KEYCOMM NEWS

Welcome to our new-look newsletter!

There has been a lot happening at Keycomm since our last issue and we are very excited to share our news with you. We will be looking at the range of new equipment that has become available for AAC users including the latest Lightwriter, the new Tobii I-Series and much more. There is a chance for you to "meet" our new staff, and there will also be photographs from our recent birthday celebration.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter!

In This Issue

- Keycomm turns 21!
- Profiles of new equipment
- Staff changes

The new Tobii I-Series is profiled inside.

See photos from our 21st birthday bash!

Good-bye to Ruth

In December 2012, Keycomm said farewell to Ruth Wise, who had worked with us for over seven years. Ruth will be missed a great deal and we wish her all the best for her new job in Sweden.

New Equipment

Scanning Lightwriter

In June, Toby Churchill announced the launch of the new scanning Lightwriter. The biggest difference to previous models is that the device will scan on the keyboard rather than the screen. All existing SL40 series Lightwriters can be upgraded to the new system.

We are hoping to purchase some scanning Lightwriters soon, and will give a full review in a future issue of the newsletter.

Tobii I-Series

Many of you will be familiar with Tobii and their eye-gaze systems. Earlier this summer, the latest version became available: the I-Series.

There are two models, the I-12 and the I-15. Both models feature automatic backup to a 32GB memory card, a robust damage-resistant screen and built-in speakers that Tobii describe as "the loudest on the market". Also, in a change from the old C-Series machines, the power port is on the side, not the bottom.

We are looking forward to trying this new system soon at Keycomm.

Look2Learn

Look to Learn is a software package from SmartBox designed for people starting out with eye gaze technology. It features forty activities that have been specially created to provide a fun way to improve access and choice making skills.

Each activity develops a different skill, ranging from early cause and effect through to accurate eye gaze control.

The software has been created in consultation with teachers and therapists and provides the tools needed for assessment.

For a free trial of the software, you can visit the SmartBox website at http://www.smartboxat.com/software/looktolearn/

SL40 Series Lightwriters can be upgraded.

PC Eye Go

Some of you will be familiar with Tobii's PC EyePro, which allows users to access Windows computers using eye gaze instead of a mouse. They have now launched the PC EyeGo, a smaller version for use with laptops or smaller screens.

Both devices easily attach and detach from your computer, are lightweight, and can be used with different computers, for example at home, at work or in school.

The new Tobii I-Series has a sleeker design.

iPad and Android News

Stylus for iPad or Android tablets

More and more users are using iPads or android tablets for communication.

These devices use a "capacitive" touch technology - i.e. they respond to a change in electrical current caused by your body, rather than a change in pressure (the "resistive" technology used by many dedicated communication devices).

This is why the iPad or Android device responds if you press it with your finger, but not if you press it with a pen.

For users that find touching a "capacitive" screen directly challenging, we can offer a range of styluses from Therapy Box. They come with a variety of grips to suit different needs. If you or an AAC user you know would like to try a stylus, get in touch!

We can offer a range of styluses (or styli, if you prefer!).

Predictable now available for Android

Predictable, published by TherapyBox, is a text-to-speech app that offers customizable AAC functions with social media integration. A popular Apple app, Predictable is now available for Android — great news, as more people will be able to access it.

SoundingBoard for iPad upgraded

The popular iPad app, SoundingBoard, has been upgraded. This is a great app to begin to assess whether or not an iPad would be a suitable device for a given AAC user, and best of all, it's free!

You can use SoundingBoard to create customised boards using either the symbols provided in the app, or your own pictures or photographs. The new version has a slicker interface and allows users to switch between landscape and portrait displays easily. Why not give it a try?

New for early learners using iPads.

There are so many apps out there...

We've sorted everyone's favourite apps into a developmental sequence: apps which reward attention, making sounds, a single touch, a sustained touch, repeated touch, swipe, drag, etc.

A version with hyperlinks is available from Melanie.ross@kaimes.edin.sch.uk and soon on the Keycomm website .

Pererro switch interface for iPad

Using switches with the iPad has proven a bit tricky in the past, with the only switch interface boxes available relying on Bluetooth, which could be problematic.

The Pererro plugs directly into the iPad.

RSL Steeper have come to the rescue with "Pererro": a device to allow switch access to Apple's iOS. It plugs directly into the iPad, and doesn't need a battery - it draws power directly from the device.

With iOS6, the highlighting of different functions does not stand out very much, but this will change with iOS7, due to be released this autumn - look out for a review of the new features of the new operating system in the next newsletter!

Keycomm turns 21!

We've been given the key to the door, we can drink in the USA and we can supervise a learner driver — that's right, Keycomm has turned 21!

On 13th August, we did what 21-year-olds do best, and had a party. We had a great time going down memory lane and also thinking about where Keycomm is going in the future. The event was well attended by friends, colleagues and partners old and new, and very importantly: there was cake!

Many thanks to NES, Liberator and Tobii Churchill for donating raffle prizes, and to all those who came to help us celebrate. Here's to another 21 years!

Our birthday celebrations were well attended by friends old and new.

Staff Changes

Since our last newsletter, there have been a lot of staff changes at Keycomm. We have said goodbye to some old friends, and welcomed several new faces.

Replacing Ruth as Communication Technology Development Officer is Susan Henderson. Susan comes from a primary teaching background and will be supporting children with severe communication impairment and also working with us on some interesting projects.

In January, we welcomed three new team members - Fil McIntyre, AAC Technologist; Phillipa Rewaj, Speech and Language Therapist (adult) and Nicky Ford, Speech and Language Therapist (paediatric). Phillipa will be supporting adults with acquired conditions and Nicky will be working in special schools with children with severe and complex needs.

Finally, this summer, Speech and Language Therapists Lindsay Lambert and Laura Smith also joined our team. Lindsay will be working one day a week, focusing on pupils making the transition from child to adult services, and Laura will be working one day a week supporting children in mainstream schools.

All these new faces bring a range of experience and a lot of enthusiasm to Keycomm and make it an exciting time for the service. We're sure you join us in welcoming them all to our team!

Fil McIntyre, AAC Technologist

Phillipa Rewaj, Speech and Language Therapist

Laura Smith, Speech and Language Therapist

Susan Henderson, Communication Technology Development Officer

Lindsay Lambert, Speech and Language Therapist

Nicky Ford, Speech and Language Therapist

Contacting the Keycomm team

Why not tear this page off and pin it to your noticeboard, or put it in your diary?

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