

TechnoTalk

The TASC Newsletter

Volume 12 Number 1

January 2004

Editorial

Welcome to 2004!

As the summer holidays become a dim memory, we are faced with an exciting year here at TASC.

Jo Ford is currently taking a well-deserved break after years of service at The Spastic Centre. So, for the next couple of editions, I'm acting as 'guest editor'.

This month the focus is on communication. Katherine and Samantha explore communication from the low-tech to the high-tech. A few speech generating devices new to TASC are reviewed and put through their paces. Also reviewed is the latest edition to the TASC library.

So spring into this edition but be on the lookout for S.S.P.I.D.E.Rs. and until next time, happy reading.

Colin Slattery.



by Samantha Puffett

DynaWrite

The DynaWrite, one of a range of products from DynaVox Systems is one of our newer pieces of equipment here at TASC. Essentially it is a text-to-speech device although it has many features that add to its appeal. The DynaWrite uses DECtalk or VeriVox synthesised speech and so can be understood by an untrained listener. It also has the capacity to store digitised (natural) speech or environmental sounds.

Some handy applications to keep in mind - The DynaWrite includes a built-in environmental control unit for integrated environmental control of items such as a television or CD player. The DynaWrite can also be used as a computer keyboard with PC and Mac computers and can be used to compose e-mail messages, which can transfer directly to your computer. You can also download a document from your computer onto the DynaWrite such as a speech that could be read out at a later date.

The DynaWrite, like other text-to-speech devices has a number of rate-enhancement features speeding up message delivery and decreasing keystrokes, which can be helpful for people who fatigue easily. One such feature is word prediction, which means that the device can anticipate your next word choice and display your options in various positions on your screen. You can choose to have your word prediction display at the left side of your screen or across the bottom. You can also decide on the number of words you want in your prediction up to a maximum of five. To speak their choice of predicted items the user simply presses one of the grey keys (word 1, 2, 3, etc) on the keyboard.



DynaWrite

Abbreviation expansion is another rate enhancement feature allowing the user to type in abbreviations which can then expand to whole words, phrases or even stories. For example: h + s, might be an abbreviation for

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“Hi, my name’s Sam, it’s good to meet you!”. Flexible expansions are another rate enhancement feature. When this feature is enabled, letters that are selected will immediately predict words or phrases in the DynaWrite dictionary that contain those letters in the order they are entered. Both of these system features aim to decrease the key-strokes required to produce whole messages.

The DynaWrite can be accessed directly using the QWERTY keyboard with or without the custom DynaWrite keyguard. Sticky keys allow the user to access any of the features that require two-key selection. When this feature is activated, keys such as Alt, Control, Function and Shift can remain active whilst another key is pressed simultaneously. The DynaWrite system can also be accessed with visual or auditory scanning using the separate clip-on keyboard.

The DynaWrite system is particularly user friendly with a menu key easily accessible on the keyboard, which allows the user to access any of the system features, which are then promptly displayed on the screen for ease of use. The menu basically guides the user with key prompts to alter system features.

More information on the device and its many features can be found on the DynaVox website: www.dynavoxsys.com



ISAAC-AUSTRALIA GRANTS
For the 10th ISAAC International Biennial Conference
“Communication for All” at Natal BRAZIL 4th – 12th October 2004
INFORMATION SHEET

See website <http://www.isaac2004.fee.unicamp.br/>
for more information on the conference.
Grant is to help attend Main Conference
6th to 10th October 2004

These grants are made possible by a generous donation from AGOSCI to
ISAAC-AUSTRALIA.

ISAAC-AUSTRALIA wish to acknowledge and thank AGOSCI for supporting
ISAAC-AUSTRALIA and people who use AAC in this way.

Two separate grants of up to \$5,000.00 AUD each will be available to **two** people who use AAC (or family members of people who use AAC) who wish to travel to attend the ISAAC International Conference in Brazil in October 2004. The financial assistance is **to cover the costs of the return flight to Natal, Brazil, registration at the conference and contribute to the costs of accommodation**. Applicants will have to cover any costs over and above the \$5,000.00 AUD of the grant in order to attend the conference. The following people may apply:

Only people who use AAC or their families may apply.

People who use AAC and their families who have not previously attended an ISAAC International Conference, and who are active in their own community in the use of AAC.

People who use AAC who teach others about AAC at a particular forum such as providing guest lectures, talks to schools, or training or mentoring of other people who use AAC.

People who use AAC who submit a paper or poster for presentation at the ISAAC 2004 Conference in Brazil (Deadline 31st December 2003) about any issue relating to AAC. The call for papers information is on the conference website which is <http://www.isaac2004.fee.unicamp.br/>

What's New

SpringBoard

by Katherine Young and Samantha Puffett.



One of the latest devices to come from the Prentke Romich Company range is SpringBoard. This device has access to vocabulary through a colour dynamic display screen. The device uses digitised speech (recorded speech) with some pre-recorded messages and the capability to record your own. Some of the physical features of this system are –

Weight – 1.4kg

Size – 23x18x5cm with a 19cm touch-screen

Recording time – 50 minutes of digitized speech

Battery life – 8 hours

SpringBoard comes with pre-stored communication pages using the MinSpeak language system library of symbols. The user has access to this vocabulary through pages that have either 4, 8, 15 or 32 cells. These pre-made pages can provide the user with access to a limited set of frequently used words or phrases. These are complimented with pages set up according to categories such as food, drinks, people, places.

In addition pages can be customized to suit the user using a blank template of 4, 8, 15 and 32 cells. The user has the option of creating pages using the Minsymbol library, Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) or may import pictures/photographs of their choice. PCS are not a standard feature however can be purchased if required. A feature of the device allows the user to link both customised and pre-stored pages.

Although the SpringBoard does not offer text-to-speech (does not convert letters to spoken messages), the user can access an on-screen alphabet for spelling messages. In addition a numbers page is also available.

The screen consists of symbol keys and a message display bar. When the user selects a symbol the associated word or phrase appears in the display bar at the top of the screen.

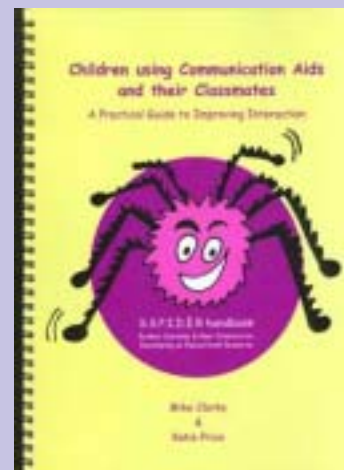
Access to the SpringBoard device is through direct selection to the touch-screen, joystick or scanning (including auditory scanning). If required 8, 15 and 32 location keyguards may be purchased to assist with direct selection of symbols. An infra-red headpointer may also be used however this must be requested at the time of purchase as additional internal hardware is required.

The device comes with an MTI cable and software which allows the user to save their customized pages onto a computer for back-up purposes.

Reviews.....

New to TASC is the **S.S.P.I.D.E.R. handbook**;
Symbol Systems & Peer Interaction: Developing an Educational Resource.

- Title:** A practical guide to improving interaction for students using communication devices
- Author:** Katie Price, Mike Clarke
- Manufacturer:** Institute of Child Health and Great Ormond Street Hospital
- Aim:** A practical resource to help people working in schools support interactions between children using communication aids and their speaking classmates.



Front Cover

The book has been designed for the following children:

- Aged seven and above
- Attending mainstream or special schools
- Having an identified discrepancy between their understanding of language and their ability to express themselves
- Having perceived difficulties in interacting with their peers
- Using an established communication device involving pictures/symbols/written words
- With physical disabilities

S.S.P.I.D.E.R. themes

- Classmates' attitudes and expectations
- Knowledge and skills in building interactions
- Other people's knowledge of communication aids

The handbook provides step-by-step instructions for over 50 games and activities that explore these themes. Specific symbol sets, examples and templates are included for teachers to photocopy and use during lessons.

Also included in the book is a useful page of publications and websites.

The handbook can be purchased through Spectronics.

For details, go to: <http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/product.asp?product=14470>

We welcome any feedback, good or bad, that you have on our service.

Please feel free to contact us by phone on

02 9972 8183, email at <tasc@tscnsw.org.au> or in writing at the address on the front page.

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