



Welcome to our final newsletter for 2011. This issue includes news from Central and Eastern Europe, Singapore, Brazil, Russia, the U.K., India and South Africa. It completes the first five years of our ACWN newsletter--a means by which we have been able to develop friendships and unite people in support of the development of AAC in emerging augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) countries. In 2012, I am pleased to hand over the Augmentative Communication World Network editorial role to Dorothy Fraser from Scotland. I will remain in the background as her assistant. I look forward to reading the fresh perspectives that Dorothy will bring to our network. She has much to share, as you will see when you read her "greetings." An enthusiastic welcome to Dorothy.

Anne Warrick

Greetings from our new editor

Hello everyone,

I've already met some of you at ISAAC and the Eastern Central Europe AAC conferences over the past few years. For those of you whom I haven't met so far, I'd like to introduce myself.

I'm Dorothy Fraser from Scotland. For many years I worked as a community based neuro-physiotherapist in Edinburgh. I also served as a physiotherapy instructor running courses and study days on Neuro-Developmental Treatment (NDT) and Motor Learning for students and therapists on request from medical professionals in the UK, as well as in Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, Romania and Pakistan.

I first became involved with projects in Romania in 2003. As a volunteer therapist on a UK-funded project for children with special needs, I had the opportunity to work with and establish friendships with local therapists in a Centre for children with profound disabilities. As a hands-

on physiotherapist, I got to know children with many backgrounds. Some had very supportive families. Others were cared for in institutions.

Over the past 8 years, my projects have expanded at the request of Romanian professionals dedicated to implementing AAC and assistive technology to address the communication needs in education and healthcare settings.

As Senior Representative to Eastern and Central Europe for the Central Coast Children's Foundation (CCCF) Inc., I facilitate, establish links, find relevant resources related to theory and practice and work in collaboration with Romanian colleagues to provide training within both education and health care settings.

Thanks to incredibly supportive internationally renowned AAC professionals, these projects and resources are constantly growing. I travel to Romania six times a year for three weeks each visit. I divide my time between Bucharest, the capital city, and Sibiu, in the province of Transylvania. I feel at home in both cities.

2011 was a busy year. I worked in special schools and met families and worked directly in classes with pupils, teachers and speech–language pathologists. At the universities in both cities and at the teacher training Centre in Sibiu, I run practical workshops on a variety of topics for mainstream and special education.

My 2012 diary is starting to fill up. I have plans to visit Romania in February. I will be involved with Polish delegates from the Eastern and Central Europe AAC (ECEAAC) conference in Warsaw. In Poznan, we are preparing a new AAC project related to healthcare and AAC. More about this in our 2012 newsletters.

I am looking forward to hearing from you about AAC around the world.

Dot

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Advancing AAC in Singapore

Sarah Yong is the Clinical Head of the Specialized Assistive Technology Centre in Singapore. Sarah is a speech and language pathologist and has worked in the area of AAC and Assistive Technology (AT) for the past decade. She was awarded the BRIDGE SCHOOL Teacher in Residence Award from 2002-03. She is a member of ISAAC and contributor to the ISAAC BUILD programme. Sarah sent this report on AAC developments in Singapore.

Activities within the Specialized Assistive Technology Centre (ATC)

by Sarah Yong



The Specialised Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) is part of the Technology Division at the Society for the Physically Disabled. It is the nationally appointed Centre tasked to provide Assistive Technology (AT) solutions for individuals with disabilities in Singapore. One of the major areas of practice is in the area of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

Loan Library

The Assistive Technology Loan Library was set up at the Specialised ATC in 2008. This loan library has hardware and software that individuals and professionals can loan for a small fee. The Loan Library, supported by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), now has a number of mid tech and high AAC devices, as well as a variety of switches. Through the loan library, individuals now have the option of trialing the devices in school and at home to see if they are suitable for use in that environment.

Previously, individuals would only be able to practice using the devices in our Centre. Being able to loan the devices to individuals to use in schools and in their everyday environment has also increased the ‘visibility’ of these devices, creating more public awareness. Also, professionals who would like to borrow these devices to ‘play’ or understand them better can do so free of charge for one week. Undoubtedly, there are still obstacles, such as training, and funding. However, the AT Loan Library has played a pivotal role in increasing awareness regarding AAC, as well as enabling the acquisition of AAC tools.

Research - Assistive Technology in Singapore – Needs, Challenges and Utilisation

The Specialised Assistive Technology Centre has conducted a research study entitled *AT in Singapore – Needs, Challenges and Utilisation*. Commissioned by the National Council of Social Service, this study involved 887 participants. Goals were to identify the needs of individuals who may benefit from AT or are using AT.

One of the categories researched was AAC. The study focused on the aided component of AAC, but included a wide range of AAC devices. Results showed that there is a great need to increase awareness. The study also revealed that often the use of AAC is limited to specific locations (*e.g.*, classroom) and for specific purposes (*e.g.*, requesting, expressing needs and wants).

Participants in the study who use AAC reported increased participation, competence, confidence, productivity, and independence.

This research is the first comprehensive study of AT in Singapore. It provided a great deal of information about AT and AAC needs and challenges, as well as current utilisation of AAC in Singapore. We can now provide data to support our efforts in advocating for access to AT and AAC. Research results also enable us to plan for better implementation of AT and AAC in Singapore.

Collaborations with Special Schools

The Specialised ATC has worked with two special schools to implement AAC in the classroom. The children in these schools have low-tech communication systems in their classrooms. In one school, there is a 'subject teacher' who helps with the implementation of AAC in the classroom.

AAC at the University

The Specialised ATC conducts two, three-hour lectures on AAC assessment and implementation at the National University of Singapore's Master's in Speech Language Pathology Course. A speech-language pathologist and an occupational therapist conduct the lecture. The Specialised ATC also enables students to get hands-on exposure to AT and AAC in our clinic. The course is planning to add AAC as one of its "range indicators." This means that students must have exposure to AAC exposure before they graduate.

AAC at the IASSID Conference

The IASSID (International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability) Second Annual Asia Pacific Conference was held in Singapore in June 2009. An 'AAC stream,' which featured presentations on the topic of AAC, was included in the programme. Both local and overseas presenters shared on a wide range of topics connected to AAC.

Prior to the conference Hilary Johnson and Karen Bloomberg from Australia conducted workshops at Society for the Physically Disabled.

Presentations and Public Education in AAC

The Specialised Assistive Technology Centre staff also speak at other venues. In October 2011, Sarah Yong spoke at the Cerebral Palsy Symposium on "AAC in Individuals with Motor Impairments." In November, we participated in the Special Education Conference 2011. One of our AAC users, Daniel Tan, was at the booth. He is a competent Pathfinder user. Through his interaction with the participants, Daniel was able to raise awareness of AAC. He also had an opportunity to communicate briefly with Members of Parliament (Denise Phua and Sim Ann) when they toured the booth.

Conclusion

There are a growing number of developments at the Specialised Assistive Technology Centre that have further enhanced the implementation of AAC. Undoubtedly, there is much more to do for the people of Singapore. We hope that we can continue to play a pivotal role in the advocacy, implementation, and training of AAC.

For more information, contact Sarah at yong.sarah@gmail.com

AAC Conferences Sept - Dec 2011

Nadia Browning has supported AAC development during the past twenty years. She has friends in Peru, Brazil, Mexico, and China and is presently continuing her work in Eastern Europe and Germany. Nadia has recently returned from a conference in Brazil and has sent this report.



Sharing Experiences at the IV Brazilian AAC Conference By Nadia Browning

Sharing Experiences is what happened at the “IV Brazilian AAC Conference” in Rio de Janeiro. From August 31 to September 2, a total of 277 participants (7 users and families, 83 students and 188 professionals) met to share, learn and have a good time. There were people from 12 different states of Brazil, as well as from Portugal and Argentina.



The conference program offered a total of 28 presentations, 14 courses and 10 tables. Topics included AAC and literacy, development of competencies, play, accessible resources, low cost AT, and adult clinics. It was carefully organized by a team of competent professionals from two of the main universities in Brazil: Leila Nuns, Catia Walter and Carolina Schirmer from the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro and Miryam Pelosi and Viera Vieira from the Federal University of Rio der Janeiro.



The active participation of AAC users was a hit. In addition to presenting with Fabio and Lydia, **Luciana** launched her first book. With great enthusiasm, she autographed all of her sold books choosing the dedication message.

It was exciting to see so many friends and the growing number of people interested in and energized by AAC.

I remember back in the 1980s when workshops about Blissymbols and AAC had just twenty participants, and when the “creation” of an AAC conference was just a dream. Well, the dream has come true.

This conference united families, professionals, students, manufacturers and representatives of materials, and we *Shared Experiences*.

I was honored, thrilled, and grateful to do the opening ceremony for the “Fourth Brazilian AAC Conference”.

I want to thank Ablenet for sponsoring the keynote presentation and donating a long list of materials. Thanks also to other organizations who supported the conference: FAPERJ, Capes, Click, Civiam, and Imagina. Finally, many thanks to all who worked on making the “IV Brazilian AAC Conference” a success. See all of you at ISAAC 2012.

For more information, contact nadiabrowning@gmail.com

It is a pleasure to include Michal Wozniak's article in this newsletter. Michal has an interest in becoming more involved in the field of AAC. AAC is a new world for him and one that he discovered during the recent conference in Warsaw. (See ACWN News 3rd Quarter 2011). While Michal is waiting for a speech device, his friends provide speech translation for him. He also texts using his cellphone to communicate. Great messages in your article, Michal. Thank you.

VIII Eastern and Central Europe AAC Conference

By Michal Wozniak



My name is Michal Wozniak, I am 23 years old and I am a second year student of Physics at the University of Warsaw. A few months ago I realized that I am an AAC user. Why did I never think this way before even though I have always had a speech impairment as a consequence of cerebral palsy; something which surely made my life harder? The answer is that I used to think AAC users only used “cyber voices” to communicate with the world. But I now realize that it does not only work this way.

At the end of June I had been invited and asked by my old elementary school to give a presentation and participate in a discussion group about the life of people with communication difficulties at the VIII ECE- AAC Conference in Warsaw. Thanks to this conference and to the feedback I got after sharing my personal experience, I realize that I belong to the AAC world. During the conference, I talked about what I go through in everyday life because I was not given, “from above,” the gift of speech. As my speech is unclear, it is often “translated” by my friend Rafal.

My life is unusual because I live between two worlds: even though I have cerebral palsy, I live among non-disabled people. My life is filled with challenges and thanks to my optimism and belief in myself, I achieve my goals, often no matter the cost. I talked about this during the conference. I think that it is always important to move forward and never give up, even if people do not understand you.

When giving the presentation, I thought that my experiences would stay in the minds of only a few people, as I was sure I didn't know much about the AAC world. I was very surprised when it turned out that parts of what I had said were quoted at the closing ceremony of the conference. This experience strengthened my self-esteem and has helped me achieve something big. In August, I made a trip alone by train to the other side of Poland. I succeeded in traveling by myself and achieved my goal! Maybe one day I'll have the chance to share future experiences that are waiting for me. Everything that you wish for can be achieved. You just have to believe in yourself and act.

The National Pedagogical Dragomanov University AAC Conference By Magnus Magnusson

The National Pedagogical Dragomanov University is one of the top Universities in Kyjiv, Ukraine. The conference was an interesting event where speech-language pathologists from all over the country, and some from adjoining countries, joined to talk about their job and to share "the latest" through presentations. Magnus Magnusson and Lia Kalinnikova gave presentations, both on family therapy and general information on AAC. In addition Lia and Magnus are helping our Ukrainian friends at Dragomanov University to put another building stone to their growing center on AAC.

We are in the planning stages for another AAC Conference at the Nordic (Arctic) Regional Federal University in Archangelsk in the Spring of 2012. For more information, contact magmag48@hotmail.com

Exhibitions: News from Naidex, UK, Sept 2011

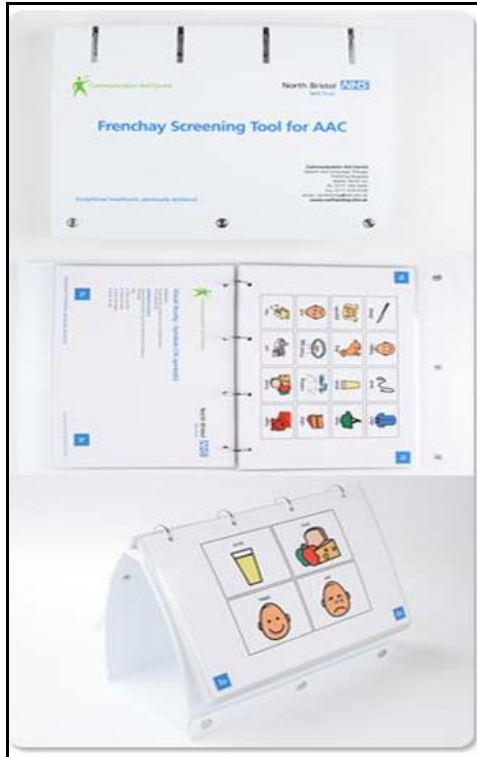
The NAIDEX www.naidex.co.uk exhibition in Glasgow presented Communication Village which featured access to a range of communication aids and AT from leading suppliers, the opportunity to touch and test products, and time to talk to experts. Two items of particular interest are:



Skoog. This is a completely new kind of musical instrument with lots of instruments/sounds available within a multicoloured box.

The Skoog is designed to empower those unable to play traditional instruments. It is a soft, squeezable object that simply plugs straight into your computer or laptop's USB port. By touching, pressing, squashing, twisting or tapping the Skoog, people can play a wide range of instruments intuitively. Go to www.skoogmusic.com

Frenchay Screening Tool for AAC



The Frenchay Screening Tool for AAC is designed to assess people's abilities in terms of physical access, visual acuity, visual processing, visual contrast sensitivity, identifying different types and fonts of symbols and words, categorisation, word-picture matching, reading and spelling (with and without symbol support), alpha encoding and focusing thoughts.

For more information, go to www.logan-technologies.co.uk and look for FAB under products



The **FAB** is a unique low-tech device that can be used anywhere, even in the bath! The range of FAB spelling boards, are developed from experience at Frenchay Hospital. For years, patients have used key guarded, static alphabet boards in the hospital or as a secondary aid to high tech devices.

Upcoming Conference/Workshop announcements

The Bridge School presents The AAC by the Bay Conference, February 23-25, 2012 Cisco, Building 9, San Jose, California. The 2012 AAC by the Bay conference will focus on issues and strategies related to education and communication of children who use AAC. This year's conference themes are: Early intervention; mobility; writing instruction; global dissemination; and self-determination. Plenary and concurrent sessions will feature internationally and nationally known leaders in AAC including: Sarah Barody, Sarah Blackstone, Caitlin Daly, Tiké DeMarco, Holly Hamilton, Mary Hunt-Berg, Elisa Kingsbury, Judith Lunger-Bergh, Joy McCollum-Franco, Marcela Manzur, Caroline Musselwhite, Gabriela Berlanga Ramírez, Kristin Rytter, Ala Smyczek, Janet Sturm, Chris Toomey, Christine Wright-Ott, and Janelle Ziobro. www.bridgeschool.org

ISAAC 2012. The 15th Biennial Conference of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) in Pittsburgh, PA, US from July 31 to August 4th. The conference will focus on ISAAC's mission that people anywhere in the world who communicate with little or no speech deserve to achieve the most effective communication possible in order to achieve their maximum potential. www.isaac-online.org

Resources



The 'Hello' Campaign (U.K.)

The **Hello Campaign** aims to provide parents and professionals with a range of information and resources that (1) build greater awareness about communication and developmental milestones and (2) teach how to identify children who are struggling.

The Communication Trust, a coalition of 40 leading voluntary sector organisations in partnership with Jean Gross – the Government's Communication Champion, runs the Campaign. BT and Pearson Assessment are sponsoring Hello. The Department for Education and the Department of Health back the Campaign.

Go to www.hello.org.uk to learn about available resources. Many are free. Have a look at their Monthly Themes; Latest News, as well as other areas of the website.

Newsletters from around the world

Spikes & Spasms is the Tremor Action Network quarterly online newsletter designed for people with essential tremor and related movement disorders. www.tremoraction.org/newsletter.php

Deepshikha: Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy www.iicpindia.org/PDF/DS.pdf

Interface - AAC South Africa. <http://www.interface-sa.org.za/news.html>

Building for Generations:

<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs040/1103350875092/archive/1103713126108.html>

The Bridge School Newsletter: www.bridgeschool.org

Announcements (Canada)

ACCPC: Communication Access to Goods and Services



For people with speech or language disabilities, access is about communication.

Do any of your customers or clients

- Speak in a way that is hard for you to understand?
- Use a communication board or device?
- Have difficulty finding the words they want to say?
- Have difficulty understanding what you are saying?

Learn what you can do to make your organization accessible for people who have speech or language disabilities.

Click here for resources:
www.communication-access.org

Communicating Matters ACCPC  www.accpc.ca

Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships Canada (ACCPC) is a Canadian, non-profit organization that promotes accessibility for people who have speech or language disabilities.

This communication access project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program - Disability Component.

Government of Canada

The **Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships CANADA (ACCPC)** has posted a new section on their website. It focuses on how to improve communication accessibility in the community. This is a human rights issue and is another portion of their important work on Social Justice issues for people with speech and language challenges. . The site is full of practical information and helpful materials. You can download and use. Also, great for training.

Go to www.accpc.ca and/or contact Barbara Collier at barbara.collier@sympatico.ca if you have any questions.

‘ROSHNI’ founded in India.

AAC technology continues to develop throughout India. The Indian Institute for Cerebral Palsy's (IICP) website www.iicpindia.org describes the initiation and vision for adaptive technology in India.

The Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) is pleased to announce that ‘ROSHNI’, a research Centre for development and training of Augmentative & Alternative communication (AAC) and Assistive Technology (AT) resources.

The National Resource Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (NRCAAC) focuses on developing multimedia software for education and leisure, and the development of alternative access options, language prediction & processing tools, communication hardware, voice output devices and training & teaching material for professionals, parents and the community.

ROSHNI actively involves persons who benefit from using AAC. For more information, go to <http://www.iicpindia.org/News/Visitor.htm>

Resource Corner

The following articles address concerns that many parents have about the introduction of AAC and the impact of AAC on their child’s speech development. **Research shows that AAC does not hinder the development of speech and may, in fact, support it.**

Here are reviews of the relevant research:

Binger, C., Berens, J., Kent-Walsh, J., & Taylor, S. (2008). [The effects of aided AAC interventions on AAC use, speech, and symbolic gestures.](#) *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 29(2), 101-11.

Millar, D. C., Light, J. C., & Schlosser, R. W. (2006). [The Impact of Augmentative and Alternative Communication Intervention on the Speech Production of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities: A Research Review.](#) *Journal of Speech Language Hearing Research*, 49(2), 248-264.

Schlosser, R. W. & Wendt, O. (2008). [Effects of Augmentative and Alternative Communication Intervention on Speech Production in Children with Autism: A Systematic Review.](#) *American Journal of Speech Language Pathology*, 17(3), 212-230

Apps: An Emerging Tool for SLPs:

A plethora of apps are available to develop expressive, receptive, and other language and communication skills. You can find a list at the following website.

<http://www.asha.org/Publications/leader/2011/111011/Apps--An-Emerging-Tool-for-SLPs/>



AAC Around the World: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGQ7wCsT3AY>

You Tube videos demonstrate how powerful communication devices can be for their users. Three girls, Emma, Morgan and Beth from Australia and England are AAC users. They each use different devices to communicate and collaborated via email to create this video.



The Gazetalk is a human computer communication system for people with disabilities. It facilitates computer accessibility with applications such as: creating/editing documents, email, web browsing, multimedia applications (music, video), reading PDF, speech output (SAPI4, SAPI5), letters and words prediction. It is able to work with a mouse, joystick, head tracking, or other alternative devices and supports users with low mobility, <http://access.uoa.gr/fs/eng/applications/view/253>

Voice for Living: A practical book by Pati King-DeBaun on early childhood (<http://www.voiceforliving.com/authors/patti-king-debaun/>). Simple, low tech.

A preschool AAC checklist by Judy Henderson from Stanford Med (<http://med.stanford.edu/ataac/judy.html>)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Low-Tech Toolkit (2009)

SET-BC developed the AAC Low-Tech Toolkit to support teachers and speech-language pathologists. Choosing and developing an augmentative and alternative communication system may seem like a daunting task. However, by starting slowly and exploring the student's communication needs and skills you will begin to find your way to the best AAC solution. Students who require augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) should have a "non-technical" or "low-technical" system. www.setbc.org

As 2011 comes to an end, I look forward to a minor role in the ACWN newsletter but continuing involvement with the Central Coast Children's Foundation (CCCF). I hope to maintain many friendships via email and wish everyone the very best of good health, happiness and peace in the coming year.

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