

Overview

The CALL Centre's first year in its new location in Paterson's Land has been a typically busy and productive year. Demands for CALL services have been increasing steadily; interesting technical and educational challenges have been arriving thick and fast; new initiatives from Scottish government have been focusing our service planning and delivery; and CALL staff members have been travelling further and faster around Scotland than ever!

CALL Centre Premises

The CALL Centre is part of the Department of Equity Studies and Special Education (ESSE) at Moray House Institute of Education – the Faculty of Education, of The University of Edinburgh.

CALL is now happily settled alongside Scottish Sensory Centre colleagues in its new quarters on the top floor of in the newly refurbished Paterson's Land, at Moray House (also sometimes known as the 'Holyrood Campus'). One year on, most – but not all – of the boxes are unpacked. Instead of the exhaust pipes of cars, we now look out on seagulls nesting on the roof opposite, the cranes building the new Scottish Parliament building, and a glimpse of Arthur's Seat.

Official Opening of the new CALL Centre

The CALL Centre and the Scottish Sensory Centre, located together since March 1999, were officially opened at an Open Day on 2nd September 2000 by Sam Galbraith, Scottish Minister of Education. Many guests and friends of both Centres were present. The Minister was led into the Centres by Jennifer Haddow from Fife independently driving her CALL Centre Smart Wheelchair.

As an ex neuro-surgeon, Mr. Galbraith exhibited great interest in the work of both Centres and their associated projects.

In the CALL technology area, he spent time talking with CALL



Mr Galbraith with Jennifer Haddow & family



Mr Galbraith with Christopher Harding-Dempster

service users Gerald Masterson, a voice output communication aid user from Glasgow, and Mary McCormick, a Bliss user from Edinburgh. He watched Liam Larnach from Wick on video, demonstrating use in a mainstream classroom of the new CALLtalk vocabulary for dynamic screen communication software. Christopher Harding Dempster, a pupil from Dumfries and Galloway illustrated some of the issues

concerned with the use of speech recognition technology in schools.

In the CALL Centre Library and Information area, Mr Galbraith expressed enthusiasm for the new CALL Web site and for the depth of factual detail in CALL Centre publications.

After this tour, Mr Galbraith was introduced by a short speech by Michael Anderson, Vice Principal of The University of Edinburgh, stressing the contribution to be made by the new Faculty of Education (formed through the merger of the University and Moray House), to the pursuit of excellence in Scottish education. Mr Sam Galbraith said he was impressed with the work of both Centres, and gave a speech outlining the commitment of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive to Special Educational Needs, as demonstrated by the new SEN Innovation Grants programme, which recently awarded funding to CALL and SSC were recently awarded funding, as well as to a range of other non-statutory and voluntary bodies and special projects. Then Professor Gordon Kirk, Dean of the Faculty of Education summed up with praise of the excellent work of the CALL Centre and the Scottish Sensory Centre over the years and the importance of their presence within the new Faculty of Education and to the field of Special Educational Needs across Scotland.

This was followed by an informal lunch, at which Mr Galbraith took the opportunity to talk with key figures within the Special Educational Needs field from local authorities and from voluntary organisations from around the country. We were pleased that many guests stayed on after lunch to examine the range of displays and demonstrations mounted by both Centres.

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CALL Staffing and Funding

Apart from being about half the size it feels like it needs to be, to cover all that CALL does, the CALL Centre staff team is in good fettle. Last year's new support staff Pam Henderson and Sarah Marjoribanks have settled in as team members, and we now wonder how we ever lived without them!

It is always felt to be important that CALL have a teacher on the team, although there have been periods when this has not been possible. We are therefore delighted this year to welcome one new addition to the team, teacher Sandra O'Neill, who has joined the CALL team on secondment from South Lanarkshire, where she was SEN Advisory



Teacher with responsibility for ICT referrals and training – amongst other things. Sandra started work in late October 1999 and immediately became invaluable, particularly in the area of training where her input has already made a noticeable enhancement to the range of in-service training opportunities CALL is able to offer to schools and other groupings.

The current CALL Core Services staff team is as follows:

1 x Specialist Speech and Language Therapist: Sally Millar	1.0 FTE
1 x Engineer/Educational Technologist: Paul Nisbet	1.0 FTE
1x Education Development Officer: Sandra O'Neill	1.0 FTE
1 x Psychologist/Visual Impairment Specialist: Stuart Aitken	0.4 FTE
1 x Information Officer: Allan Wilson	1.0 FTE
1 x Administrator: Pam Henderson	0.6 FTE
1 x Secretary: Sarah Marjoribanks	0.5 FTE
Total	5.5 FTE

CALL Centre Funding

Core funding has once again been provided by The Scottish Executive Education Department, SEN division. Further funding has come from The Scottish Executive Social Work Services Group, and on a small scale from service level agreements with a number of local authority Education Departments and other bodies.

As usual, CALL staff members have to be 'multi-skilled' – our work is highly diverse, and each person's time is split into many small fragments, and stretched out across Scotland. In the course of this year, CALL has also followed the practice of buying in additional time as required from one or two external project workers, for a fixed number of days of work on specific research and development projects.

CALL Centre Steering Group

As always, we would like to thank the members of the CALL Centre Steering Group (see Appendix A) for their support. The composition of the Group has been stable during 1999-2000. Plans have been developed to invite new members to join next year, whose roles will reflect aspects of government policy priorities.

Partnerships

The CALL Centre has continued to develop and enjoy productive collaborative working in partnership with colleagues at national, authority and local levels, and with voluntary bodies, such: as the Scottish local authority ICT SEN Development Officers and the Scottish Special Educational Needs Technology Support Group (SSENTSG); Sense Scotland; SCTCI; KeyComm; FACCT; TASSCC; Augmentative Communication in Practice: Scotland, and Communication Matters.

Even closer to home, the CALL Centre and the Scottish Sensory Centre are now located side by side, exchanging information, accessing and using each others' information resources and services, redirecting enquiries as appropriate, and working together on things like mailing out of training course information, sharing a web server computer, buying software licences. Visitors and enquirers find it helpful to have access to both Centres and their different services.

However, although we have things in common, proximity highlights the fact that the two Centres are also very distinct in a number of ways. We have different client groups and different ways of working, making complete merger of the two Centres unlikely.

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CALL Services

Throughout the year, the CALL Centre has provided, as usual, a range of services to professionals, pupils and families – assessment and support, information and training, loans and technical services. The pattern and focus of demands varies slightly every year but overall uptake of all services continues to be high.

CALL has had contact with most of the local authorities in Scotland, as well as having many UK and international contacts.

Assessment and support of individual pupils continues (see pages 8 – 13 for details). CALL has Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with a growing number of local authorities. This helps efficient planning and cost-effective execution of outreach work, allowing assessments to be carried out along with staff in-service training within the same ‘blocks’ of time. Although SLAs demand a great deal of CALL staff travel away from base, we are in no doubt that working on-site with pupils and staff within the context of their own schools is the right way to go forward, (rather than seeing individual pupils for assessment ‘in a vacuum’). As some SLAs have now been established for several years, it is satisfying to see how a relationships built up over time allows development of a service much more sensitive to local needs.

As more schools and individuals have Internet access these days. The amount of high quality information about technology for special educational needs and for communication – and about everything else – on the Internet is expanding constantly, so we might have expected enquiries directly to CALL to have dropped off. This has not happened: enquiries and requests to CALL for information and advice keep increasing in number. They come in both by traditional routes and by Email (often via the CALL Web site). While the international aspect of this emphasises CALL’s excellent reputation worldwide, the sheer volume can be a little problematical; where possible, CALL answers many enquiries, at least in part, by directing them to relevant web sites.

As well as one-off responses to enquirers, CALL has substantially increased the number of printed Information Sheets available, having introduced new ones and updated older ones. We have also developed a whole new set of information materials known as ‘Quick Guides’, and published an important new book ‘Supportive Writing Technology’ (see details on pages 17 – 18).

A busy programme of CALL training events has been running throughout 1999-2000 (see details on pages 19 – 27). As usual, CALL staff have also contributed to training and conference programmes organised by others.

As ever, loans of hardware, software, communication aids, videos, and other materials have been much in demand. However, because of the copyright and licensing terms of software manufacturers, it is becoming more and more difficult to lend out software. CALL will demonstrate software in the Centre and on training courses, and can direct enquirers in some cases to ‘demo copies’ available for downloading off a web site. The technical services that CALL carry out for clients are usually associated with assessment or loan service users.

CALL Research and Development

In the course of this year, CALL has been working on three projects started in January 1999, funded by the Scottish Executive. These are:

- 1 Continuing development of the CALL Centre Web Site
- 2 *CALLTalk* Vocabulary for Dynamic Screen Communication Aid Applications
- 3 Word Prediction Software for Windows CE

A further new project was awarded funding through The Scottish Executive Education Department’s new scheme, the SEN Innovation Grants Scheme.

4. Introducing Speech Recognition in Schools (started in February 2000)

Two further CALL projects and one joint project were applied for in March 2000, but only one of these applications was successful. (Project to start in 2000 –01)

Development work continues on the Smart Wheelchair funded through links with Smile Rehab Ltd. (commercial suppliers of the Smart Wheelchair).

All current CALL projects are detailed on pages 32 – 34 in this report.

As we write, the year 2000-2001 is already upon us and all the signs are pointing to another busy and productive year.

Sally Millar & Paul Nisbet
Joint Coordinators, CALL Centre
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