

Outcomes and Benefits in Assistive Technology Service Delivery

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It is with great pleasure that we welcome many new colleagues to the Editorial Review Board of Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits (ATOB). Our Call for Reviewers this past Spring, coupled with personal invitations extended from our editorial office to experts in the field, culminated in a four-fold increase in the number of peer reviewers working with the journal. We are also excited about the journal's new website presence at: <http://atobjournal.org> which went live in September, 2007. Since receiving ISSN designations for previous issues of ATOB, we are now making available hardcopy versions of the current publication and previous volumes on demand from the website. For more information regarding acquisition of hardcopy volumes, please visit <http://www.atobjournal.org>.

In this issue of ATOB, our lead article is the first of a series of topical articles that address national issues identified at an AT Outcomes Summit conducted in December, 2005, in Chicago (see <http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/index.php/2005/12/15/at-outcomes-summit-2005/>; Parette, Peterson-Karlan, Smith, Gray, & Silver-Pacuilla, 2006). At this professional meeting, numerous concerns regarding large scale assessments were articulated, leading to an invitation for a team of experts to prepare a synthesis of the research on this topic. Martha Thurlow, Gerald Tindal, Richard Powers, Preston Lewis, Cara Cahalan Laitusis, and Joan

Breslin-Larson, present in their article, "Research on AT Outcomes and Large Scale Assessments," a discussion of the role that AT plays in state testing accommodations. The authors describe examples of how AT is used in Kentucky, Minnesota, and Oregon, and highlight current and emerging research activities in this area.

In the second article, "The Effectiveness of Using a Pocket PC as a Video Modeling and Feedback Device for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities in Vocational Settings," Toni Van Laarhoven, Traci Van Laarhoven-Myers, and Leslie M. Zurita describe a multiple probe design examining the effectiveness of using a pocket PC to teach vocational tasks to two adolescents with mild and moderate cognitive impairments. The data presented indicate that introduction of the video-based procedures was associated with significant increases in performance.

In the third article titled, "Providing Curriculum Access to Young Children: Online Workshops for Educators," Linda Robinson, Carol Schneider, and Patricia Hutingger describe the effectiveness of online workshops developed by the Early Childhood Technology Integrated Instructional System (EC-TIIS) at Western Illinois University. Findings presented by the authors indicate that the online workshops are effective in increasing knowledge, skills, and attitudes of education professionals and families.

Particular emphasis is placed on changes in classroom practices made by education professionals after participation in on-line professional development, as well as faculty member outcomes regarding changes made in the university curriculum.

In the fourth article, “Visual Features That Convey Meaning in Graphic Symbols: A Comparison of PCS and Artists’ Depictions,” by Rupal Patel, Katherine Schooley, and Jessica Wilner, a research and development perspective is presented that may guide future work in the industry when creating augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) symbol sets. In this study, concepts depicted in Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) were examined in terms of a varying visual features and principles, coupled with artists’ renditions of the concepts. Findings of the study presented suggest that a diverse set of visual features may be useful for analyzing how meaning is conveyed in existing AAC symbol sets and for developing novel symbols.

In the fifth article, “Universal Design for Learning: Critical Need Areas for People with Learning Disabilities,” Wendy Strobel, Sajay Arthanat, Stephen Bauer, and Jennifer Flagg discuss primary market research designed to identify critical technology needs within the context of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for people with learning disabilities. The study examines the educational technology industry from various expert perspectives and provides a better understanding of its current state, unmet needs, and future course of action for the adoption of UDL in classroom settings nationally.

In the sixth article, “Enhancing Access to Situational Vocabulary by Leveraging Geographic Context,” by Rupal Patel and Rajiv Radhakrishnan, a description is provided of work that focuses on access to situational

vocabulary through the use of geographic context to predict vocabulary. The authors report a process for collecting samples of spoken language and ‘mining’ location-specific vocabulary clusters within these samples, with descriptions of how context-driven vocabulary organization and prediction can be integrated into an iconic communication system, thereby potentially increasing a user’s access to situationally appropriate vocabulary.

In the seventh article, “Achieving Systemic Change with Universal Design for Learning and Digital Content,” Karen E. Ender, Barbara J. Kinney, William M. Penrod, and Debra K. Bauder describe a partnership between the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and University of Louisville to develop a statewide initiative addressing the implementation of UDL. The discussion includes descriptions of a statewide accountability testing (CATS), digitized text system, and UDL model schools that were created during the implementation phase. Outcomes reported included overall positive systemic changes for the majority of the model schools included in the project.

Finally, in the eighth article titled, "Evidence-Based Practice and the Consideration of Assistive Technology," George R. Peterson-Karlan and Howard P. Parette provide both a legislative and policy background for evidence-based practice (EBP). Issues related to AT research and the AT consideration process are explored. Of particular interest to researchers and developers of AT *and* practitioners who use findings of AT effectiveness are guidelines for both the development of research-based evidence of AT effectiveness, and guidelines for EBP as part of decision-making guidelines for AT consideration.

References

- Parette, H. P., Peterson-Karlan, G. R., Smith, S. J., Gray, T., & Silver-Pacuilla, H. (2006). The state of assistive technology: Themes from an outcomes summit. *Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits*, 3, 15-33.