

TechnoTalk

The TASC Newsletter



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Editorial

Spring has sprung and with the change of season we have a few staff changes on the TASC team. Angela Vass, Speech Pathologist has joined us after spending a few months travelling in India and Europe. Angela is not a new face to The Spastic Centre after spending a couple of years working with the Adult Resource Program. Kerrie Potgieter, Occupational Therapist has recently started maternity leave and eagerly awaiting the birth of baby Potgieter No. 2. Petra Karlsson, Occupational Therapist is about to leave us to complete her PhD exploring the collaborative approach to implementation of AT for students in upper primary. We are looking forward to the results of this exciting research project.

The ARATA Conference (<http://www.e-bility.com/arata/conf.php>) is fast approaching and the team are busily preparing presentations and looking forward to catching up with old friends.

Do you or your client/family member use a number of pieces of equipment, i.e. communication device, mobile phone and computer? Is it challenging to access all of these? Integrated communication systems may be considered as a solution to access requirements. The TASC team have reviewed a number of systems and provided a case example of a system in place for one of our clients.

Looking to our next edition.

Jo Ford

News...

Website of Interest

This great free website was developed in Finland and contains games in English (as well as Finnish and Swedish), and was presented at the ISAAC Conference in Montreal last week. The games are designed for AAC device users or for those who use alternative access when using the computer. Speech support is also available.

Games such as; Puzzle, Domino, Memory games, Games for precision, Sudoku, Word exercises, Drawing exercises and cause and effect games range from very easy to more challenging and can be played with a mouse or a switch. When using a switch, it is programmed for step scanning, which will require two switches and a switch interface (i.e. DJ Johnston Switch Interface Pro 5.0) that can emulate a 'space bar' and an 'enter'.

It's a lovely website, try it out!

www.papunet.net/games/

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We welcome any feedback, good or bad, that you may have on our service. Please feel free to contact us by phone on 02 9975 8469, email tasc@tascnsw.org.au or by writing to The Spastic Centre PO Box 184 Brookvale NSW 2100

TechnoTalk Newsletter is free and available from www.thespasticcentre.com.au/news/technotalk/

Main Story:

Integrated Communication Systems

by Anna Bech, Alana Lum and Kerrie Potgieter

Increasingly children and adults alike want to access a range of technology on a daily basis including a mobile phone and the computer for Internet browsing and email. For those with communication difficulties, access to computer technology can be a primary means to not only accomplish communication goals but also to meet educational, vocational and personal needs. An integrated communication system such as those discussed below may be considered for some users when access to several different technologies is either too physically challenging or not practical. It allows people using communication systems accessibility to the same technology as their peers and the ability to develop computer skills to broaden opportunities for recreation, access to the school curriculum and vocational pursuits.

There are three main types of integrated communication systems:

1. A user accesses the computer and mobile phone via a speech generating device. Generally a cable or infra-red / Bluetooth connection is required to send information to a separate computer or mobile phone and the device keyboard is used to emulate keystrokes and mouse functions.

See example of Vanguard Plus below.

2. A speech generating device that has in-built computer capabilities. Some of these devices also have in-built phone capabilities (through an Aircard) and others require an external mobile phone to be attached. When accessing the computer, the screen is divided into two, with a keyboard visible on one half of the screen and the computer application on the other half.

See example of DynaVox V / Vmax and Liberator page 3.

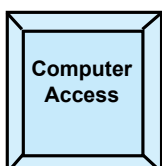
3. A tablet PC where communication software is available along with regular computer applications such as the Internet or email. Mobile phone connection can also be supported through the software program loaded onto the tablet.

See example of Optimist page 4.

Examples of integrated communication systems

Vanguard Plus

The Vanguard Plus is a Minspeak based dedicated communication device that provides computer emulation, environmental control and phone access.



The Vanguard can connect to your computer via a serial cable, USB cable or infra-red remote receiver and then be used to emulate keyboard, mouse and word processing functions on the computer.



The Vanguard also has an internal telephone. To make a phone call or send a text message, an Aircard (which acts as a mobile phone inside the computer) must be installed and activated on the device.





Environmental control can also be set up on the Vanguard through its built-in infra-red capabilities. The device will then act as a remote control for the TV, radio, DVD, etc.

For more information go to www.prentrom.com

The Liberator-14 (Eco-14)



The Liberator-14 is the new PRC device which combines a dedicated communication system, Minspeak and a Windows XP computer system onto a single device. The communication pages can be viewed as a whole screen or used as a shared screen with the computer operating at the same time. Programs such as Microsoft Word, games, and calculator can be used on the device. Minspeak can be used to “type” a document or you can switch to a spelling page for the keyboard functions. Other computer programs can be loaded onto the device. Within the Minspeak system, a number of computer pages are pre-programmed, including an editing page with Word, mouse control, and internet access page. Switching between the communication page and the computer system involves pressing a single button.

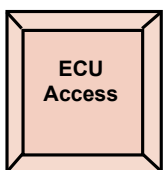
The Liberator can connect to an external computer or printer. Documents can also be saved onto a flash drive and transferred to another computer. To connect to an external computer, you need either a USB cable, infra-red receiver or a Bluetooth dongle.

The Bluetooth dongle can be purchased as an add-on. It works simply by plugging the dongle into a USB drive on your computer and then setting up the device, by changing the output in the Tools Menu.

To use The Liberator with the internet, a network adapter is required and the device must be configured to the internet connection.



The Liberator has internal phone capability which allows you to store phone numbers, send text messages (using the keyboard overlay or Minspeak) and make a phone call on the mobile. In order to activate this option on the Liberator, an Aircard must be purchased and set up on the device.



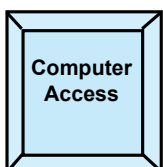
Infra-red environmental controls are another feature of this integrated device. You can teach the device to operate as a remote control for appliances such as TV / DVD.

For more information go to www.prentrom.com



DynaVox V / Vmax

This device is another example of an integrated communication system. As with The Liberator, the V / Vmax are Windows XP computer system with a separate communication page (series 5 DynaVox software). The communication software comes with a range of pre-programmed pages, InterAACT, which can be set up for individuals of varied ages, cognitive ability, language skills and context of the interaction.



The Windows system allows you to run any Windows XP compatible software, and is set up for email and internet access.

In order for the device to be used with an external computer, the Access IT is required. This allows access to the external computer wirelessly via infra-red as it is plugged into the

computer's USB drive, and once the device is set up to alternate output, it can communicate to the external computer without the need for cables.

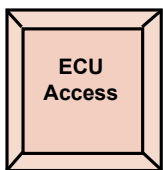
An onscreen keyboard can be used with the computer access pages. When this is accessed, the keyboard will float over the top of the computer page. By selecting a button on the onscreen keyboard, a command / word / phrase is then sent to the open Windows program. Onscreen keyboards are useful for people who have difficulties accessing a standard mouse or keyboard.

To connect to the internet through your device you can either use a network cable through the Ethernet port or a wireless networking adapter that connects to a USB port or CompactFlash port.

Printing from your device is achieved via a USB cable from the printer or through Bluetooth (the device requires a Bluetooth adapter for this to work).



Telephone access through the device works with the Bluetooth adapter connected with specific mobile phones that are recommended, allowing the device user to text and talk on the mobile.



The DynaVox V has environmental control options for operation of common electronic devices around the house. It works via infra-red to control televisions, DVD, stereos, etc.

For more information go to www.spectronicsinoz.com

Optimist 3



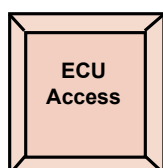
The Optimist is an example of a tablet PC with a Windows XP operating system. Software programs are installed onto the system which allows for voice output system and alternate computer access (such as The Grid 2 or VS Communicator).

One example of software that is supported on the Optimist is The Grid 2. This program comes with the built-in Computer Control features such as keyboard and mouse control pages which provide access to Word documents, email and internet.



The Grid 2 also supports mobile phone access through the Mobile Phone workspace enabling phone calls and text messaging. This is done through a Bluetooth connection or an Aircard. There are certain mobile phones that are compatible with The Grid.

VS Communicator software also supports text messaging. For this to work, a data cable, infra-red or Bluetooth connection with a compatible phone to interface with the device is required.



The Optimist can be attached to a GEWA Control Micro or Control Star to enable environmental control and can then be accessed through environmental control pages in the voice output software program.

For more information go to www.zytec.com.au



Case Example

Gretta is a 16 year old client who was referred to TASC to review options for voice output communication devices and computer access. One of Gretta's wishes was to be able to independently use the phone to text message her friends as she was currently having to ask her family to text for her, which meant that she had no privacy about what she texted! She was also interested in how she could use the device to access a computer to help her complete her school work.

Gretta is completing Year 11 at a mainstream high school, so it was important for her to have access to communication and computer functions in her device. She had previously had a Pathfinder, so she was familiar with the Minspeak language system. Initially the Vanguard was trialled, and whilst it was a good system it was felt that Gretta would benefit from an all-in-one system so that she only had one device to move around the school. She also preferred to use 'group scanning' on her device, which was not an option available in the Vanguard.

Soon after she had trialled the Vanguard, the Liberator was released. Gretta and her family were keen to trial it as it would offer the 'all-in-one' solution. That is, Gretta would be able to switch between communication and computer functions, and even use the Minspeak for text entry. Following a successful trial of the device, funding was approved and Gretta finally received her Liberator two months ago.

Gretta, her family and her school support team's feedback so far has been very positive. Gretta is enjoying using the Liberator and seems to have worked out a lot of the functions. She uses the Liberator for communication and is starting to use it at school for text entry and completing school work. She reported that with the Liberator she "can be more involved in class". There have been some issues with the telephone and text messages functions – the Sim card has not been reading properly, however Technability has been working with Gretta to sort out the issues.

When considering integrated systems it is important to think about what the client wants to be able to do. Keeping their goals in mind will help the team to work out the features they require in their device and how they can best access these different features. For further support for choosing the right device, please contact your local therapist or TASC.

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Staff Profile

Angela Vass



Hi, my name is Angela Vass and I have recently joined the TASC team as a Speech Pathology Consultant.

The Spastic Centre is not unfamiliar to me, as I've previously worked as a Speech Pathologist on the Adult Resource Program for almost three years. During this time I was involved in working with the adult population with both mealtime management and communication. I realized during my time at ARP that I really enjoyed the process and outcomes achieved when communication clients were successfully able to enhance their lives through the use of technology.

So after returning from a half year break of travelling continents and sub-continents, I've returned to find a home with the TASC team. With the travel fading into a slow distant memory, I'm excited about being offered a fantastic job with TASC.

I find technology and the opportunities it presents for people with disabilities constantly exciting. To be working in such a consistently changing and quickly evolving area will keep me on my toes, up to date and very excited.

I look forward to working with clients, allied health professionals, families, professionals and many more, to aid people with disabilities in reaching and maintaining their independence and rights through the use of technology.

Equipment News from AbleNet

AbleNet is bringing out the BIGmack and the LITTLEmack with four different coloured caps in each package.

The caps can be used to colour code activities and messages related to the activities throughout the day such as play time, meal times, morning circle.....



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