

Helping ALL Children to Access Text

How can we ensure ALL children have access to text books and other print materials in schools?

How can we avoid massive duplication of effort by teachers and other school staff making text accessible for pupils with a reading difficulty?

These were the key questions addressed at a major *Symposium on Accessible Digital Resources for Children with Additional Support Needs*, attended by nearly 100 practitioners, organised by the CALL Centre with the support of the Scottish Executive Education Department.

Professor Sheila Riddell from the University of Edinburgh placed the day firmly in the context of the Curriculum for Excellence agenda. How can all young people become successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens and confident individuals if many have difficulty accessing text?

Stuart Robertson from Learning and Teaching Scotland, who chaired the day, provided an overview of the impact of ICT initiatives on schools over recent years and looked ahead to the opportunities to be provided by the Scottish Schools' Digital Network when it is launched in 2007.

Consider the needs of ALL pupils

Stuart Aitken from the CALL Centre emphasised the number of pupils who could benefit from the use of technology to make text more accessible. In 2005, 34,680 pupils had a Record of Needs or Individualised Educational Programme. Of these,



Paul Nisbet with Stuart Robertson and Stuart Aitken

21% had been recorded with the main difficulty in learning being 'moderate learning difficulties'. The second biggest group (20.9%) had been recorded with 'specific learning difficulties in language and/or mathematics'. 'Specific visual impairment' was the main learning difficulty in only 1.5% of these pupils. It was important to consider the needs of ALL pupils.

He also reviewed the legislation behind the drive towards inclusion, with a particular emphasis on the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002. Many local authority contracts for ICT provision in schools still did not meet the requirements for ensuring access for pupils with disabilities.

There is no single solution!

Paul Nisbet developed the ICT theme by looking at different ways in which technology could help pupils with reading difficulties to access text. If a school has only a paper copy of a text, it can be scanned to produce an accessible electronic text, subject to copyright permission, but this can be very time-consuming with work often being duplicated across the country. Where electronic copies of books and other materials are available, a variety of formats are in use, including PDF, MS Word, MS Reader, MP3 audio books and DAISY. A number of more specialist formats have been developed for pupils with specific needs, with Kurzweil being useful for children with dyslexia and Clicker being valuable for children who have to use switches to access technology. He emphasised that there is no single solution!

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Helping ALL Children to Access Text



Moira Thomson, Broughton High School, Edinburgh

Paul later described work that the CALL Centre had carried out in conjunction with the Scottish Qualifications Authority in order to make exams available in a more accessible format. This has the potential to ease the problems schools face with large numbers of pupils requiring readers and scribes and also gives pupils greater independence.

20% of secondary pupils could benefit

Moira Thomson from Broughton High School provided a teacher's perspective. She suggested that around 20% of secondary pupils could benefit from the use of technology to support reading. She also emphasised the time taken to produce accessible versions of text books and other printed versions of materials and expressed frustration at the need to destroy these versions to comply with copyright when they were no longer required for the specific pupil who had used them.

Jamie Cuthbertson from the RNIB described and demonstrated the DAISY system, which allows people with a visual impairment to read suitably formatted electronic books.



Jamie Cuthbertson, RNIB

Tina Detheridge from Wigit Software emphasised the importance of materials providing symbol support for the benefit of non-readers and poor readers. She demonstrated the use of Webwide, that can add symbol support to html-based web pages.

Rosetta McLeod from the Learning and Teaching Scotland Scottish Schools Digital Network project described the system, which will provide a national Virtual Learning Environment for Scottish schools.

Richard Orme from the RNIB described developments in the United States where legislation had obliged publishers to develop ways to make text available in accessible electronic format. A new National Instructional Materials Standard (NIMAS) was being developed.

Range of Possible Solutions

Ian Litterick from the Right to Read initiative described copyright issues relating to dyslexia. He regretted that the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002 had not been drafted to include all Reading Impaired Persons and looked at various possible solutions so that people with dyslexia would no longer be disadvantaged.

James Christie from Harcourt Education (parent group for three leading UK publishers) brought a publisher's perspective. Harcourt were keen to make materials accessible, but he emphasised that it was not always a simple process, particularly with regard to their back catalogue, where copyright clearance had to be obtained for the use of illustrations, type fonts, etc. in addition to the basic text content.

Jim McNeilage from the Copyright Licensing Agency described the role of the agency and the licences available for photocopying and scanning print materials. He revealed that although scanning licences had been negotiated with the Further and Higher Education sectors, COSLA had not expressed interest in a similar deal for schools.

Overall, the Symposium was regarded as very worthwhile and a number of issues will be followed up.

Full details of the presentations made at the Symposium and other developments in the area of access to text will soon be available on the CALL Centre web site: <http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk>.

The CALL Centre is grateful for the support provided by SEED, which made the day possible.

ICT and Inclusion Days, April 2006

This year's CALL Centre ICT and Inclusion days will be held on 25th - 27th April in the following venues:

25th April - Jordanhill Campus, Glasgow;

26th April - Quality Station Hotel, Perth;

27th April - CALL Centre, Edinburgh.

The ICT and Inclusion days provide teachers, therapists, parents and others who have an interest in the use of technology to allow children with disabilities to access the school curriculum with an opportunity to find out about the latest technology.

Biggest ever

This year's event will be the biggest ever, with around 20 suppliers attending each day to demonstrate their products in a focused presentation and in the exhibition area. In addition to the sessions led by suppliers, there will be a number of presentations by teachers and other local practitioners sharing ideas for the practical use of technology. Details are being finalised as we go to press, but there are sure to be a number of interesting presentations.

Though aimed primarily at people working in schools, the exhibition and most of the sessions will also be of interest to adults with disabilities and people working with them.

You can get more information about the ICT and Inclusion days and book a place at: <http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk/ictandinclusion>. It is free to attend the days, but we ask people to register in advance so we know how many people to expect.



.Software Update..Software Update.

Co:Writer for the Neo

Don Johnston Ltd. have announced an excellent deal, in conjunction with Learning and Teaching Scotland, whereby the new Co:Writer word prediction system for the AlphaSmart Neo will be available for educational establishments in Scotland at a greatly reduced price. Co:Writer for Neo is now available for just £29.50 per Neo installation, representing a 70% saving on the usual £99.00 single user retail price. Order it from Learning and Teaching Scotland (Tel. 08700 100 297).

The Neo has replaced the AlphaSmart 3000 as the most popular option for somebody needing an affordable, easy to use, lightweight means to produce and store text.



You can also order the Neo with Co:Writer pre-installed for £189.50 directly from Don Johnston (Tel. 01925 256500).

Clicker 5 for Mac

Clicker 5 is now available for Apple Macintosh computers (requires Mac OS X 10.2.8 or above). Contact [CrickSoftware \(01604671691, info@cricksoft.com\)](mailto:info@cricksoft.com) for a copy on 30 day approval.

Updates from the original version of Clicker 5 for Windows to version 5.10, which includes switch access and a new spellchecker are also available from <http://www.cricksoft.com>.

More than 200 Grid Sets for Clicker 5 can now be downloaded free from <http://www.learninggrids.com>.

BoardMaker 5

If you are a BoardMaker 5 user, make sure you have upgraded to the latest version - 5.3.5 (PC). This allows easier importing of JPEG and GIF graphics and has other improvements. It can be downloaded from <http://www.mayerjohnson.com>.

Lightwriters

We've been updating our range of Toby Churchill Lightwriter communication aids, adding two new SL35s, suitable for text users.

The first is the standard SL35 model, which is small (20 cm x 130 cm x 4.5 cm), light (750 g) and very portable. Our one uses the Elan synthetic speech system - probably the best available in terms of 'British sounding' speech quality.



We also have bought an SL35 with a Cherry Keyboard. This is much closer in size to a standard computer keyboard and is suitable for somebody who finds the standard SL35 keyboard a little too small. It is less portable than the standard SL35 and is designed for use on a wheelchair tray or on a desk.

Our version uses the familiar, slightly American DecTalk speech, with a choice of several voices (male, female and child).



Both models offer two-way screens, a large memory for pre-stored messages, abbreviation expansion and predictive typing

Say-it! Sam SM1

The Say-it! Sam Communicator (which we have in CALL) from Possum is a pocket-sized communication device, but for some people it is just TOO small. We now also have a Say-it! Sam SM1, which uses the same software, but has an 8.4" display mounted in a rugged case, making it accessible for many more people, though also heavier (1.7 kg).

The SM1 has a dynamic display with symbols or text and can use either DECTalk synthetic speech or digitised speech to output a message.

There are a number of access options including direct selection using the touch screen and 1 and 2 switch scanning.

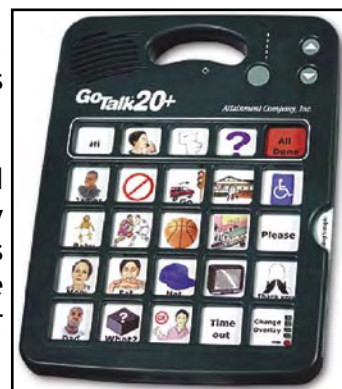


Say-it! Sam Communicator (left) and SM1 (right)

GoTalk 20+

The GoTalk 20+ is a recent addition to the GoTalk family of digital communication devices, capable of storing over 100 short messages, with a total available recording time of 15 minutes. It has 25 1" square message keys, 20 of which can be used to store different messages in each of its five operating levels. The other five message keys can be used to store core messages, e.g. "Change my overlay.", which are common across all five levels.

Message quality and volume control is slightly better than in previous models and there have been a number of other improvements.



Sci-Plus 300 Talking Scientific Calculator

We have regularly been asked for advice on scientific calculators suitable for use with students with low vision or poor hand function. In the past, all we could suggest were the RNIB's expensive talking calculator, possible alternatives using computer software, or a visit to a stationer to find the calculator with the biggest buttons available.

At last, there is a reasonable option, the Sci-Plus 300 distributed by Inclusive Technology. This has buttons that are nearly 2 cm square and a display with digits 2.2 cm high. Speech output is available through an external speaker or earpiece. It has a pretty good range of scientific functions, though it may not have



EVERY function that a student might want. Having large buttons inevitably means that it will no longer fit in most pockets - it measures approximately 15 cm by 23 cm by 3 cm.

There are two versions available from Inclusive: the Sci-Plus 300 (£220), which includes speech and the 200 (£165) which doesn't include speech.

Review: The Power of Communication



This is an excellent DVD produced by Communication Matters. It aims to let people know about augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), the different people who who might need to use a communication aid, the variety of aids available and the difference having such an aid can make to an individual.

The DVD focuses on the lives of four people who use a communication aid "to lead challenging, active, useful and, most importantly, independent lives".

It carries a powerful message about the importance of communication to individuals and the difference that AAC can make to their lives and could be a valuable tool for use in awareness raising. This is what you need to show to policy makers and budget holders when you are trying to argue for funding to be put in place for purchase of communication aids,

The DVD costs £15 (including post and packing) and can be purchased from Communication Matters, c/o The ACE Centre, 92 Windmill Road, Oxford OX3 7DR.

It is also possible to borrow a copy from CALL.

How can you use an Interactive Whiteboard in a classroom?

What resources are available?

Come and find out!

Interactive Whiteboards

CALL Centre, Thursday 25th May, 2006

Contact the CALL Centre for details.

Tel. 0131 651 6235

<http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk/training>



WordTalk, the free utility developed by Rod MacAulay from TASSCC, to add speech to Microsoft Word can now be downloaded free of charge from:

<http://www.wordtalk.org.uk>

Access to Further Education

The Scottish Executive recently undertook a consultation on Further Education provision for young people with complex support needs. As part of the review the CALL Centre consulted over thirty young people with a range of support needs arising from communication, sensory, physical and or learning impairments, and spoke to associated family members and staff.

What they said indicated that the situation in Scotland for young people with low incidence disabilities / complex additional support needs as far as Further Education goes, is generally very poor. Our interviews exposed much frustration, disappointment, sadness, anger, despair and resignation. In summary:

Most young people with complex support needs hope to stay on at school as long as they can as there may be no appropriate provision for them after school

Major reasons for not accessing or having difficulty accessing existing options:

- There is a severe lack of information, transparency and awareness of FE options, a particular obstacle faced by people who have severe difficulties in accessing information
- Many college placement options appear to be provision-led rather than needs-led. Students with complex needs are fitted into the courses and programmes available
- Those who offer services may find it difficult to communicate with and support the communication needs of students who use highly specialised systems for communicating
- Where needs are highly specialised and low incidence, appropriate specialist and support services may not exist locally
- Major funding problems arise also for non-specialist areas, particularly transport, escorts, and helpers for personal care
- Where services are identified and costs are involved, there are often lengthy processes before agreements to fund are obtained. Delays then result in gaining access to both the college placement and to support services.

There's not a lot for me to do after school - it's a real shame from an educational point of view -it's starting to worry me a wee bit.

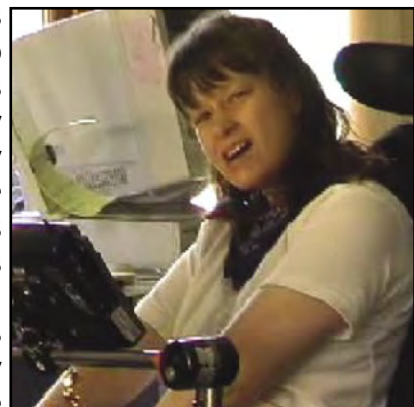
They couldn't offer the social aspect of college life. (about Scottish college)

In spite of difficulties, some young people with complex needs have enjoyed a positive time at college. Social and general academic success may mask lack of progress in other areas, eg. specialist aspects of communication. For this reason, students who were at college may come back again later, seeking further, more specialist provision.

Individual members of staff in school, on various transitional projects and link schemes and in Additional Support for Learning Departments in FE colleges do their best to 'go the extra mile' to understand and deal with issues for individual students but the overall lack of information, specialist skills and funding and the lack of 'structural' support in college and in the local authority mean that their efforts are often fruitless.

Young people with mild/moderate learning difficulties (especially if they are mobile and have some speech) are in general better served and seemed, overall, to be happy with their FE provision.

Local authorities and colleges who insist that all needs can be satisfactorily met locally may not be fully aware of the differences between the needs of students with learning difficulties that they currently provide for, and the needs of other groups with complex support needs.



Straightforward and effective adaptations locally - such as smaller class groups, more support and more specialist staff, longer courses - tend to be ruled out, possibly because of capping of the SUM funding which would result in other students' provision being reduced in order to bring provision for students with complex support needs up to a reasonable level.

For these - and other - reasons, there will always be a need for some specialist provision, whether within Scotland (eg. Motherwell or another college) or in England.

Access to Further Education

It's all there - computer club, going out for meals, "there is always something on" (about specialist college in England)

Parents and young people are not told of the option of specialist colleges across the border either by schools (who don't seem to be aware of them themselves, by and large) or by authorities. Most authorities refuse funding for attendance at such colleges or only provide it if pushed very hard.

Young people and their parents often have to fight long and hard to get relevant information and appropriate/necessary funding and services. Liaison, consultation and continuity are not applied routinely and often depend on families' tenacity and knowledge of 'the system'. Not every family has the ability or the energy to campaign in this way, so provision for young people can be inequitable.

When asked directly, most school-leavers do not like the idea of going away to a distant residential college. Young people with more mature insight into what they need and who have more experience of what is on offer locally are more likely to consider favourably the option of a specialist college.

Sometimes, young people might need a 'transition' link from school (usually to local college) and then on to more specialist further education later.

Most parents do not at first much like the idea of a distant residential college either, but may change

their minds once they appreciate the possible benefits of such a placement, in terms of their child's education.

Young people going to residential college, and their families, seek a full scale 'college experience' with an integrated educational programme, 24/7 consistency of curriculum, a peer group, and social and leisure activities arranged (i.e. not just a hostel).

Residential/specialist college experiences could be provided nearer to home within Scotland, if the political will and the necessary funding were provided to support young people's attendance at these, outwith the home local authority area.

Ring-fenced funding is needed to protect the interests of this small, specialised vulnerable group. If not ring-fenced, funding designated for their use appears to 'get lost' in local authorities.

Having said that, it is recognised that education (and funding for education) should not stand entirely separate, for this group of young people with complex needs, from the wider set of needs also needing to be addressed and funded, in an integrated way, lifelong - housing, personal care, healthcare, transport etc.

The consultation report written by CALL is available online at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publication/2006/03/03103843/0>.

The full report on the consultation is available from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/01/complexNeedsConsultation>

New in CALL is distributed to people who use CALL Centre services, to interested professionals and to others. If you would like to be added to, or removed from our mailing list, please indicate and return this slip to the CALL Centre or email callcentre@ed.ac.uk.

- I wish to receive *New in CALL* in print
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Name

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CALL Centre

Communication Aids for Language and Learning

The CALL Centre is a research and service unit funded primarily by the Scottish Executive Education Department. Contact the CALL Centre for further information on any of our work.

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Email callcentre@ed.ac.uk
<http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk>

What's On?

ICT Clicks in 2006

Camelon Education Centre, Falkirk
Saturday 22nd April



Naace Scottish Primary Group is organising this event which will include workshops on Interactive Whiteboards and Language, Interactive Whiteboards and Maths, Powerpoint to create an Interactive Yearbook, Podcasting, Stop Motion Animation, Information Literacy and Internet Safety, Moving Image Education to Improve Literacy, Webquests and Voting Tools. The day starts with coffee and registration at 9am and ends with a buffet lunch at 1pm. Further details and booking form will be available on the naace website (www.naace.org.uk) or contact Sandra O'Neill (sandra.oneill@education.ed.ac.uk or by phone 0131 651 6075).

ICT and Inclusion 2006

Jordanhill Campus, Glasgow. Tuesday 25th April
Station Hotel, Perth. Wednesday 26th April
CALL Centre, Edinburgh. Thursday 27th April

A chance to find out more about the latest software and technology available to help children with additional support needs, and to see presentations by teachers and others on the practical use of technology in the classroom. See page 3 for further details.

AAC (Scotland) Special Interest Group (SIG) 9th Annual Study Day

Wolfson Lecture Theatre, University of Dundee
Thursday 4th May.

This Study Day, with an overall focus on Access for All, will include seminars on Symbolising the Mainstream Primary Environment; Interactive Whiteboards and Lifeskills; Music - Access for All; Introduction to Scanning (not too quickly, not too slowly).

The AAC SIG is open to all interested people - not just speech and language therapists. The fee to attend the Study Day is £25. Further information is available from *Wilma Armstrong, SCTCI, Westmarc, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow G51 4TF. Tel 0141 201 2619.*

Interactive Whiteboards

CALL Centre, Edinburgh
Thursday 25th May.

This is a repeat of an over-subscribed course looking at the advantages of using an interactive whiteboard in the inclusive classroom. Contact CALL (0131 651 6235) for details and a booking form or book online at <http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk/training>

Liberator / FACCT Training Week

Auchterderran Centre,
Cardenden, Fife
29th May - 2nd June.



FACCT are hosting a week of events led by Liberator, incorporating a Roadshow providing opportunities to view and try some of the equipment now available from Liberator and a series of free training courses. The courses cover VIP Communication Software (2 days); Multi-Sensory Referencing including Objects of Reference; Use of Powerpoint with PMLD and SLD.

Further information is available from FACCT, Auchterderran Centre, Woodend Road, Cardenden, Fife KY5 0NE. Tel. 01592 414730. Information can also be found on the Liberator web site, <http://www.liberator.co.uk>

Communication Matters Symposium

Leicester University
24 - 26 September 2006

This is the main annual event in the UK addressing the needs of people with severe communication impairment. There will be a mixture of seminars, presentations and workshops catering for all levels of interest, along with a suppliers' exhibition and social events. Details from <http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk>

Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland Study Day



Stirling Management Centre
7th November 2006

Call for Papers

The 16th Annual Study Day will have an overall theme of 'Practical Solutions to Support Communication'. The organisers are looking for people to present papers at a variety of workshops on the day.

Are you doing interesting, innovative work to support communication in a school or adult setting that you would like to share with other people? Have you been doing research in some practical aspect of augmentative and alternative communication? Why not present a paper at this year's Study Day?

The Study Day will also feature keynote presentations and an exhibition of AAC equipment and software featuring most of the UK's leading suppliers.

Forms for submitting a proposal for a workshop (which need to be returned by 14th April) and details about the Study Day can be found on the Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland web site: <http://www.acipscotland.org.uk>