

### Equipment Bank

The Equipment Bank continues to be an important facility provided by the CALL Centre. Loans are made for extended assessment and evaluation purposes, generally for a period of up to two months. This allows people to satisfy themselves that the right equipment has been identified prior to what may be an expensive purchase. For example, a school borrowed *Logitech Marble FX* and *Kensington Orbit* trackballs and a *PenPartner* digitising pad to try with a pupil who had difficulty with using a mouse. She found the *PenPartner* “too much hassle” and was “not that keen” on the Kensington trackball, but thought that the Logitech was “very good”. The school has now acquired one for her use. On a grander scale, extended assessment / trial is vital before considering purchase of a complex communication device at £5,000 – £7,000.

### New Equipment

The Loan Bank of Equipment was updated in the course of 1999 – 2000 with purchase of a variety of new items, up to a total value of £12,000 – the sum offered in Capital Grant from SEED.

The SEED grant was supplemented on a small scale from the income from service level agreements and training courses. Equipment purchased with money from service level agreements was chosen with the needs of specific referred pupils in mind.

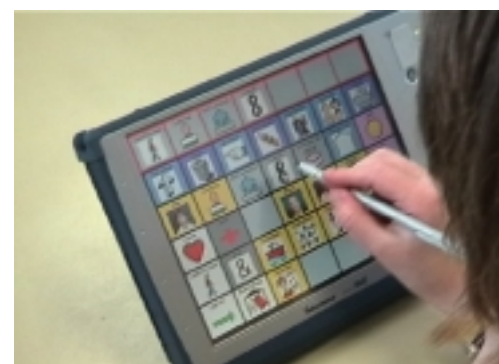
Items purchased for the Loan Bank included:

- *Norand 6642* notebook computer with touchscreen and *Winspeak* communication software
- *JamCam* digital camera
- *Intellikeys* overlay keyboard and guards (duplicate)
- Assorted trackballs, joysticks, switches, interfaces (some new, some duplicates)
- Selection of specialised keyboards (*Compact*, *Switchboard*), adapters
- Selection of early learning and supportive writing software
- Selection of speech recognition software
- Selection of single and sequenced voice output switches (e.g. *Chipper*, *Sequencer*)

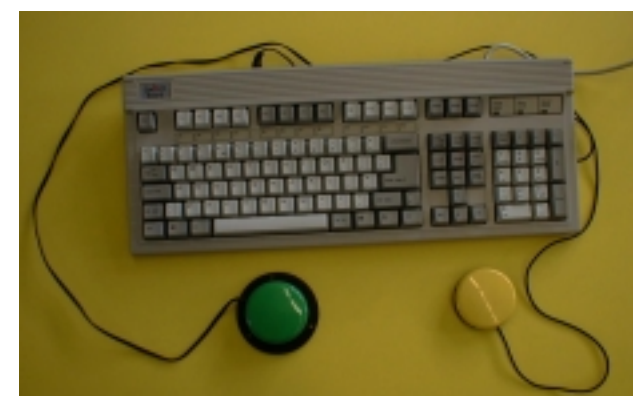
A number of items of equipment were purchased for CALL’s own use in-house (for assessment and support, information and training services, and for research

and development project work), These are not for loan and include:

- *BoardMaker* software for Windows
- *Virtual PC* software
- 2 x *RM SystemCare* notebook computers
- *RM Pentium III* computer
- *iMac* computer
- Apple G3 computer
- Apple G4 computer
- HP Laserjet 4050 printer



*Norand 6642* notebook computer with touchscreen and *Winspeak* software



*Switchboard* switch adaptable keyboard

A particular issue with regard to equipment this year has been the need to adapt to the new USB interface on all the newest computers. Old adaptive keyboards, mice and switch interfaces can no longer be used directly with the *iMac* and other recent Apple computers. Interfaces have become available over the past year to allow the use of old peripherals, but these require to be tested and frequently give rise to further complications.

### Links with Manufacturers and Developers

CALL continues to maintain good links with both researchers developers and with manufacturers and suppliers in the fields of AAC, assistive technology and educational software, This helps CALL staff stay aware of new developments in this rapidly changing technological field. Developers and suppliers benefit from CALL's practical experience.

Informal discussion on potential new products and feedback on existing products has been given to a number of manufacturers and suppliers (for example, AbilityNet, Cambridge Adaptive Communication, Crick Software, Don Johnston Special Needs, DynaVox, IBM).

Links with suppliers have been strengthened by hosting the CALL Centre based ICT/SEN update in March 2000 and in planning the CASC Roadshow to be held in May 2000.

CALL has more formal links with a number of suppliers, who may provide certain items of software or hardware at a reduced cost. Other benefits of these arrangements include training days where new products can be viewed and evaluated. It is to the benefit of these companies that CALL staff are aware of their products, but these arrangements should not be taken to imply that CALL particularly endorses their products. Companies with whom CALL has such arrangements include:

- Crick Software
- Don Johnston Special Needs
- Inclusive Technology Ltd.
- RM
- Sunrise Medical (DynaVox)
- Widgit Software Ltd.

### Technical Services

There were 63 recorded incidences of technical support, adaptations, or special configurations of equipment for individual borrowers/end users in 1999 – 2000. (The target was 25.) Just over half of these related to support for the Smart wheelchair, the others included configuring software for a touch monitor, personalising augmentative communication software and modifying joysticks.

### Evaluation of Equipment

The *New in CALL* newsletter, distributed in December 1999 to around 600 schools and other establishments, provided general and evaluative information about CALL loan equipment (especially newly purchased items) and its use with pupils.

### Loan Service

CALL carried out a total of 192 loan transactions between 1st April 1999 and 31st March 2000. This comprised the return of 33 items borrowed the previous year, the renewal of 20 ongoing loans and 139 new loans. The new loans have increased by 23% compared with 1998 – 1999. A number of factors may have contributed to this increase:

- *Service Level Agreements* – The ongoing relationship built up through these agreements encourages a series of loans over time, rather than a single event.
- *New Premises* – Publicity surrounding the opening of the new premises may have raised awareness of CALL services in 1999.
- *Duplicates of Equipment* – during 1998 – 99, CALL training and assessment commitments meant that some items of equipment were frequently not available for loan outwith the Centre. The purchase of duplicates of small items such as switches, and alternatives to keyboards and mice, has allowed loans to be made during the past year, while still having equipment available for training and assessment. *Training courses* within the CALL Centre often lead to loans of equipment, as participants become more aware of the suitability of particular equipment for their clients and feel more confident about trying different devices.

## Loans and Technical Services 1999 – 2000

### Geographical Distribution of Loans

Table 13 shows loans by geographical area. The total number of loans, including those made to adults, is shown in italics, followed by the loans made to clients in an educational setting. Loans were made to clients in 19 local authorities, compared with 16 in 1998 – 1999. Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee and the Scottish Borders showed the most significant increases. As with many of the other statistics for loans, it would be wrong to attach too much significance to an apparent trend – much of the increase can be due to the eagerness of a small number of individual staff members within a local authority to try technology with their clients.

Local Authority	All	Education	Local Authority	All	Education
Aberdeen	2	2	Inverclyde	0	0
Aberdeenshire	4	4	Midlothian	3	2
Angus	0	0	Moray	0	0
Argyll & Bute	2	1	N. Ayrshire	1	1
Clackmannanshire	0	0	N. Lanarkshire	0	0
Dumfries & Galloway	21	21	Orkney Is.	1	1
Dundee	17	12	Perth & Kinross	2	2
E. Ayrshire	0	0	Renfrewshire	6	6
E. Dunbartonshire	0	0	Scottish Borders	23	14
E. Lothian	1	1	Shetland Is.	2	2
E. Renfrewshire	0	0	S. Ayrshire	1	0
Edinburgh	30	14	S. Lanarkshire	5	5
Falkirk	0	0	Stirling	8	8
Fife	2	2	W. Dunbarton	0	0
Glasgow	2	2	W. Lothian	0	0
Highland	4	4	Western Isles	2	2

### Who is borrowing equipment from CALL?

Teachers and other educational staff continue to be the main users of the Loan Bank, as shown in Table 14. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of loans made to social work and voluntary sector staff – from a combined total of 8 in 1998 – 99 to 26 in 1999 – 2000.

Designation	All	Education
Teacher	60	60
SEN Adviser, SEN / IT Specialist, etc.	16	16
Parent or Relative	6	4
HE/FE Staff	3	3
Speech and Language Therapist	15	12
Occupational Therapist	3	1
Physiotherapist	2	2
Social Work / Care Staff	12	0
Disabled Person	2	1
Engineer	2	2
Voluntary Agency	14	0
Researcher	2	1
Student	2	2

### Who is using equipment from the CALL Loan Bank?

Table 15 shows the educational status of the end-users of equipment borrowed as new loans in 1999 – 2000 from the CALL Centre. Loans are generally made for the use of a particular named individual with special educational needs, but they are occasionally made for research purposes, staff development, or for work with a group of clients. Where it is not possible to tie a loan to a particular client this data is recorded as *Other / not known* in the Table.

## Loans and Technical Services 1999 – 2000

<b>Educational status</b>	<b>All Loans</b>	<b>Education Loans</b>
Pre-school	10	10
School	76	76
Post school education	6	6
Adults not in education	30	0
Other / not known	17	12

All categories, with the exception of clients in post-school education, show a moderate increase. The decrease in the number of loans made to the post-school sector is possibly a reflection of a slight change of emphasis in the work done for the University of Edinburgh.

### **Evaluation and Feedback**

All borrowers are issued with a form asking for feedback on the outcome of a loan when equipment is issued. During the year, 81% of the loans that were returned provided at least some feedback, either through the form or given verbally.

Where there was feedback to a particular question, responses suggested that:

- 66% of loans met the needs of the client (compared with 70% in 1998-1999). It is, of course, worth noting that valuable information is always obtained from a loan for assessment and trial, even where a particular piece of equipment does not meet a client's needs, often leading to success with another item.
- Where clients would be attempting to buy a piece of equipment, an initial approach would be made to their local education authority in 48% of cases. There is a surprising drop in the number of people who would seek funding through a charity – from 36% in 1998-1999 to just 4% in 1999-2000. This may be a “statistical blip”, or it could reflect the difficulties people face in getting charitable funding.
- 74% of the borrowers who gave an indication of their satisfaction with the CALL Loan Service were “very satisfied” (83% in 1998-1999), while 26% were “satisfied” (17% in 1998-1999).

### **Feedback**

Comments below are from people who have borrowed equipment from CALL during the year. Some refer to what the client (end user) thought of the equipment borrowed and others refer to the borrower's satisfaction with the loan service:

#### **Loan service User**

*Thank you for lending these-- a life-saver as always.* (Teacher)

*I liked the variety of keyboards available.* (Teacher)

*Many thanks again for the loans – at least we can rule these possibilities out without making expensive mistakes.*

(SEN & Technology Service Coordinator)

*Thank you for your support.* (Teacher)

#### **Equipment End Users' Reactions**

*I liked it and found it easy to operate!* (School pupil)