinions but sometimes people do not ask what I think. People are surprised that I can think.

There are times when I am lazy and I can't be bothered to give my view. Sometimes it is difficult to give a view or an opinion because I don't know, I have not had enough experience or I do not have enough information.

There are times I give opinions I do not agree with to get a reaction from people. To show them I can think for myself.

Do you sometimes feel that your opinions are ignored?

The people who do ask me for my views or opinions are my family, my tutors at College and my best friends. It has taken my family some time to learn not to make decisions for me. I think people who do not ask me do not know me well enough, or do not like me.

Sometimes my opinions are ignored. At College just now I am having a hard time because I want something to happen and people agree with me but it is not happening. Sometimes my opinions are ignored for financial reasons. I would like a DeltaTalker but there is not enough money to buy everyone a communication aid. I have one, and some people are still waiting, but sometimes it still upsets me. Sometimes I am ignored because of people's attitudes.

Sometimes they do not listen or they make up their own mind.

*Tina MacLugash
Motherwell College, Motherwell*

Peacocks, Picnics, Pools and Parties

Helen Dixon

I work in Barrow in Furness on the edge of the Lake District. Barrow is also at the end of a 30 mile access road, so if you want to go anywhere it takes the best part of an hour to even reach the motorway.

I work chiefly with children and adults with severe learning difficulties but also with various AAC users. The two most competent AAC users are an eleven year old girl and a twenty eight year old lady. Due to the nature of our area both these people had very little contact with other users, especially the eleven year old who was in a mainstream school and was the only child in her school using any form of AAC. Others used ORACs to a limited extent but more as a teaching tool than as a means of communication. She had met one other child briefly during a visit to Bobath but that was about it.

The adult user had met other people in the past but was not currently in contact with anyone. She was also looking to change her communication aid and wanted to see other aids in use and to "pick the brains" of other users. The only way to overcome both these difficulties was for these two to somehow meet other users. Short of bribing people to move into the area the only way to do it seemed to be through an AAC User Group.

I looked into User Groups already running but at the time the nearest ones appeared to be either Newcastle or Liverpool - too far away. Eventually I decided to set up a group locally. The only way I knew of trying to locate users was through Speech and Language Therapists. I knew a group too locally based would end up involving my two Users and nobody else

which seemed fairly pointless so in the end I decided to write to Speech and Language Therapists in Lancashire and Cumbria. I wrote to District Therapists asking them to pass the letters on to appropriate therapists. A small number replied saying they worked with users who might be interested..

The next thing was to find a venue, decide what was going to happen at the first meeting and to find a source of money. The venue turned out to be easy to sort out. The Deputy Head at George Hastwell School in Barrow had recently left there to become the Head of Bleasdale House School in Silverdale, Lancashire, close to the border with Cumbria and kindly offered us the use of facilities at this residential special school. Bleasdale House seemed perfect.

I had asked in the first letter when people would prefer to meet. The few that expressed a preference said the weekend as children would not be at school, and other people would not be at work.

As an initial meeting I decided an informal coffee morning would be a way for people to get to know each other a bit, and for me to find out who was interested and what they might want to do at future meetings. It was to last for 2 hours, I thought this would be long enough for everyone but not too long. I wrote to *Communication Matters* who agreed to pay for refreshments from User Group funds.

I wrote to all the District Therapists again asking them to invite people to the Coffee Morning. I also wrote to anyone who had replied to my previous letter. I had asked people to bring their whole families and also invited any helpers, therapists, in fact any one who was interested.

On the day, 11 users came to the coffee morning; 4 children and the rest adults. They also brought with them parents, carers, brothers, sisters, classroom assistants, and Speech and Language Therapists. Every one had a good chat, and a good nosy at everyone else's communication aids and overlays, some people were a little shy and did not use their aids much but at least they

saw other people use them. Also the other children realised that their sibling was not the only one to use a communication aid. People came with a wide range of communication aids including, *ORAC*, *TouchTalker*, *AlphaTalker*, *Dynavox*, and *Bliss Chart*. People were also using aids at different levels; some were communicating very competently, while others were just starting out.

I had written a quiz to give people something to do if things went a bit quiet. I also had a couple of *ORACs* with fun things in for people

to mess about with if they wanted. I took a lot of paper and crayons for colouring with, to keep the brothers and sisters occupied if necessary. The parents found it useful talking to other parents to compare experiences and also to pick the brains of people with older children. A good time was had by all!

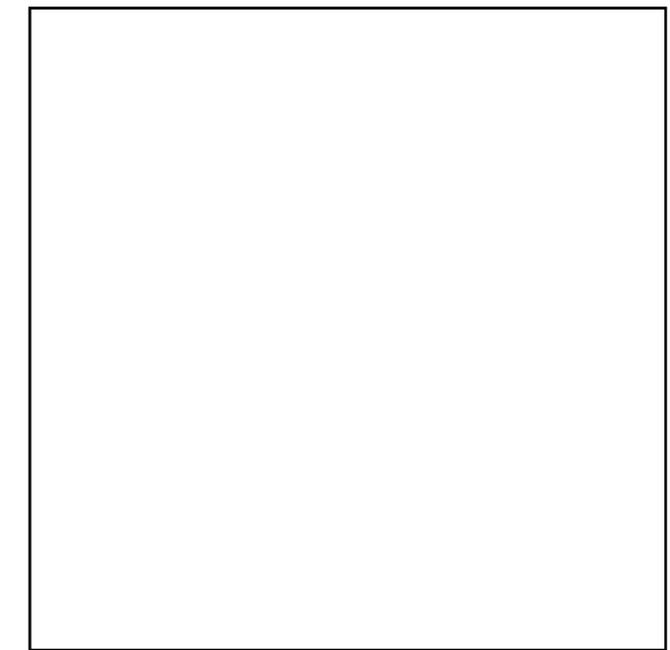
I also handed out a Questionnaire to try to find out what people wanted from the group and for suggestions for future events. The majority of people thought a group would be at least "*quite useful*" and mostly "*very useful*". Most thought we should meet monthly or quarterly, for half a day. The one person who thought children and adults should meet separately had been my child user. People were divided as to whether the group should be mostly time for a chat or should involve more formal activities. Talking to people, this apparently depended on how much contact people had with other users, those with least contact wanting most time to chat. People were divided on whether we should meet centrally or move round the area.

Everyone who was at the first meeting wanted to meet again and the one idea which seemed to appeal to everyone was a picnic so we arranged to meet again in the summer. The residential side of Bleasdale House has beautiful grounds and a big conservatory in case it was wet so we arranged to meet there.

Again I wrote to everyone I could think of inviting them. 5 Users came to the picnic 2 children and 3 adults. These have turned out to be the core members of the group who come to all the meetings, other people come to some when they can. Others have never come to a meeting but say they still want to be informed of what we are doing. We had a glorious summer day for the picnic, with blazing sunshine, we sat under a tree among the peacocks and squirrels. It felt more like a Buckingham Palace garden party than anything else. Everyone brought their own lunch and one of the mothers brought a cheesecake for everyone to share. We had an animal theme for the day so had an animal quiz, a game for the children using Big macks deciding if animals lived on the farm or at the zoo, another using an Echo 4 and a 4 switch box to say if fictional animals were dog, horse, bear or cat. Also a Donkey beetle game using an ORAC . Again everyone had plenty of time for a chat and a friendship which had started between two of the children at the Coffee morning further developed. I had planned the picnic to last from 11.00 till 2.00pm, but most of us were still at Bleasdale House at 3 o'clock. While there we booked a date for a Christmas party! Again I circulated widely this time including therapists at the North West Special Interest Group in Computers and Communication Technology. The Christmas party was a great success, I lost count of how many people came. We had seasonal activities, putting Carols in the right order using an ORAC, playing 12 days of Christmas Beetle and a Christmas quiz. Not that anyone had much time for doing activities, they were all too busy chatting and especially eating. Everyone had brought something to contribute to lunch. We had plenty for everyone and most people took home something for their tea as well. We had a special visitor. The children are still asking Natalie's Dad how come he was asked to look after the reindeer! I have the feeling he might get that job again! At the Christmas party I asked people what they wanted to do next. A lot of people had spotted the swimming pool at Bleasdale house and wondered if we could hire it. I was a little dubious as you can't use a communication aid in a swimming pool but everyone was keen so that was booked. The User fund at Communication matters paid for the hire of the pool and the swimming teacher. Again I invited anyone and everyone.

Everyone enjoyed the swim and had a good splash around. As always, before and after everyone caught up with the gossip and were comparing what was happening with everyone's communication aids.

Our latest event has been our second picnic, again it was a glorious, sunny day, and we sat under the tree. I had prepared another more detailed questionnaire to try to find out further what people wanted from the group. This went not only to the people who attended the picnic but also to everyone on my ever expanding circulation list and to District Therapists to pass on as well. The results of this were quite interesting. 21 people returned the Questionnaires, 4 users, 7 carers, and 3 others (teacher, welfare assistant and physiotherapist). 6 of these had



not attended a User group, 15 had attended the group at Bleasdale House. 7 found the group very useful, 3 useful, 4 quite useful. Nobody who replied found the group not useful. People who had not attended a group had not done so for a number of reasons, 1 had no interest, 3 because of the distance, 2 because the dates and times were unsuitable. Most people felt the group should involve both children and adults. 6 people thought children and adults should be together for some of the time and separate for the rest. Only one person thought they should not meet together, this was one of the Speech and Language Therapists.

10 people thought the group should meet quarterly. 1 monthly, 6 half yearly and 1 yearly. 16 people would be prepared to pay to attend a group, 4 would not.

The question which had the most differing answers was the question about what were the most important aspects of the group to them. The majority of users felt the most important aspects were meeting other users, seeing other communication aids and carrying out non-communication activities. Carers found seeing other aids, meeting other users and carers important and found non-communication activities least important. Therapists were fairly evenly spread with what they found important but violently divided on non-communication activities, with two people feeling they were *most* important and two feeling they were *least* important. The other group felt communication activities were most important.

The main conclusion I can reach from the results of the questionnaire is that whoever said you can't please all of the people all of the time was absolutely right – but people definitely find user groups useful and enjoyable...

Helen Dixon
Speech and Language Therapist
Bay Community NHS Trust. Barrow in Furness

*The Editors would welcome news of other AAC User Group activities, especially with photos! Remember you can apply to **Communication Matters** for a small grant to help get an AAC User group meeting up and running. Tel: 0870 606 5463.*

Advertisement

The Design and Implementation of an Equipment Management Database

Phil Gardiner

Communicate (The Northern Communication Aid Centre) provides among other services an AAC equipment loan service and an assessment service which undertake referrals from various sources.

The stock of equipment is quite extensive and the loan service is used frequently by Speech and Language Therapists and other professionals from the Northern Region.

This requires an effective equipment management system which permits the control of AAC equipment from the purchase of a device from a supplier including the recording of electronic safety checks repairs etc. to the production of loan forms recording the current location of an item and the recording of usage of a piece of equipment. In short the complete history of each item of AAC equipment logged on the Database whether it was purchased for the loan stock or assessment stock.

This paper aims to outline the investigation, design and implementation of a Relational Database to manage the stock of AAC equipment. It includes:

- an investigation of the former/existing manual filing system
- the requirements of a new information system.
- the resource costs financial and human including time span, physical design.
- the advantages of the Relational Database.

Critical Areas Requiring Improvement:

- There existed duplication of data which was difficult to avoid with a manual filing system.
- It was difficult to monitor the flow of equipment and to quickly locate a piece of equipment i.e. in stock or on loan.
- There was no system in place for recalling equipment back to the department for safety checks.
- There was no fast method of checking which therapists/Borrowers have items of equipment on loan with different users.

Targeted Areas:

- Equipment Inventory (the current list was inaccurate).
- Prescription Loan Register (needed to update).
- Overdue Loan Recall (contact borrowers & GPs re status of users).
- Safety Check Recall (no established system in place).

It was decided that a Relational Database would be a major asset in improving the management of equipment and maintaining accurate information on users and borrowers of AAC equipment.

A feasibility study was carried out by myself with the outcome

that the department would purchase an extension of the software licence for *Microsoft Access 2* Database owned by Newcastle City Health Trust.

The Benefits:

- Cost Effective Human Resources
- Production of Accurate Data
- Cost Effective Financially
- In House Training Available
- Reliability (Proven Software Product)
- Security (Password Entry to The PC)

The data would be input into one collective pool from which specific documents could be produced it would also permit the opportunity to validate the accuracy of the information.

Desired Outcome :

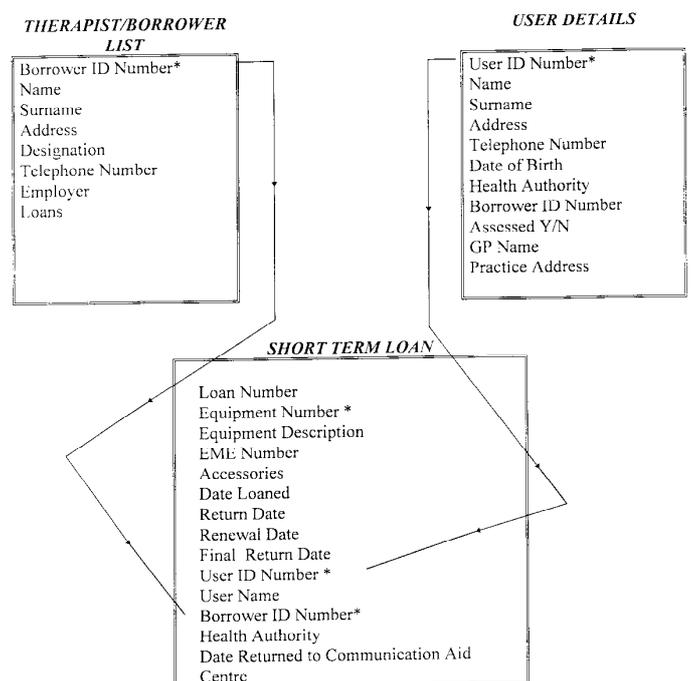
- To Avoid Unnecessary Duplication of Data.
- Reduce Workload of Equipment Officer. Improve Accuracy and Availability of Data

How Tables Are Linked :

Each table to be linked has at least one **Primary File Key** which will link together each table e.g. User ID Number, Borrower ID Number Equipment Number.

The system contains Entities which are of interest to the system and require data kept on them, e.g. item of equipment. There are

EXAMPLE OF USING A LINK TABLE



also Attributes which are items of data held about an **Entity**, e.g. date purchased, warranty details etc. Key **Attributes** identify a specific occurrence of an Entity e.g. the Equipment Number which is specific to only one separate item of equipment and therefore unique.

Analogy of Relationships :

Information in table may be linked in three ways however only two are recommended.

One To One where one record in one table is related to only one record in another table.

One To Many this is a relationship in which one record in a table is related to two or more records in a joined table, e.g. -

- One piece of equipment can have many borrowers – this is the most common type of relationship;
- Increase Security and Save Office Space (Reduce Manual Filing).

The Relational Database

Data does not have to be held on one table alone. it may be held in many tables then **related** together through common elements within the tables.

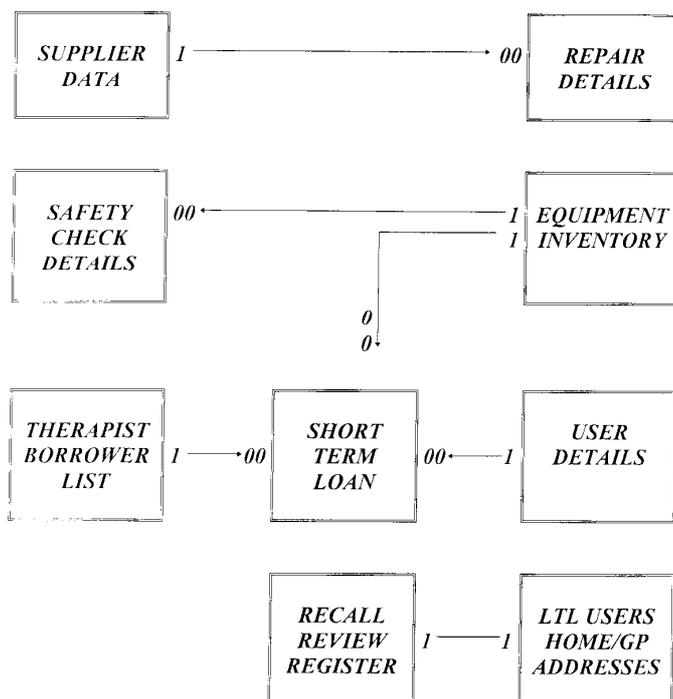
Tables are only linked together if they have a direct relationship achieved through keys which allow the data in one table be associated with its **related** data in another table.

All databases organise information into records, cells and fields.

A **record** is made up of specific pieces of information that together comprise one database entry e.g. name, age, phone number.

Cells hold the pieces of information in a record. Each cell can

RELATIONSHIP TABLE



hold one piece of information e.g. a name or d.o.b.

A **field** is a group of cells that hold the same type of information and share the same **field** name, e.g. a field named Age is made up of all the cells in a table specifying ages.

Information may be viewed in two ways - **Form Screen** where cells are organised to look like printed forms shows one record at a time, e.g. information connected to a specific piece of equipment. **List Screen** organises cells into fields (columns) and records (rows). With this screen the user can see information from many different records on one screen at the same time, e.g. information on many pieces of equipment within the Inventory Table.

*Phil Gardiner, Equipment Officer
Communicate, The Lodge
Regional Rehabilitation Centre, Hunters Road
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4NR*

New Product Information

The Barry Box Speech Aid Family

A new range of British made relatively low cost portable AAC devices with digitised speech output has appeared, built in the honourable tradition; an engineer working from home has created a system in response to the special needs of his grandson Barry, who walks and talks and cannot speak.

Having built a system for Barry, George Ritchie went on to build systems for other users with slightly different needs. There are now 4 options available. The ‘family’ consists of:

1. The original Barry Box, with 48 ‘short word’ keys (16 of these can have 2 short messages, through use of the Shift key) and including one long, 9 second message key) giving 64 message keys in all. Direct selection. £375
2. The Extended Play Barry Box, with up to 5 minutes of recording time, split up across 52 keys (20 keys with 8 secs, 32 keys with 4 secs.) Direct selection. £420
3. The 1 to 4 Barry Box for very basic communication - up to 4 messages of up to 8 seconds each. Direct selection. £235
4. The switch operated scanning 1 to 4 Barry Box, with auditory prompting. Again, 1,2,,3, or 4 messages of up to 8 secs. each. The machine scans through the keys and speaks each prompt (2 secs.) then the full message is spoken on selection. £250

For further information about the Barry Box Family (catalogue, phone discussion or demonstration visit),

Contact: G.B. Ritchie, 21 Whetstone Close, Heelands, Milton Keynes, MK13 7P
Tel / Fax: 01908 313624

New Book Review

Communication and Language Acquisition: Discoveries from Atypical Development

Edited by Lauren B. Adamson and Mary Ann Ronski

1997 352pp ISBN 1 55766 279 7 hb £36

Published by Paul Brookes. Available from Jessica Kingsley, 116 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JB.

I found this a very interesting book and I recommend it to anyone in AAC who has an interest in theoretical perspectives on language development. The Editors point out that, traditionally, researchers have applied their understanding of typical language development to atypical populations, in the hopes of facilitating the language development of children with developmental disabilities. This book is pointing the other way round hoping to contribute to a fuller understanding of how research on atypical patterns of communication and language development might challenge and clarify notions about development in the basic research realm.

There are chapters looking at research in the language of children with Autism, Downs Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, cognitive disabilities, specific language impairment, deafness etc. There is nothing that relates directly to AAC (you have to make those connections for yourself) apart from Sevcik and Ronski's interesting chapter on a longitudinal study charting the acquisition and use of symbol vocabulary in young people

with moderate to severe learning difficulties (and differences in eventual performance with the use of the symbols for expression, within that group). Results highlighted the importance of comprehension of spoken language in the process of learning to use alternative modes of language productively.

I did have reservations about this book; it's a bit of a 'ragbag' and I must admit I skipped a couple of chapters that seemed to me behaviouristic, uninteresting and out of place. I was surprised that not one of the authors referenced the significant earlier British book in this area (Bishop & Mogford, 1988, *Language Development in Exceptional Circumstances*, Churchill Livingstone). Like so many other books that are collections of work by a variety of different authors, the Editors have apparently barely attempted to draw together the different contributions into any coherent thesis, so that when you've finished you are buzzing with ideas and questions, but dangling with very little sense of the direction that you should be heading in, for further follow up. (Are we ever going to get back to 'proper books' written from start to finish by one person who has something specific to say?)

Having said all that, anyone who has a serious interest in research and the processes of language development should definitely give this book a go.

Sally Millar

CALL Centre, 4 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW

If you work in the Health Service,

If you work in the Voluntary Sector,

If you have a disability,

If you are working as a volunteer,

You should know about MSF



represents Speech and Language Therapists, Rehabilitation Engineers, Medical Technologists, Clinical Scientists, Clinical Psychologists and many other Health Service professionals.

represents members working for Scope, ICAN, The Children's Society, The Rathbone Society and many other voluntary, non-profit organisations.

has a full time Disability Officer, National and Regional Disability and Employment Rights groups and a Disabled Members' Conference. MSF has been at the forefront of the campaign for full anti-discrimination legislation.

has a charter for volunteer workers which calls for respect, safe working conditions, proper training and skills development and guidelines for those new to volunteering.

For more information contact:

MSF Centre, 33 – 37 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB

Tel: 0171 505 3000 Fax: 0171 505 3030

or

Ken Orme, MSF Disability Officer, Phone or Fax: 01623 720 086

MSF Tyneside Health Service Branch believes Communication Matters!

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AAC Users' Interaction with their Peers

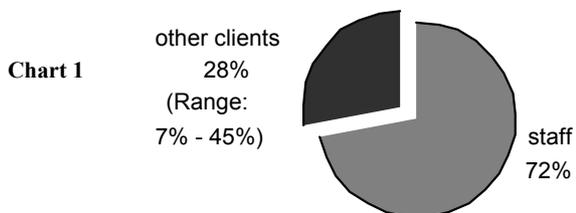
Joan Murphy

Many people with disabilities still live in residential settings and their potential communication partners are mainly restricted to other people with disabilities (their peers) and people who are paid to care for them. It is therefore particularly important that the number and quality of the communication opportunities available to residents in these settings are maximised. However, it seems that within the residential care setting, AAC users have few interaction opportunities, particularly with their peers. There are 2 principle factors which appear to influence this: social attitudes and the physical environment. The AAC research team at the University of Stirling conducted a research project, funded by the Gannochy Trust, to investigate this issue and to try to identify ways of improving communication between AAC users and their peers in residential settings.

We shadowed 9 AAC users and coded the nature of the interactions which were observed - for example, noting who the conversation was with, who it was initiated by, how long it lasted, and whether or not there were any misunderstandings. The following graphs summarise some of the main findings from the observations which were coded and analysed.

Communication Partners:

Conversations AAC Users had with:

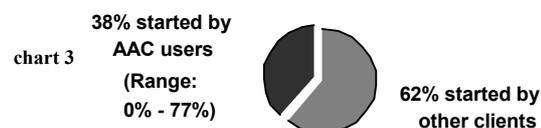


Initiations :

Conversations started by AAC Users

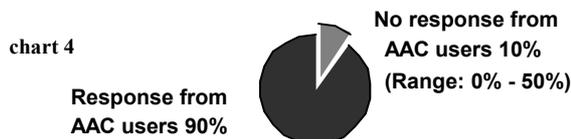


Conversations between AAC Users and other Clients

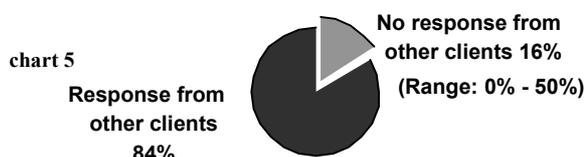


Non-responses :

Conversations started by Other Clients: Non-Response by AAC Users

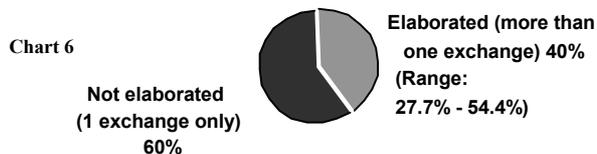


Conversations started by AAC Users: Non-Response by Other Clients



Elaborations:

Elaborated Conversations



Use of AAC systems in elaborated Interactions



Detailed field notes were kept during the observations and analysis of these, together with the coded data, resulted in the identification of a number of issues which were taken back to the participants - AAC users, other residents and staff - for detailed discussion.

The final outcome of the project was the production of a 56 page workbook which contains the findings of the project, comments from residents and staff and suggestions for ways of improving augmented communication within an organisation.

Overleaf are examples showing 2 pages taken from the workbook. They can be used in many different ways: - simply for discussion in a one to one setting or in a group; for awareness raising; for training purposes. More formally, the book could be used a standards document for an organisation.

FINDINGS:

From our observations we think:

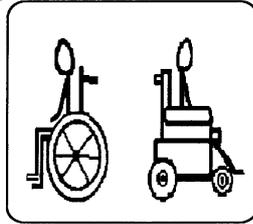
- *Clients hardly ever say hello or goodbye to each other - even with eye contact or gestures.*
- *Clients are more likely to say hello or goodbye to staff than other clients.*
- *Clients tend to sit in silence during social breaks in activities, unless there is a member of staff present.*
- *Clients aren't used to starting conversations because able-bodied people tend to take control.* [RESPONSIBILITY, SOCIAL CONDITIONING]
- *Some clients don't respond when someone speaks to them.*

In the interviews, people said:

- *Clients think it's 'bad' that they ignore each other.*
- *Clients see too much of each other.*
- *Communication aids make clients feel awkward – both people wait for the other to start conversations.* [ATTITUDES TO COMMUNICATION AIDS]
- *Communication aid users ignore other clients because of the effort involved in using their aid.* [TECHNOLOGY]
- *Clients don't talk to each other because they see each other as boring.* [TOPIC, STAFF V/ CLIENTS]
- *Communication aid users are ignored because they are at the bottom of the disabled hierarchy.*
- *Clients see several staff in the mornings and so are less likely to greet other clients when they see them.*
- *Shyness and lack of confidence are also reasons why people don't talk to each other.*
- *You can't like everyone you meet.*
- *Because staff take the initiative in conversations it is hard for clients to join in - usually because of the speed that group discussion takes.*

SUGGESTIONS:

- There is a need for discussion and awareness raising about the fact that clients ignore each other.**
- Pre-stored phrases could help communication aid users start conversations with other clients and use greetings and farewells.**
- Clients could use yes/no questions to help start conversations with communication aid users.**
- Communication aid users could use more non-verbal clues to communicate briefly with other clients, e.g. smile.**
- Staff could stimulate more discussions between clients.**
- There needs to be an awareness that people cannot be forced to speak to each other.**

IGNORING EACH OTHER

This page has been designed for you to use in your own situation - for example:

- Use this page as a planning sheet by selecting and/or adding comments and suggestions from the opposite page which are relevant to your particular situation.
- Select topics from the opposite page for training and/or discussion.
- Note the resources which may be needed to bring about change.
- Use this page to evaluate whether or not changes have taken place.

Recommendations

attitudes to AAC
 attracting attention
 AAC systems - social points
 AAC systems - technical points
 grouping and number of people
 helping each other
 ignoring each other
 low / high tech
 physical position & comfort
 privacy
 reluctance to use AAC systems

responsibility
 seating arrangements
 social conditioning
 surroundings
 talking to staff rather than other clients
 time
 topic
 training
 vocabulary / pre-stored phrases
 want to talk
 work culture

*For further information about this project, contact:
 Joan Murphy. Research Speech and Language Therapist,
 AAC Research Unit, Psychology Dept., University of Stirling,
 Stirling FK9 4LA.
 Tel: 01786 467645 Fax: 01786 467641
 email: joan.murphy@stir.ac.uk*

New Book & Video Review

Talking Mats: a low-tech framework to help people with severe communication difficulties express their views

by Joan Murphy. Pack price: £23 (incl. VAT)
Booklet; 21 pages, Video: 37 Minutes.

Available from: AAC Research Team, Psychology Dept.,
University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA. Tel: 01786 467645
Fax: 01786 467641.

If you want to discuss an issue with a person who uses AAC, then *'Talking Mats'* might offer a new approach. This flexible framework for conversation suggests a means for an AAC user to explore and explain their views more easily. It does not replace whatever other (perhaps high tech) communication systems the person uses, but supplements them. A new booklet and accompanying video developed by Joan Murphy of the AAC Research Team at the Psychology Department, University of Stirling explains it all.

The booklet outlines the wide range of different types of person who might find this approach helpful (all ages, but mostly people with at least reasonable comprehension of spoken

language); the materials needed; the framework, which is divided into issues, emotions and influences; how to use the mats and what to do with the results.

The accompanying video illustrates how the mats can be used, with real examples of conversations between the author and three different AAC users. There is a woman with physical disabilities discussing her feelings about using the telephone, a woman with dysphasia analysing the factors that make it easier for her to communicate, and a secondary school boy expressing his feelings about his school time table.

The booklet is clearly presented and the advice is practical and informative. The video ensures that there is no ambiguity. This is the latest in a series of videos and booklets produced by the AAC Research team. It is, as we have come to expect, very polished if a little didactic. I can recommend it to those working with people who use AAC, who want to go beyond the daily conversations and discuss issues more thoroughly.

Caroline Gray
ACE Centre
Waynflete Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 8DD

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Diary Dates

Courses, Conferences, Study Days

I CAN TRAINING DAYS

- **Working with Parents to develop their social/communication skills**
15th June, £80
- **Literacy Development & Difficulties - The Theory & Practical Ways to Help**
18th & 19th June, £150
- **Communication Needs of Language Impaired Children**
25th June, £80
- **Play and Communication: A Non-Directive Approach**
8th July, £80
- **Intensive Interaction: Assessing Social Communication**
13 July, £80

For further details, contact:
I CAN Training Centre
New Road, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 9BW
Tel. 0131 667 1438

Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland STUDY DAY

30 October 1998

Broadwood Stadium, Cumbernauld

Adults with Acquired Communication Difficulties using AAC

For further details, contact:
Debbie Jans, Keycomm
Tel. 0131 443 6775



University College, Dublin, 1998
23 August – instructional courses
24 - 27 August – main conference
Trinity College, Dublin, 1998
28 - 29 August – Research Symposium

Contact the Conference Secretariat at:
Incentive Conference Ireland
1 Pembroke Place, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, Ireland
Tel. (+353) 1 6671711 Fax (+353) 1 6671713

AFASIC

In-Service Training Days

to be held at

London Voluntary Service Resource Centre, London N7

- **Severe Receptive Language Difficulties in the Classroom**
19th June, £70
- **Functional Language in the Classroom**
26th June & 16th October, £80
- **Understanding the Emotional and Behavioural Problems of Language Impaired Children**
3rd July, £70
- **Collaborative Working Styles between Teachers and Therapists**
2nd October, £70
- **Professional Partnerships**
9 October, £70

For further details, contact:
Carol Lingwood
Tel. 01273 381009

Lincoln District Healthcare NHS Trust Lincoln Rehabilitation Workshops in 1998

- **Engineering for Independence**
The role of NHS Clinical Engineers in the provision of electronic assistive technology is becoming increasingly recognised. This advanced workshop will explore issues of clinical assessment, equipment provision, user support and compliance with Medical Devices Regulations. Prescription for Independence provides an introductory module for this course.
15th June, £95
- **Communicating with Confidence**
A wide range of communication functions may be required by the severely disabled individual and may need to be provided as an integral part of an environmental control system. This advanced workshop will explore means of providing and using telephony, communication aid functions, reading and writing and access to computers and electronic communications.
5th October, £95
- **Prescription for Independence**
This course provides an update for medical assessors for environmental controls and is suitable for medical staff in training. It also form an introductory module for clinical engineers and therapy professionals whose work involves the provision of electronic assistive technology.
30th November, £95

For further details, contact:
Mrs Binnie Lamond, Course Administrator
Community Rehabilitation Centre
Long Leys Road
Lincoln LN1 1FS
Tel. 01522 577320 Fax. 01522 538752

Diary Dates

Courses, Conferences, Study Days



- **Getting to Grips with Clicker: A Practical Workshop**

The aim of this workshop is to provide participants with a working knowledge of the software program Clicker.
2nd June, ACE/ACCESS Centre, Oldham, £105

- **Communication for Students with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities**

This seminar provides an overview of technology and low tech solutions to develop the communication skills of this client group.

16th June, ACE/ACCESS Centre, Oldham, £115

- **Overview of Voice Recognition Systems**

This day will enable delegates to try out and compare a range of the latest voice recognition software.

17th June, ACE Centre, Oxford, £115

- **Developing Switching Skills for Individuals with Severe Physical Disabilities**

The aim of this course is to provide participants with the means to encourage the development of effective switching skills.

24th June, ACE/ACCESS Centre, Oldham, £115

- **Communication for Students with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities**

This course aims to cover such areas as the development of communication skills and access to technology at levels appropriate to those with PMLD. The emphasis will be on issues and practical solutions.

6th July, ACE Centre, Oxford, £115

For further details contact the course organiser:

Sharon Topping at CENTRA Tel. 01257 241428



Training courses August 1998 - March 1999

- Early Level Communication Technology
- Voice Recognition
- Special Access Technology
- Augmentative Communication in Schools
- Symbol Software

For details, contact:

**The CALL Centre, University of Edinburgh
4 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW
Tel. 0131 667 1438**

COMMUNICATE

Study Day and Equipment Exhibition

Special Software and Assistive Technology for Play

25th June 1998

OWSA Boat Club, The quayside, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

This Study Day and Equipment Exhibition includes the following sessions:

- **Putting the fun back into play** (see note below)
- **Getting in touch with toys**
- **Learning and promoting movement control through Targeted Training**
- **Never too young to play!**
- **Inclusive Technology: Early software and alternative access to computers** (see note below)
- **SEMERC: Software for games and play plus special input devices**
- **Don Johnston: Software and access: creative learning through play**

Note: If you attended **Special Toys, Adaptive Play and Technology** in February, please note that 'Putting the fun back into play' and 'Inclusive Technology' sessions above will be similar.

Course fee, including lunch & refreshments:

£10 (Personal interest, e.g. parents)

£25 (within Communicate Consortium Contract Area)

£60 (outside Contract Area)

Contact address below (closing date 19th June)

Communicate Advice Sessions and General Equipment Demonstrations

7th July, 11th November 1998
& 21st January 1999

For further details contact:

Jean McPherson, Coordinator

Communicate, The Lodge,

Regional Rehabilitation Centre

Hunters Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4NR

Tel. 0191 219 5640/1 Fax. 0191 219 5647

University College London HUMAN COMMUNICATION SCIENCE

- **Effective Therapy: Practical Applications of Memory Theory for use with Dyslexic and Language Disordered Children** 9th - 10th June
- **Language Concepts to Access Learning** 17th - 18th June
- **Advanced Course: More Practical Applications of Memory Theory** 24th - 25th June

For details, contact:

UCL, Human Communication Science

Tel. 0171 504 4204 Fax. 0171 713 0861