PMLD ∞ LINK

The Bulletin of News and Information for Everyone Working with People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties

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PMLD LINK relies on contributions from practitioners, parents, carers and everyone interested in this field

Although this issue is rather late, I hope you will feel that the wait has been worthwhile. As you will see, there are more articles than usual, and we are delighted that so many people have written about their experiences of using IT. Tina Detheridge, in the last FUTURE FOCUS talked about the limitations of the technology and of our imaginations. I, for one, have had my imagination stimulated by reading about the different ways that people have been using IT - for communication, recording progress, for practical tasks, and for helping people with PMLD to be interested and involved in their own lives and things that are going on around them.

The BILL OF RIGHTS is part of a document developed by a group of teachers working in schools in Leeds. The whole of the document is of great interest, but unfortunately there was not enough space to print it all. The Bill of Rights seemed to be the core of their ethos, and if you would like the whole document contact Malcolm Henshall, who sent it to us.

This issue includes the remaining reports of the Manchester conference which we did not have space for last time, and reports from the NCET conference *IT, Disability and Lifelong Learning*. I think this conference showed clearly how presentations and workshops which do not focus on the complex needs of people with PMLD nevertheless often offer ideas and new ways of thinking which can be applied to our work and help to enhance their everyday lives. We may have to listen with open minds, and then do a lot of lateral thinking, but I hope that, like me, you will find that these reports give you some new ideas that you will be able to follow up.

The focus for the Autumn issue is on cultural issues and people with PMLD. Although this is something which is very rarely written about in relation to people with PMLD, it is just as important for them as it is for us all. Judith Cavet introduces the topic in **FUTURE FOCUS** and I hope this will inspire some of our readers to write in about their own knowledge and experience.

BUSINESS MATTERS
Subscriptions
This is the last issue for this subscription year. If you have not already subscribed for 1996/97, now is the time to do it. I am afraid we have had to increase the rate to £8.50 per year to cover the ever-rising costs of producing, printing and mailing. I do hope that you will all feel that it is still worth every penny and will continue to subscribe, to read, to share, and to contribute articles and information to PMLD-Link

Articles
Copy for the next issue should be sent to me by 11th November. If possible, typed or word processed in single line spacing, and good enough quality to photocopy for printing. This means that I do not have to retype articles which are not edited in any other way. Of course, if you use an Apple Mac and can send me a disc in microsoft word 5.1 so much the better!

Don't forget, we rely on you for articles (on any topic relating to people with PMLD) and information about any new resources you have seen or heard about - new equipment, useful books or articles, new materials or any interesting projects that you or colleagues are involved in.

Carol Ouvry

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND LEISURE
WITH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Nicola is a young woman who uses a wheelchair and doesn't speak. She spends her days at her local day centre in the Special Care Unit. At home she enjoys watching MTV and being around other people. But since her four brothers and sisters left home it has become painfully obvious how limited her opportunities and activities are. Her parents and friends have been exploring new things that she might do independently and ways in which she can interact with other people. They wondered what could be done with their family computer. Still video photos of Nicola, the dog, the cats, her family and home were taken and put together on the computer, along with a spoken commentary to create a talking photograph album. Nicola has learned to "turn the pages" by tapping the space bar on the keybord. She amazed everyone by how quickly she picked this up and how long she remained interested in the pictures. Even more exciting was the way in which it has become clear that there are people who she wants to see the photos, and people who are not allowed to see them - she takes her hands right away from the keyboard and puts them in her lap. People are starting to realise that Nicola has things that she wants to communicate and can act in a very deliberate and directed way.
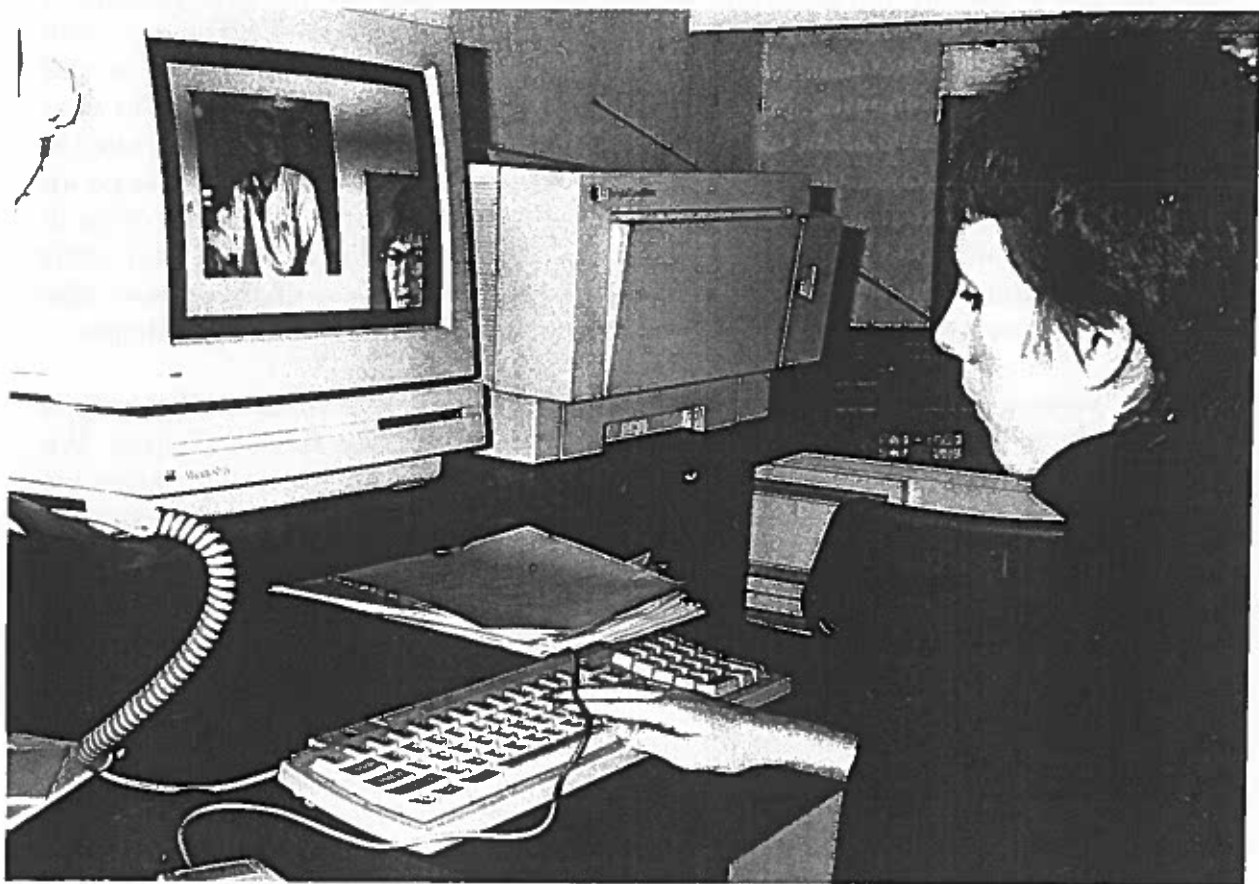
As Nicola's parents know, finding constructive activities to engage people with her kinds of difficulties can be a problem. Sometimes information technology can provide the "added value" or extra reinforcement that they need to keep them involved. This may be in the form of a vibrating cushion to go along with music from their cassette player, a flashing emergency light or loud rhythmic accompaniments from a Yamaha keyboard. Some people will be able to activate toys or equipment using regular means, others may need switches. If a person makes any movement or sound, voluntary or involuntary, switching is almost always easy to establish. Switches come in all shapes and sizes and may be activated by arm-waving, blinking, sucking or sneezing. This in turn can activate any sort of electrical equipment - mains or battery, hopping bunnies, food processors or a regular computer.

The first studies into using this sort of equipment with people with multiple disabilities in long stay institutions had dramatic consequences. It was clear that they were acting in a deliberate way to produce consistent results. Staff and carers started to talk to them more often, about a wider variety of topics and in different tones of voice. People were moved, dressed and fed with greater care and respect. Similarly, in schools for children with severe learning difficulties computers made a huge and immediate impact, especially in classes where the children had the greatest difficulties. Here were things which children could do by themselves, and often with other positive spin-offs.

In my class of eight pupils, labelled as profoundly handicapped, we used a BBC computer. Tina, who was blind and very curled up, hated using her hands or her head. She would lift her face right up and press the spacebar, her eyes flicking in response to the changes of colour sweeping across the screen. Darren and John who were mobile, constantly challenging staff and the environment, would gravitate to the computer and happily spend time hitting the keyboard to hear tunes and see patterns. Tristan, at fifteen was just, very reluctantly, learning to walk. He was motivated to push his way through doors and eventually to go up and down stairs if he could hear the sound of a distant computer. Kate, often in tears, was comforted by sitting together with another child in a comfortable chair watching while he or she worked on the computer. Some of the games also helped with eye-tracking skills as they watched the movement of bright shapes.

There were arguments with the physiotherapist who was anxious that pupils should be in optimum therapeutic positions when accessing these activities. We felt that children had to be motivated and happy to use the computer before we could start using it to reinforce things that they didn't want to do - for example reaching, stretching, bringing hands to the midline or being extended on wedges and in new standing frames. We needed to be sure that they were not going to be deterred from using the computer by making too many disparate demands in this new context.

So computer activities accessed by simple switches or the keyboard became part of our regular curriculum. It was used to encourage independent and sustained activity, to help teach that a specific action would produce consistent results, to see which sounds, colours, patterns and pictures someone enjoyed most, to reinforce tracking skills and as a reward for other good work. We also found that

it was a shared focus for children and adults, especially when new people came into the classroom. It gave people something interesting to talk about, giving rise to real communication. When a dinner lady asked a child "What happens when you do that?" she really didn't know the answer, and was genuinely interested in the result!

Newer computers have given us a wealth of possibilities. Special touch screens can be attached to the ordinary monitor, so that one can choose, draw, write and so on by pointing rather than using a keyboard or a mouse. Some people are enjoying regular art and music programs, touching the screen to make their own pictures and sounds. There are also hundreds of new CD ROMs, just like regular music CDs but containing computer pictures and movies as well as sounds. These can be games, information about cookery, art galleries, rock bands, talking stories, space and so on. Even exploring these discs at random via a touch screen can lead to interesting journeys, listening to new sounds, music and explanations, seeing new pictures. In this way we can provide age or curriculum-appropriate accessible materials.

It is (honestly!) quick and easy - once you have the equipment - to capture real sounds and pictures, putting these together (like Nicola's photos) to create individual resources, an activity which reflects the current class theme or topic, or allows a child to participate in or control a group activity.

Computers can also help bridge communication gaps created by time and place. As independent adults we accumulate a detritus of cinema tickets, scratched records, old exercise books and unfashionable clothes which connect us to all the experiences which have contributed to who we are. People who don't speak and have other people organising their lives and possessions are at risk of loosing connections with past times and events - even things that happened the previous day. Diaries, videos and tape recordings can help to capture some of these experiences. Some schools and colleges are making extensive use of still video photography too. Pictures of the days events, a packed lunch, geography field trip or work in the greenhouse, can quickly and cheaply be put onto computer and printed out to take home in the evening. These can be shared with families and friends, giving a fuller picture of a person with their own unique experiences and kept to build up and revisit a visual story of day to day happenings.

The latest computers provide everyone with a wealth of opportunities for learning and leisure activities, not least, people with the most difficulties. They can help to capture events and share them with other people, many regular resources can be accessed with touch screens or switches, they can help reinforce important skills and provide opportunities for self-directed independent activities but most important, they provide a valued context in which to work and relax.

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USING TECHNOLOGY TO RECORD PROGRESS MADE BY PUPILS WITH PMLD

This article presents the outcomes of a small scale project which investigated ways in which we could use a range of media to make a record of pupils' progress. The development of records of achievement for pupils in schools for severe learning difficulties (SLD) has resulted in the use of photographs and video to capture pupils' achievements and provide tangible documentation of the progress made. One of the strengths of these is their accessibility both to parents and the pupils themselves. They can also provide an attractive celebration of achievement. Clearly, however, there are different strengths and limitations to both photographs and video and the inclusion of additional information is essential to support their usefulness.

In June 1995 a small working party was set up to explore the ways in which teachers were using different media and to learn from these experiences. This working party consisted of ourselves as university lecturers with a particular interest in children and young people with PMLD, and a group of experienced teachers. The project was funded by a small grant from the National Council for Educational Technology (NCET) through the GEST programme. A first step was to put together our ideas of what we thought were essential elements of good practice that we could use as criteria against which to judge the usefulness of any particular method. Our aim was not to find one medium but to be able to select which method was more appropriate in any given situation. Our first criterion was that the results of our assessment could be shared with the pupils themselves in order that they could gain a sense of achievement. This suggested that the media needed to result in something which was meaningful to the pupil. One of the implications of this is that pupils could gain a sense that this was "them". Clearly, in this there will be individual differences in the ways in which pupils are able to access information in a given sensory mode.

We felt that it was important that the selected medium provide an objective account of a pupil's achievements - one that could be readily shared with other professionals and which would provide them with an accurate "picture" of the pupils' abilities. One of the difficulties of written text is the limitations of giving the true essensce of a pupil's responses and it is not unusual for teachers to feel that they have been provided with inaccurate information about a pupil's abilities when it is confined to a written format. This leads to a further requirement - that it should provide a snapshot of achievement, a good representation of the pupil's abilities. This then led us to think very positively about the respective strengths of audio material to convey sound patterns and turn taking, and visual approaches to provide feedback on the nature of movements - their fluidity, precision etc. One of the advantages of video was the facility with which it provided information on concurrent responses. The "snapshot", therefore, could provide multiple pieces of information - where the child's attention was directed when they interacted - the presence of shared attention. Likewise, not only could we make a record of a pupil's developing ability to move around the environment, for example, but also their ability to anticipate and negotiate obstacles.

It was felt important to add some very pragmatic aspects to these criteria. Given the fact that we were not film directors or professional photographers, the ease with which this information could be both collected and edited was important. Clearly there are difficulties with collating miles of video film; it can be time consuming to edit and unless documented with precision it can be difficult to review. Ease of access was seen as important as an essential part of the assessment process, as was being able to compare past and present abilities. At this point we began to recognise one of the strengths of using an ion camera. This provides a series of pictures - like the stills from a video, and therefore can provide a good picture of movements (they are often used to improve sporting practices). Like photographs, one can select the best examples and jettison the rest. Furthermore, they have the advantage that they can be accessed through the hypermedia software. This means that they can be viewed by the pupil quite

independently using a variety of modes of switches, and printed out, with or without accompanying text. Whilst considering the advantages of the medium we reflected further on how we could improve our use of photographs - if an ordinary camera was all that we had. The ion camera made us realise the value of making a small sequence of snaps that conveyed both the beginning and the end of an action. This provides a good snapshot of the pupil's ability.

We reflected on the need to provide supporting information - to draw the viewer's attention to the significant aspects of the picture. Together with the picture there was seen to be a need for information on the following:

i)   the type and form of support needed by the pupil to indicate their attainments;
ii)   the pupil's previous experience of a particular learning context;
iii)   the frequency and typicality of the pupil's response;
iv)   the pupil's learning style and strategies;
v)   optimum teaching approaches;
vi)   a possible range of responses shown at the same time, e.g. pairing of vocalisation, eye-gaze and finger movements;
vii)   relevant personal information about the pupil, for example their interests and motivation.

Clearly, the amount of supporting information is dependent on how much information is presented in the picture. Technology is best used where it conveys this information readily. Through using these criteria we can evaluate and refine the ways in which we use technology to enable us to keep a record of the often subtle and fleeting responses that pupils make. Then we can share this evidence with others.

Finally, the usefulness of all media is dependent on the willingness to sort and select so that only important information is kept. One has to be ruthless with snapshots of day trips and the like; their function is usually not as a record of achievement but as a teaching tool and one should be careful to make this distinction.

The following case studies, provided by members of our working party, provide "real-life" examples of some ways of using technology to record the small steps of progress made by pupils with PMLD.

Jill Porter and Dawn Male, London University Institute of Education

Case Study 1: Andrew by Rosemary Allen, St. Giles School, Croydon

Andrew is 12 years old. He has cerebral palsy, spastic quadriplegia, epilepsy, asthma and food allergies. He is of short stature and has no speech and is dependent on others for his needs. He communicates by eye-pointing and vocalising and turns his head to right and left for "yes" and "no" respectively. If he is particularly interested in something or gets excited he will almost rise out of his seat, go red in the face and vocalise vociferously; if he is not interested in something he will turn his head away or drop his head to one side - a strategy which he uses to great effect! He can access computer programs, page-turner, pointer board and radio cassette by using a single switch. Over the past few years he has used a QED lever switch, a Wolfson touch sensitive switch and more recently a Jelly Bean switch.

Andrew likes to be the centre of attention and to be entertained. He has his own welfare assistant, Sue, with whom he has an excellent relationship and misses her if she is not there.

I had taught Andrew for two years when he was aged 7-9 years and once again between the ages 11-12 years. As regards National Curriculum assessment, Andrew would always be working towards Level 1, yet this gave no indication as to his abilities, strengths needs, interests or what motivated or demotivated him. Andrew has a very strong personality but it was difficult to build up a positive picture with helpful guidelines for those who were unfamiliar with him. Information in his Record of Achievement file tended to be teacher comments, photos with captions and video evidence of Andrew participating in various activities.

The assessment package I used aimed to give a brief and easily accessible visual summary of Andrew's interests, motivation and progression with regard to switch use and access over a period of time, i.e. five years. A range of technology was used and alternative forms of recording suggested.

I gathered together samples of "work"/"evidence" from Andrew's Record of Achievement file:

1990-91   Andrew had enjoyed making pictures on the computer using first a QED lever switch and then a Wolfson touch sensitive switch, by pressing and releasing (aided). The program used was the Alan Nixon single switch program *Build* where Sid appears on the screen and jumps up and down. This is essentially a simple cause and effect program where a whole picture appears and moves by pressing a switch. Andrew particularly liked this, especially the <u>movement</u> effect and the fact that he could control it. A colour print-out of the screen picture had been taken using the *Screenthief* program facility and it was this that was annotated and placed in Andrew's file.

1993   Andrew's next teacher had made a list of 'Things that make me smile" showing once again that the visual kinaesthetic effects were high motivators, e.g. the light on the microwave/fridge; being spun in his wheelchair; watching the word-processor print; wheelchair dancing and relaxation; feeding the goldfish; the photocopier machine in action; when someone helps him sign "Good Morning"; when he is near his friends Harry or Louise.

1994-95   Andrew's health had improved considerably this year and he was initiating and communicating his needs far more forcefully and positively. He was taking a more active interest in class activities especially role play and turn-taking activities, e.g. going to the shop to buy a newspaper/sorting coins.

            How was I to record this other than by annotating photos or giving examples? Although I had used videos in the past I wanted something concise and accessible for the teacher and which Andrew could participate in as well. As we had a well-resourced technology department I joined forces with my colleague, Peter Howat, and explained what I wanted to do and we came up with the following assessment package:

            Step 1:   "Take a colour photograph/colour print-our OR take a still video photo with a Canon Ion camera.

            Step 2:   Put photo through scanner attached to Apple Mac OR use video capture capability on Apple Mac..

            Step 3:   Save as Mac Picts.

            Step 4:   Insert disc with saved picture into *Hyperstudio* program with Add Clip Art Option.

Step 5:   Copy these picture/screens/cards onto program, add text and buttons, i.e. page turner facility.

Step 6:   Save sequence of "pages"/cards on disc with copy of Hyperstudio player.

What I did was to take several photos of Andrew at various activities using switches. Some photos were taken with a standard camera, some with a Canon Ion still video camera, which takes "still shots". Both types of photos can then be scanned through the computer using the "video capture capability" on the Mac and saved as Mac Picts. These are then inserted into the *Hyperstudio* package with Add Clip Art option. They are copied onto the program as pages/cards, text is added and 'buttons' as page turner. This is all saved on disc with a copy of *Hyperstudio* player so that it can be accessed like a book, using the mouse.

Andrew had recently been presented with one of the new 'Jelly Bean' switches and at first did not show much interest. As one of his favourite activities is to listen to story tapes, we set up the switches to control the cassette player. Andrew soon became interested in this activity and was using the switches and giving responses as to choice of activity when the switches were set up with symbols on the pointer board.

The main drawbacks encountered with trying out this assessment package were that it needed familiarity with the I.T. *Hyperstudio* package and time, and I am indebted to the seemingly effortless contribution made by Peter. I have through persistence and practice overcome my initial trepidation at what seemed such a mammoth task, but I am confident that this is one way forward which through INSET and practice will soon become second nature and provide an alternative form of recording which will enable adult and child to work together.

Case Study 2:   Erica by Lynis Williams, St. Ann's School, Morden

Erica is a pupil at Key Stage 3 with PMLD, including epilepsy and visual cortical impairment. She is integrated into a class of similar aged pupils in a school for children with Severe and Complex Learning Difficulties. She enjoys being with people she knows, who she recognises by their voice, perfume or touch. Erica can locate objects with her head (e.g. hanging mobiles) and can use her right hand to hold a cup and feed herself with minimal prompting.

Although Erica is a wheel chair user she can maintain a balance on a horse and is making progress n weight bearing whilst standing when transferring from one chair to another. She is beginning to use a specially designed hand-operated switch.

Best use is made of Erica's good days as her drugs often make her drowsy. I have taught Erica for two and a half years now, so know her well.

Erica has made progress vocalising in a 1:1 conversational situation over the years at school. She will turn-take and I am seeing early signs of an emerging change in her vocalising and inflection. I used a tape recorder to record this stage of achievement.

The audio tape record was chosen as it was readily accessible to other colleagues (e.g. music therapist) and her parents, who are able to see evidence of their other children's progress, but not easily of Erica's. More important is that this method of recording is accessible to Erica. She is able to listen to the tape and feel the recorder on her lap, whereas she has no concept of a video as she cannot see it. She is the centre of attention for the entire class when the tape is played, and her hands move towards the recorder on her lap to feel the vibrations. Although it was difficult to find a quiet place at school to

record it, it was important to find a room where Erica felt comfortable as she is wary of any strange surroundings.

The tape recorder picks up the response time, inflection and to which elements of the conversation Erica decided to respond. This would have been extremely difficult to record as written evidence. A tape also gives objective evidence rather than the subjective interpretation which would have been inherent in written records in this case. The procedure is easy to repeat. This is important as it would be very easy to draw unsubstantiated conclusions from only one session.

Further work is already planned as a result of the tape evidence:
- encouraging her to initiate communication;
- research into whether a lack of response indicates a negative choice as she seemed to vocalise when a positive response to a question was appropriate;
- widening her experience of life as she seems to fall silent when a subject she does not understand is introduced;
- use of a switch to activate the tape;
- a recording of Erica commenting as she listens to the tape (evaluating her own work?)

The tape provides a permanent record of achievement. It is also instructive how each play-through reveals further factors for analysis and indicates other areas to explore by repeated tape recordings. These factors were not discernible during the actual recording process.

EATING CHIPS

Our research unit, which we call *Computer Applications to Special Education (C.A.S.E.)*, aims to support the effective usre of microcomputer technology with people (children and adults) who have moderate/severe learning difficulties. One of our most intriguing, and difficult projects has been the development of single-switch use to give people who have to be fed by others a measure of independence at mealtimes. I would like to give a description of this project in this article, and describe some of our research findings.

SINGLE SWITCHES
Readers will be familiar with the idea of using single switches to control computer programs. A switch is connected (usually through an inteface box so that different types of switches can be connected easily, as desired) to a microcomputer. A suitable computer program is loaded. Operating the switch then makes interesting things happen on screen, usually with sound-effects. The educational rationale for such single-switch use includes: encouraging gaze and tracking; encouraging motivation to make responses; enhancing appreciation of cause-and-effect; recreation.

One limitation of the avilable technology is that single-switchuse is mostly limited to making events happen on the computer screen. Some individuals do not appear to be especially interested in looking and listening - at least to things that happen on a two-dimensional surface some distance from them. In contrast, they might be much more interested if single-switch operation led to something to eat or drink, and indeed this might be a more personally meaningful computer application for them. After all, we mostly use computers because they do something that we want to have happen - to write with using word-processors, to play intersting games with, or do the home accounts, for example. Getting a computer to give you something to eat or drink is, however, not an easy task!

The field of applicaton of technology in which computers move things physically around in the environment is remote manipulation (or telemanipulation) and robotics. In 'telemanipulation' a human operator sitting some distance away controls mechanical arms, often helped by closed circuit TV. Typically this occurs in hazardous environments such as nuclear installations, space ships, deep undersea operations and so on. These applications are difficult for the operator, but give the maximum flexibility. In 'robotic' applications a degree of autonomy is given to the machinery by programming computers to carry out some of the control functions. This makes the human contnrol function much simpler, but at the same time the application is less flexible. Remote manipulation is best when no job is quite the same each time it is done; robotic control is best when procedures are repeated identically many times. Obviously, oneis talking here only about environments in which machinery is needed to do the job in question.

REHABILITATION ROBOTICS
Individuals who need help with eating fall broadly into two categories: people who, were it not for their physical disability, could feed themselves; and people with multiple disabilities. In the former category are people with high-level spinal cord lesions, with cerebral palsy principally affecting motor control; and people with degenerative neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis. In the latter are some children and adults with PMLD. For both groups of people, eating unasisted is difficult because it requires a degree of motor planning and control whcih is denied to them by their disability. They want to eat, of course, but lack the means to do it. This is an echo of precisely the problem that remote manipulation and robotic applications have been developed for: where someone need to move something, precisely and safely, but where it is physically impossible for them to do it themselves. Eating is a comparatively repetitive physical task, requiring the movement of materials in relatively stereotyped ways in a circumscribed environment. So, a robotic application is appropriate in engineering terms.

Some six years ago Mike Topping, a mature student at Keele studying computing and education, was on teaching practice at a local school for children with physical

disabilties. One lunch time he watched a young neighbour of his being fed by an assistant. She happened to be feeding two children at the same time and Mike thought that the result, whilst nutirtionally effective, was not very dignified for Peter, his toung neighbour. He wondered whether computers could provide the answer and contacted our C.A.S.E. unit to see if we could help. With our support Mike subsequently obtained a small robotic arm (it had been developed originally to teach basic robotics to school children) and set about making it into a feeding aid.

HANDY 1 - A ROBOTIC AID TO EATING

The story of Mike's development of the prototype of the "Handy 1" robotic aid to eating (which it was eventually called) could almost have come from Heath Robinson! A BBC microcomputer was used (these were common in schools and Peter had one already at home). A concept keyboard was initially chosen as the input device (a representation of a plate could be put on it, alloweing different areas of a plate to be selected to eat from). A disc drive stored the program. The robotic arm itself was mounted on a trolley, and a table high enough for Peter's wheelchair to go under was used to put the plate on. An old spoon was hammered flat, cut square and mounted on the end of the robot arm. Trials showed that the plate itself had to be flat-bottomed or the arm could not scoop up food. a Computer srogram was written that caused the robotic arm to pick up food from the plate (food like Shepherd's pie or chocolate mousse were the most suitable) after a touch on the concept keyboard, and to deliver it just in front of the user's mouth. Peter could then reach forward and take food from the spoon. He fed hmself for the first time in his life!

Experience in schools soon showed the need for a much smaller, self-contained device which was simpler to operate. A single-switch on a bendy gooseneck (for ease of positioning) and a simpler program menu system were developed. Users could choose which part of the plate to eat food from, but if this was too difficult initially, touching the single-switch would reliably bring food to the mouth since the computer could remember where it had already taken food from on the plate. This illustrated the potential of the 'robotics' concept: from a relatively simple input from the user (operating a single-switch), via microprocessor control, a physical device could perfom a complex series of oerations.

Several years of development of this device ensued, and Handy 1 is now available from a company (Rehabilitiation Robotics Ltd.) set up to make and distribute the world's first robotic aid to eating . It now includes a drinking option, allowing a cup to be picked up and brought to the mouth, and other options for self-care are being considered   The overall size of the unit has been reduced as far as is practical and the design modernised and streamlined. Of course, the original BBC microcomputer has been replaced: customised, pre-programmed microprocessor chips (eating chips?!) now do all the computer control.

HANDY 1 IN USE

It's tempting to think that a new piece of technology can easily answer some of the difficult problems we face in life. Of course, the facts may be different. The device may solve some problems and create others. It may be financially costly. It may require servicing. It may require the help of others to keep it going. It may also be so new that people don't see a need for it at first. Motor cars are a good example. They are costly, require servicing, need the production of other products (like petrol), weren't initially seen as necessary by most people, and create problems like accidents, hold-ups and polution. So too, with Handy 1. Not everyone wants to replace being fed by a helper with a machine. The device will not easily cope with some foods (crisps are impossible, for example). It is quite expensive to buy. A helper needs to be on hand to put food on the plate, plug it in and so on. It can break down. It needs storage space and so on.

But if the disadvantages of a technological aid can be accepted (and all aids have disadvantages - think of a wheelchiar, for example), Handy 1 offers advantages, as the follwing examples show:

"Laura" did very little at school. Multiply handicapped, she was fed at mealtimes and spent much of each day inactive. Intensive one-to-one switch training sessions with a single-switch and a range of apparently interesting computer programs failed to encourage her to use the computer. Incredibly, therefore, on her first session with a Handy 1, she operated the single switch and ate mousse from the spoon. Food, and perhaps the novelty of the equipment, apparently motivated her to respond.

"Louise" was multiply disabled with cerebral palsy. She did not feed herself, communicated by facial gestures but did not speak, and was a wheelchair user. Her introductin to a Handy 1 was carefully monitored (Hegarty and Pinnington, 1992) including video analysis of eating-related behaviours before and after the introduction of the aid. There were statistically significant differences between baseline and robotic-aid use periods in Louise's head posture whilst eating and lip-closure quality whilst eating. There was also an improvement in Louise's use of the single-switch as the sesssions of use progressed. It seemed that, not only could the aid be useful as an aid to eating, but that it could also have therapeutic benefits.

To answer this question more fully, researcher Lorraine Pinnington carried out a detailed trial of the introduction of Handy 1 aids to a group of 18 children at Chailey Heritage development centre in Sussex. Results (Pinnington and Hegarty 1994, Pinnington 1995) showed the advantages of the consistent presentation of food to children which the robotic aid could do.

NEXT STEPS
The 1980s saw a 'quantum leap' in the provision of technological help for children with PMLD with the introduction of microcomputers, single-switches, and appropriate software. There was little quite like this before. However, I feel that perhaps we have been over complacent and rested on our collective laurels, because relatively little development seems to have taken place since then. Many centres are still using the old software and methods, and little new has come along. In this article I have described how at Keele University we have tried to develop microprocessor assistance for people with movement disability by exploiting the telemanipulator/robotic areas of computer application.

The result, the Handy 1 robotic aid to eating and self-care, is the world's first commercially available rehabilitation robotics development, and there are demonstrable advantages for individual users. The challenge is to take this forward to reduce costs and increase acceptance, thus offering new scope for individuals with PMLD to have more independence and control of their world.

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How often have we worked with a pupils, with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) sensing that this person has a much greater capability than he or she is able to use effectively? I certainly have come across several pupils that I have felt sure understood a great deal of what was going on, but were not able to interact with it, or to show conclusively how much understanding they had. This must worry all of us. It must be the most horrendous experience. To have ideas and wants, but not to be able to tell anyone.

In a recent study I looked at ways in which we could use IT to bridge the gap between what understanding a pupil can demonstrate and what he or she is actually capable of. The root, of course, is communication. One of the difficulties of working with pupils with little or no formal communication, is that so much of it is open to adult interpretation. And how are we to be sure that we are interpreting signs correctly? Especially as we so desperately want our pupils to succeed and progress.

There has been some very helpful literature on the development of communication recently (Nind and Hewitt 1994, Goldbart 1994). It has highlighted important factors in the development of communication and conditions under which it may be facilitated. Goldbart (*ibid*) identifies three criteria might be used to describe effective communication: it is intentional, interactive, and the communicator can initiate as well as respond to the communication of others. There are a number of pre-requisites that the communicator needs in order to achieve this, which were identified by . Kiernan, Reid and Goldbart (1987). These include:

Contingency awareness - understanding cause and effect of actions, as a function of interaction

Cognition - the capability to have something to say and to understand the content of the communication. This will include an awareness of surroundings.

Social awareness - awareness of other people with whom interaction can occur

Communicative purpose - awareness of needs and wants to express and the belief that others will respond to the communication

Means - means of both receptive and expressive communication

Any of these can be problematic for a pupil with PMLD, but the value in identifying capability and difficulties with these pre-requisites is that it allows us to break the problem down into identifiable areas for which strategies can be developed.

One of the key factors that emerged in the study was the need for consistency. If a pupil is to understand contingency awareness then the reaction to an action must be consistent and reliable. It is no use us sometimes responding to a communicative attempt. This of course can be difficult for us as teachers. When we are busy meeting the needs of several pupil in the classroom it is difficult to give that constant reliable

attention to each one. Similarly if a pupil has limited means of communication, somehow we have to be able not only to recognise it, but to show that we have recognised it, and that we have made the correct interpretation. It highlights the need for overt and unambiguous means. Interpretation of small gestures or eye pointing can be dependent upon the adult, with each adult making different interpretations. It is for this reason that IT can provide a useful tool as part of the strategy for developing clear signals that are equally obvious to pupil and adult alike. By IT, I include any switch operated toy, speech device, or other visual or auditory stimulant. Using a switch, a pupil may be able to make a deliberate even if very small, action which can be seen or heard by everybody and gives the feedback to the pupil. If the switch use and the devices are reliable, there will be a much higher degree of consistency than in 'softer' interpretable responses.

One of the first requirements of using any IT device is to find a means by which the pupil can operate a switch. Not only is the choice of switch important, but also the positioning of the pupil and the switch is also crucial, if it is to be successful. A significant observation made of the pupils in the study showed that as soon as they were given a switch that they could use reliably each of them showed immediate noticeable gains in their achievement, and in the level of cognition that they could demonstrate.

Another important factor was motivation. It is obvious, and yet often overlooked, that the pupil is going to respond more enthusiastically to something that interests him or her. Finding motivating activities requires imagination. I found that the pupils themselves were the best indicators of what they liked. Creating activities that built on events that they enjoyed was much more fruitful. One blind pupil used a tape recorder to play music to herself. This developed clear cause and effect, gave pleasurable feedback, and showed that she could initiate activity for herself. Another pupil showed that she could understand the actions of Blob and other screen characters, but was more motivated to do so when she had an audience (human feedback) as well.

This highlights a third important observation. Pupils are much more motivated by social contingencies than by non-social ones (Schwiegert 1989). Speech output devices were the successful most tools tried. A BigMack or Echo4, which can reproduce recorded speech messages, were used by three of the five pupils in the study as a means of interacting in games, making a contribution in a story or showing that they could take turns in a game. A particularly popular game was a version of 'Simon Says' in which each pupil used a single speech message to give their command. The able-bodied adults responded with the physical actions, causing amusement to everyone. The game provided a framework for shared expectations. (Harris 1994). The IT provided the means. This game was not only showing that the pupils understood the cause and effect, but that they had something to say, and even more importantly, understood that someone would respond to their communication. It allowed them to demonstrating capability in all five of the pre-requisite areas of communication discussed above.

Sometimes we had to look very careful at a pupil's responses to see the reactions and to identify the signs of cognition embedded within it. One pupil, Ben, showed two

unexpected and stunning examples of cognition. Ben was blind with very limited physical movement. On the first occasion, he used a switch to operate a speech device with a recording of his teacher. Instead of the anticipated pleasure in re-creating her voice with a silly message, he became confused, looking very distinctly at the position of the teacher and then at the speech device, which was on the other side of him. This showed that not only did he recognise the voice, but that he realised that something was wrong - it was coming from the wrong place. In the second activity Ben would get a much valued kiss each time he activated the switch. (a social reward)., We suspected that even he knew that his teacher was not really switch operated!. On one occasion he activated the switch twice, and turned his head for the kiss, and kept it there until he had a second kiss. He repeated this several times. Was this a sense of number?

It is important, particularly when experimenting with new ideas, to take care to make sure that we are seeing what is really going on, not only to not miss small gestures and communicative attempts, but also not to overestimate. Over-estimating can be as damaging as missing something. That also produces inconsistency, and can cause confusion. It is also important to learn to observe closely and carefully. Observation is helped by recording 'evidence', giving confirmation of each small step of achievement. It is also helped by being shared. Where the observations were shared by two adults there was a greater confidence, both in believing what was seen, and in designing and modifying activities. This is not easy. It takes time and, above all, perseverance. But the rewards are worthwhile, and our pupils have a right to them.

For Carlie, the use of a speech device enabled her to show that she could be naughty, an essential part of learning social behaviour and developing self confidence. Access to switch operated tools enabled her to move from being a quiet, isolated child to become outgoing and sociable. She learned to participate in classroom activities, and started to make friends with her peers.

Most of the pupils studied showed a big increase in their ability to interact with other children. So often pupils with no-speech and severe physical disabilities are both physically and socially isolated from their peers. It is easy to resort to a kind of tokenism in forcing actions on such a pupil, rather allowing them to initiate, or to choose not to.

The rate at which these pupils made gains in their demonstrated capabilities suggests that they had the necessary cognitive understanding, but had lacked the means to communicate this. The IT provided the tool by which they could show understanding, which in turn helped the teachers to develop more challenging and appropriate activities.

It is not possible here to list all of the ways in which IT can be used. Learning Through Interaction (Bozic and Murcdoch 1996) and Extending Horizons (NCET 1995) provide many ideas from several practitioners in the field who also discuss frameworks for assessment and evaluation as well as discussing progression. What is certainly clear from my own study, and from the experiences of other teachers working with pupils with PMLD, is that technology can be a very valuable and

important tool, but to use it effectively we have to think much more widely than computers, or single cause and effect activities. Any activities have to be built into socially interactive situations, with peers as well as with adults.

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AN ETHOS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE PROFOUND AND MULTIPLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND FOR THOSE WHO WORK WITH THEM

The pupils we teach are completely defenceless and vulnerable. Whilst in school they are totally dependent on us for their every need. They are easily ignored and can be treated with disrespect without any fear of comeback. This being the case our responsibility is enormous. We must be constantly vigilant in affording our pupils the respect and education they deserve.

The following 'Bill of Rights" is written from a perceived point of view of the children we teach. This approach may be open to criticism but we hope that it will be taken in the spirit in which it is meant. We felt that it is a good way of presenting the issues and there is more impact in doing it this way. It serves to remind us that each person we teach has rights in the same way as we do and this is not just a list of soulless rules. This document has been evolving over many months and, in a sense, can never be complete. Any further thoughts on the document will always be welcomed. However, if our pupils could tell us how they are feeling, and what they want from us, perhaps the following is something of what they might say .....

BILL OF RIGHTS

NB The following 'rights' are not presented in any particular order.

I HAVE THE RIGHT .....

to be taught in an exciting, stimulating, enjoyable and caring environment;
to some fun;
to be given time to be listened to;
to be allowed my own time and space;
to have notice taken of my age but not to the exclusion of my other needs;
to your patience;
to your respect;
to say no;
to your respect for my parents/carers and to hear only positive comments regarding them;
to expect no jokes or disparaging comments at my expense;
to your complete attention whenever being worked with during the school day;
not to have my lessons interrupted unless there are exceptional circumstances;
to expect you to take every opportunity to help me understand the world;
to be viewed not as a pmld child but as a child who has profound learning difficulties - I am a person first and have learning difficulties second;
to be taught in a quiet, structured and calm atmosphere;
not to be spoken about with no reference to my being there;
to privacy and respect when my personal needs are being seen to;
to time to enjoy an activity and to learn from the situation without being rushed;
to a good quality of education - but I am not only here to "achieve my full potential";

to have my food presented in an appetising way, even though it may need mashing to enable me to eat it;

to be offered a drink at reasonable intervals throughtout the day as sometimes I get very thirsty;

to take my time when having a drink or a meal as thesea are just as important to me as the other things I do in school;

to be positioned in a variety of good ways during the school day;

to be given the opportunity to be occupied;

to have my personal preferences recognised;

to be given choices whenever possible;

not to be regarded as difficult or as a problem;

to expect your concentration to be of such a level that you will usually notice any initiatives I may make;

to expect your attention, and company, often during the day - not only when I achieve something or when I am being 'good';

to expect a certain level of routine and consistency of staff in order to give me an ordered world to relate to;

always to be told what is about to happen to me and why - don't suddenly yank me into a wheelchair or suddenly stick a spoon in my mouth;

to expect you not to get exasperated with me even if I am having a bad day - I will not always be able to take advantage of the learning situations you present me with because of the way I am feeling;

to care and thought being take over the music being played in the classroom. Please avoid constant background music, I like it occasionally but often I like to listen to ordinary everyday sounds;

to feel safe and secure in my classroom;

to work and play alongside people of a similar age no matter their or my learning difficulties;

to be encouraged to show others the same consideration that I would expect for myself.

This *Bill of Rights* forms part of a document has been prepared by representativees from each of the Leeds Authority schools, which have pupils with profound and multiple learning diffiuclties (West Oaks, Green Meadows, Broomfield, Milestone, Penny Field) and a teacher from the Leeds VI service. The group has met half-termly, in time funded by TVEI but, out of necessity, much of the work has been carried out in between these meetings. There has been a consultation exercise which has given some parents, school staff, nurses, doctors, psychologists, child protection staff, Section 11 staff, speech therapists, a social worker and interested voluntary agencies etc. the opportunity to give their opinion. Those who responded, responded positively and some have made helpful suggestions which we hope they will recognise in the completed document. However the responsibility for its contents remains with the original group. This document is not sacred nor can it ever be perfect or complete for after all we are attempting to speak on behalf of a grou of people who are not able fully to tell us what they want. We would welcome any comments as to how to improve the document. If you have any comments please contact Malcolm Henshall at Penny Field School, Tongue Lane, Leeds LS6 4QD (Tel: 0113 278577)

CONFERENCE REPORTS:

More Notes from
Issues of Communication
held at Manchester Metropolitan University
on 7th February 1996.

The following notes complete the report of the conference.

Communication and Behaviour
Mark Gray - RNIB

The structure of the talk was introduced by two phrases which outlined the two themes. The first one was "Communication is the exchange of information by any means possible" from Helen Bradley's 1992 package , "Assessing Communication Together". The other is Mark Gray's own "Behaviour is anything you perform that can be observed by another person and all behaviours communicated. However observers of behaviour do not always interpret behaviour the same way".

The two core themes were central to understanding how people with profound and multiple disabilities communicate.

People with profound disabilities interpret much of their surroundings using the 5 senses. If one of these senses is lacking then the others work even harder to compensate. It is therefore necessary to maintain a consistent means of communicating. If for example a visually impaired, deaf person were only able to recognise a carer at the day centre by his/her smell it would then be essential for that person to maintain a consistent smell by using the same aftershave/perfume when they were working with that particular person as a means of communicating to that person who they are.

A communication programme depends on:

1. Environment
2. Disabilities/abilities of the person
3. Social/Emotional experiences experienced
4. Any established communication

Mark illustrated the various ways in which we communicate by any means possible. He explained that the more formal means of communication predominate most of our exchanges with all people but for those who have severe sight loss, hearing loss, poor physical ability their main means of communication may be one or more of the following.

- formal signs
- gestures and informal signs
- facial expressions
- eye contact

- pictures and symbols
- tone of voice
- posture and bearing
- proximity and movement
- touch and feel
- heard and spoken words
- written and read words

Mark described the basic differences between a person with a disability and those without using a series of zones.

Those in zone 5 - having near perfect bodies and a wide range of communications

Those in zone 4 - need slight assistance, eg. glasses, hearing aids, communication boards or sign language such as BSL or Deafblind manual.

Those in zone 3 - are people who have severe to moderate learning difficulties and need additional help in communicating eg. makaton vocabulary and symbols.

Those is zones 2/1 - are the areas in which touch, posture, tone of voice and smell were prominent as a means of communication.

He went on to explain that to use an object of reference if you were profoundly disabled could be difficult if you had limited motor skills and if your interpretation of that object was unclear. For this illustration Mark used a real life case study. He spoke about 'Lydia' who is deaf, blind and physically disabled. The staff who worked with her wanted to teach her 'drink' using an approximated hand-sign to mean drink, but she has never seen, heard or touched a cup. Her awareness of the routine was someone touching her hand and moving it up. It meant nothing to her personally, but if a straw was placed at her lips she would automatically associate the straw with drink and suck. This was an example of zone 1 communication using the persons experiences of the world. It was decided that this communication had to be 2-way and a form of communication that would be accessible. As Lydia had little movement of her limbs it was decided that a straw would be attached to the tray in front of her and her elbow placed on the straw to indicate 'drink'. This was done everytime a drink was given. Eventually Lydia was able to 'ask for a drink' on her own given the method taught - she was empowered to ask of her own free will. The next step in the communication programme was to incorporate the element of choice. The choice of hot or cold drink was needed. A simple choice was given to Lydia

bendy straw = hot drink
straight straw = cold drink

This was again re-enforced over a period of time. As a consequence of Lydia requesting drinks whenever she wanted, the frequency of her needing to go to the toilet was increased. The second of her communications was prioritised as indicating a need for the toilet. The symbol for this was first the knob/handle to the toilet door attached to her tray. When eventually this was 'taught' the cumbersome handle was

simplified to a magnetic non-slip letter **T** to represent toilet. As these communications progressed it was decided that the environment surrounding the `drink` routine would have to be added eg. asking for a drink involved a series of steps - water, kettle, pour, cup. Therefore depending on the activity and the steps involved the particular activity may not be immediately available. eg. would a cold drink be acceptable as an alternative to a hot drink.

It is therefore correct to say that communication is a multisensory experience which starts as a basic but familiar routine.

Another area Mark touched upon was the use of sounds and body movement. Using examples from speakers of the day he explained how noises and physical body tone could be used as part of the interpretations of a persons communication. He related the experience of a parent and baby. The parent is able to determine the baby's hungry sound, happy sound, play with me sound and distressed sound by a combination of body posture, how the baby feels, facial expression and noise. To an outsider the baby is always making noises, to the parent there is a `real` communication. If the relationships we have with people who have multiple disabilities are considered very often a report is written which says "Claire makes noises" rather than saying "she communicates by a series of noises". One way which the noises and movement can be recorded is the affective communication assessment. A simplified version of this assessment is used by Mark which he explained briefly. The first column could relate to an activity or a piece of equipment the child/adult is engaged in, the other columns being self-explanatory. Used in conjunction with video or with the paper and a cassette recorder and tape with the chart he outlined the latter as a `Whiskas assessment`, eight out of ten carers doing the assessment felt that when Johnny is in this position making this noise (noise 1, side 1 on tape) with the following facial expressions and muscle tone, he might be expressing agitation, happiness etc.

The final point Mark made was if you wanted to make people's lives more meaningful forget the formal programme, aim for the following structure from the clients point of view. The following *Bill of Rights* is important in that it increases opportunities open to the individual.

- **I have a right to know who you are**
  Say hello at the start of each interaction using an object, symbol sign or smell or combinations
- **I have a right to know where I am**
  Introduce the room sign, symbol, smell, object or combinations on entering
- **I have the right to know what we are doing**
  Introduce the activity, national curriculum or otherwise. Name, sign symbol, object, smell or combinations
- **I have the right to make a choice**
  Give alternative sign, symbols, smells and objects available to you at the time

Nick started off by explaining the 'spin off' in communication between the child/adult, the teacher and the computer based technology in a learning environment i. e. the communication or social interaction that comes from showing how the different functions of the particular piece of software, and periphera; these would include switches touch screens, tracker balls etc. and will enhance the level of communication for the multiple disabled child before they start using the technology..

He then went of to talk about Enhancing Communication through the use of Technology and how it can proide many learning opportunities to the user.

Enhancing Communication through the use of Technology

Why is Technology (including I.T.) relevant?
- Technology is enabling
- Technology is infinitely expandable and adaptable
- Technology is attractive and sociable

What is technology in this respect?
- Bringing together two or more elements to produce a third completely unrelated effect.
- Technology used should be dictated by the users requirements.

Simplest access to technology is the SWITCH
- Infinitely connectable
- Can be found in vast array of shapes and sizes and arrays.

- Low Technology Switches

Bent pins to micro switches
    All have one purpose to join to bits of metal together to make a circuit.

- High Technology Switches

Use other technologies to bring the bits of metal together or bring lots of bits of metal together in complicated ways.
Beam switches, Keyboards, Touch Screens, Microchips.

So if Switches can be a means of communication and expression what other elements do we need?
- Motivation to communicate we assume that this is an innate characteristic which is why syndromes like autism are so baffling. Technology can be the motivation.
- A means through which to communicate this can be anything from a drumming bear to a computer.

Why are computers (microchip controlled devises) useful for developing Communication skills?
- They are desirable and motivating
- They are a source of social interaction.
- They are infinitely variable dependant on the software.
- They are patient and not distracted.
- They are getting increasingly portable
- They are getting increasingly interconnectable.

Where do you start in using computers for communication.
- Demonstrate some capacity for using a switch in some configuration suitable for the user.
- Determine what activities (what software is available) are suitable and what types of computer they run on BEFORE purchasing the computer.
- The most expensive option is not necessarily the best option.

Success is ultimately determined by the interaction between the hardware the software and the user.

Hardware software the Acid test!

Types of hardware available
- BBC computers secondhand

New computers 3 catagories
- Acorn / PC / Mac

Periphrals
- Switches/ Touchscreens / Tracker Balls

Types of software available
- Cause and effect

Designed to show the user that they are in charge of what happening on the screen.
Useful tests of users ability, cognitive level and sensory functioning.
Can a good basis for communication with individuals and groups

- Simple Games software

Encourages user to interact with the computer
Teaches skills like waiting and anticipation.
Good for developing hand-eye co-ordination ordination useful for other forms of communication

- Task orientated software

Designed to develop particular skills to be used in future situations.

- Educational Software

Designed to help cope with situations in the wider world.

- Specialist Communication Software

Often built into particular products that are essentially specialised communication computers e.g. Liberator and Mardis.

The future

- Computers and particularly monitors will get smaller.
- Better connectivity between computers
- Computers will become more firmly established as toys.

Providing the requirements of people with disabilities are taken into account at the start of the design process of both hard and software, computers offer better opportunities for personal and social development than we could previously of thought possible.

A final Comment is to bend the technology to fit the people Not bend the people to fit the technology. Switches are the gateway to technology. They are a great source of social interaction, they put people in the centre of things and attract the user to develop new skills.

People describe their own lives in different ways for different reasons. Supporting people with learning disabilities to describe their lives can be done either to achieve a specific purpose or for them to record their own life and what is important to them. For example, collecting information about your life for specific purposes includes:

- Describing your life and focusing on your achievements in a CV or application for a job or course;

- Presenting your achievements and experience in a portfolio of work to be assessed for a certificate or other award.

Collecting information about your life because you want to have a record of it may include:

- A memento box of objects that reflect important events, people or times in your life;

- A photo album that documents your life from birth to present day;

- A scrap book of special times such as holidays;

- Video showing ordinary and special times in your life;

- Audio tapes of children learning to talk or other events;

- A notice board or large clip frame with photos of important people or special times.

For people with learning disabilities we are calling describing the person's life for a particular purpose a 'profile', and using the term 'personal portfolio' to represent when the person wants to remember and describe their life experiences for themselves. Profiles can be made for different reasons but most often to contribute to their planning meeting.

Other reasons may include:

- Assertivenes training course - thinking about different times in people's lives and how they reacted to them;

- Helping people evaluating the service they receive, for example comparing how often people go out now in contrast to a year ago;

- Presenting examples of work or experience for accreditation;

- CVs and other information used to apply for jobs and courses.

People are supported to make portfolios just for themselves. They may want to share this with other people to help them to understand who they are, what is important to them and what they have experienced and achieved, but this is a by-product and not the main reason for making a portfolio.

There are some similarities in the ways that staff would help people to describe their life either for a portfolio or a profile, but the underlying purpose and structure of it is very different.

For people with profound and multiple learning disabilities developing profiles and personal portfolios are just as important and creates different challenges, usually around finding best ways to help the person stay central to the process, involving them meaningfully as much as possible, and searching for ways of presenting information that the person may understand. It obviously relies much more on the parent, advocate or staff member thinking though what could be included and the most appropriate ways for infomation to be presented based on their understanding of the person.

	Profiles	*Personal Portfolios*
Why would it be made?	A profile has a clear aim to describe an individual's life under a range of specific headings for a praticular purpose. These purposes are usually planning meetings This might be a planning meeting for all aspects of the person's life of just for one particular part of it, for example a job notion meeting to look at what sort of job the person would like. Other reasons include: To describe the person's life to help in research or evaluation purposes. To help the person gain afccreditation for their experiences and achievements For members of self advocacy groups to learn about each others experiences.	To help the person record their life in a way that makes sense to them. Sometimes two people undertake making a personal portfolio as a way of getting to know each other better. This involves sharing each others life stories even though only one person may produce a detailed personal portfolio.
When would it be made?	Either before the planning meeting or as part of the planning process.	Whenever the person/their advocate wanted to start.

Who has one?	In services everyone who has a planning meeting whill have some form of profile. The first meetings of a circle of support usually involve talking about and recording areas of the focus person's life.	Some people in a service who have expressed an interest in having a personal portfolio or their advocate has done this on their behalf.
What would it look like?	Either written or using words and pictures. Similar formats tend to be used ranging from 'strengths and needs lists' to detailed diagrams of different areas of the person's life, for example a relationship map, a community presence map, a choices list, and dream diagram. As far as possible they are recorded in a way that the person understands.	The emphasis is placed on the finished product. People choose the medium that is most meaningful for them. This may include video, photos, pictures, audiotapes or collections of objects. It will be done in the way the person chooses and in a way they understand. Where people have more significant disabilities it will be done in the form of communication media that the person uses most. Nothing would be recorded in a way the person did not understand. There are no limits or pre-conditions on what could be recorded. The emphasis is placed both on the experience of making the personal portfolio and the finished product.
Who would see it?	The people involved in the planning meeting and whoever else the person chooses to show it to.	Only the people that the person chooses to show it to.

How would it be used?	For the person to represent themselves or be represented at their planning meeting and as a record of the person's life at that point in time. In a circle of support to help understand the person better in order to make the changes in their life that they want.	Some people often loook at their personal portfolios for pleasure and to reflect on their past. Other people enjoy the process of making it but once it has been completed are content to 'know it is there' rather than to regularly look at it. People can use them to decorate their homes with clip frames of significant people and events. Some people use them as to help other people understand them better and get to know them more, for example, showing new staff or friends. They can be used as a way of celebrating achievements. It might be used for planning meetings or other forms of self representation but this is a by-product rather than its purpose.
How long would it take to make?	This varies depending on the person. If the person is working on it on a weekly basis then it may take a couple of months before the meeting. In some styles of planning people get together with the person for a meeting and complete the profile together then (Personal Futures Planning) In other styles of planning someone interviews the person and other key people and completes the profile on their behalf (Essential Lifestyle Planning).	This varies depending on the person. For some people their personal portfolio is an ongoing process which they add to all the time. For other people it is specific task which takes about 6 months to complete. Generally personal portfolios take much longer to complete than profiles and are done over a period of time rather than in one or two sessions.

Whilst it is helpful to look at these distinctions, in real life they are often blurred, merging and combining in many different ways.

NOTES from the NCET CONFERENCE:
IT, Disbility and Lifelong Learning

In February the NCET staged a national conference on IT and support for learners in London. Information Technology is of increasing importance in the education of pupils and students with special needs. This conference, aimed at the non-specialist, comprised a series of presentations that raised some of the most significant issues, showed what was now possible and gave some glimpses of where the technology was going. Inevitably, in giving such an overview not a great deal was aimed specifically at the needs of pupils with PMLD. However, the principles from most of the presentations could be applied in other situations.

Margaret Bell, NCET gave a short introduction to the conference and raised a number of issues which recurred in the presentations throughout the day. She described the need for IT support in special education in three main areas:

> for the learners themselves (access to learning and to the content of learning)
> for the people who work with learners with disabilities, and
> for information dissemination and networking

The keynote address was given by the *Minister of State for Education, Lord Healey,* who mentioned the many projects supporting the extension of the use of IT for pupils with special education needs. However, he highlighted the importance of asking "How can this help disabled people?". Although an obvious question, it is one that is all too easy to forget when we get carried away with the wonders of the new developments in IT.

He also pointed out that provision for pupils with learning difficulties has not improved in the same way as for people with physical disabilities and visual impairments. He suggested that, in the course of assessment, recommendations for appropriate IT (including training for staff and parents to use it) should be included. However, the issue of funding either the provision of equipment or training was not addressed, and would undoubtedly be a serious consideration.

Although initially, *Sally McKeowan's* presentation on literacy and lifelong learning did not appear to have much relevance to people with PMLD, there were a number of points which could be applied in planning the use of technology for people with PMLD. For example, she pointed out that the use of a back-lit screen, different fonts and colours could make an enormous difference to a person's ability to use a program. This must surely also be the case when using programs which are not literacy based?

She described a number of programs with features which are of particular help to people with severe learning difficulties including Big Mac, Talking Pendown and Speech into Text, and spoke about talking word processors. This prompted me to ask myself - could some of these features be used with people with PMLD? I concluded that they probably could.

Why not precede the use of programs specifically devised for someone with PMLD with their name, or initial letter, on the screen to indicate that this is Sandra's session, or Anthony's program, for example.

Prue Fuller of the ACE Centre described new developments which were intended to translate the users mode of communication into speech, and suggested that the recognition of gestures was under way. No doubt there is a long way to go along this line, but how exciting if some of the subtle signals use by some people with PMLD could be translated into speech.

Perhaps the most obviously relevant presentation was that of *David Stewart* of the Shepherd School and *David Brown* of Nottingham University describing a project to evaluate the use of virtual reality with pupils with severe learning difficulties. David Stewart reiterated the need for training, and pointed out that not only do staff need training in the use of IT (an issue identified by Margaret Bell in her introduction to the conference) but they also need training in working with people with learning difficulties. He told us that 48% of teachers now have no specialist professional training in the field.

David Brown demonstrated how interactive displays can allow students to explore environments both in safety, and repetitively to develop understanding. Real life situations were simulated to teach life skills, encourage self directed activity and help students to take control of their lives. We were shown simulations of City World, Home World and Supermarket which were used with a desktop monitor and operated by a joystick which allows the learner to decide where to go and what to do. Headsets were not used because of the health and safety issues which are still being researched.

One major question that they wanted to explore was "does virtual experience transfer to the real world?". The research showed that pupils trained in a simulated environment were more accurate in their actions in a similar real environment. The learned that their own actions control what happens, and this encourages self directed activity.

Another form of virtual reality is used at the Shepherd School to simulate experiences for pupils with PMLD which they would be very unlikey to experience in real life because of their disabilities and extreme fragility. We were shown briefly two scenes: and outdoor ice and snow scene and a scene with swirling smoke. The usefulness of these was, to me, far less convincing than the simulations of life experiences made for more able pupils.

David Stewart concluded by raising a number of ethical issues:

> firstly, the fact that testing and evaluating materials involves using pupils themselves as testing material. The use of a control group may be denying some pupils the use of something beneficial in the name of science.

> secondly, the educational value of using special equipment must always be considered. What are the *children* getting from the experience?

thirdly, the facilities available during the school years may abruptly disappear as students enter adult seravices. There is little technology available for lifelong education for people with PMLD.

The morning presentations ended with a description of the use of multimedia technology at the Lumley Learning Centre with adult students. *Angela Lee* described keeping up with technology as a "dizzying experience" and I for one, agree wholeheartedly.

Although she and her colleague, *Steve Lovan*, were describing the use of technology for students with a wide range of disabilities but *not* PMLD, it became clear, particularly when the multimedia authoring project was described, that there were possibilities of using this technology for the benefit of people with PMLD as well. It combined familiar images (photographs), video material, text, and sound which clearly offered potential for development of customised multimedia packages for people with PMLD. The most obvious use is to put together Records of Achievement, but I feel sure that it would be possible to create imaginative learning packages for people with PMLD as well.

During the break for lunch a wide range of displays provided information about equipment, software and other products as well as organisations and projects concerned with IT and special needs.

In the first session of the afternoon *Mick Thomas* gave a fascinating overview of multimedia, focusing in particular on ways in which students can create their own multi-sensory communications. Although students with PMLD are unlikely to be able to create their own, by using their own or familiar sounds, mixed with relevant still or moving images taken from video cameras relevant experiences could be created for them. The joy of his presentation was the way in which he demystified multimedia, showing us that this was something that any teacher and most pupils can create for themselves.

Klaus Wedell reported a significant project that NCET is running to provide access to information and to peer support for teachers of pupils with special needs. Using E-mail, teachers in the project have been sharing ideas about strategies and resources in all areas of special needs. Membership is now open to any Special Needs Teacher who has access to E-mail. The Internet, which is really a collection of computer information bases, has a wealth of material on special needs and disability. Most of the material is provided by practitioners and experts in the field and is fairly free of commercial pressure. Teachers are beginning to find really useful material there.

It is not often that we have the opportunity to get a clear overview of important issues. This conference was a good opportunity for this, and should have been an inspiration for any teachers concerned with special needs, even if there was little material directly dedicated to his or her special interest.

Tina Detheridge   Carol Ouvry

David Jackson, student at Meldreth Manor School, talks about using the internet using Writing by Symbols software:

I like talking to friends in america and making jokes

about people who help me.

My Friends saw my work on the internet and

asked lots of questions.

CYBERSPACE PROVES A RICH ENVIRONMENT FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

On 20th June *Scope* (formerly The Spastics Society) unveiled its new World Wide Web site at **http://www.scope.org.uk.**

As well as the national web site the launch focused on home pages produced at Scope's Meldreth Manor School near Cambridge which caters for children with both physical disabilities and learning difficulties. Most pupils at the school use special communication aids and their internet work at present has to be physically facilitated by teaching staff, much of their output is communicated on screen by a series of pictorial symbols subtitled with text. The school uses internet applications as part of its work on communication. Several students have created personal pages showing poetry, artwork and photos and discussing their favourite pastimes.
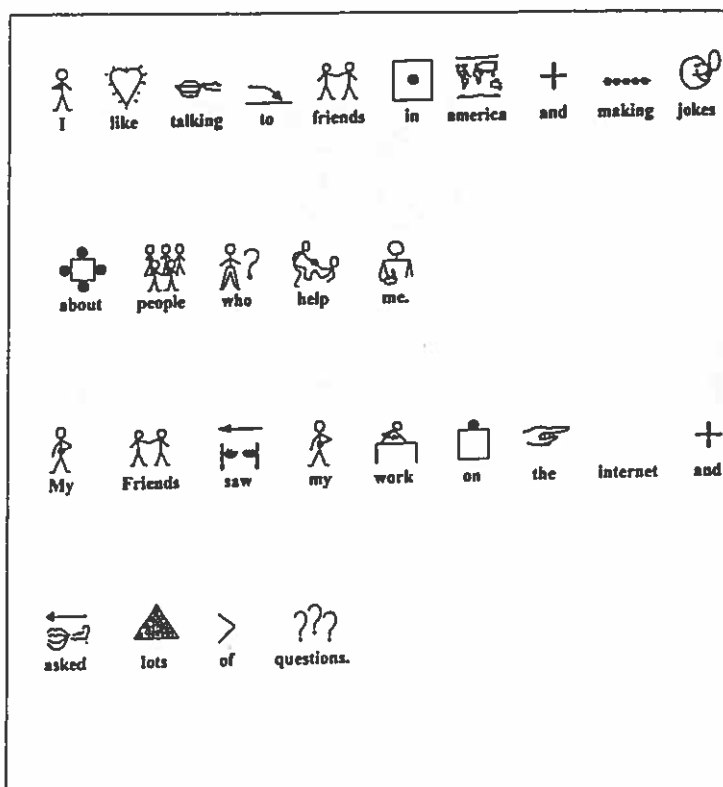
David Banes, head teacher at Meldreth Manor said:

"As well as creating their own pages to publish on the web students use the net just like everybody else, sending e-mail, joining in new groups and researching school projects or their favourite pop stars and soap operas. The only difference is that at the moment we need to provide pupils with a great deal of support to overcome the barriers preventing access to this medium. The launch of the Scope pages might help raise this issue internationally and encourage others to seek solutions to the problem."

Meldreth Manor Home Pages are at
> **http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/meldreth_manor_school**

This information is taken from the Press Release sent to PMLD-Link by
Christina McGill,
Press and Public Relations
12 Park Crescent, London W1N 4EQ   Telephone: 0171 636 5020

David Jackson, student at Meldreth Manor School, talks about using the internet using Writing by Symbols software:

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FUTURE FOCUS - PROVIDING ETHNICALLY SENSITIVE SERVICES

"Britain will become a multi-cultural society when the insights, mores and habits of the subordinate cultures are accorded equal value and become incorporated into the legal and social structure of British society" (Harris, 1991, cited in McDonald, 1994, p101). Recent research (eg Beresford, 1995) highlights the vulnerability of families from minority ethnic backgrounds who have a severely disabled child. With this in mind, the next edition of PMLD Link will focus upon the means by which service providers can work effectively and sensitively with people with PMLD who are from minority ethnic and cultural groups.

It is twenty years since the Race Relations Act, 1976, made all institutions providing services to the public responsible for ensuring these are non-discriminatory, both directly and indirectly. More recently, the Children Act, 1989, requires local authorities (local authorities note, not Social Service Departments alone) to take into account ethnicity and culture when providing for children in need (children with profound and multiple disability qualify as 'children in need'). Government guidance about the policy and practice associated with the NHS and CC Act, 1990, has also begun to recognise the particular needs of Britain's minority ethnic populations. While this can be seen as 'something of a breakthrough', (Walker & Amad, 1994, cited in Atkin & Rollings, 1996, p82) disquiet continues to be expressed about the extent to which services are provided which effectively and appropriately meet the needs of service users from minority ethnic groups.

Shah (1992) in her study of Asian children with learning disability drew attention to two specific forms of discrimination which she felt were particularly relevant to these children and their families. The first of these was the withholding of aid from people who need it and the second was the performance of trivial or tokenistic actions. Important in this context was the impact of workers' stereotypes which involved the assumption of vast generalisations about families' views and modes of behaviour. A well-recognised example of this is the under-provision of respite services to Asian families because of the notion that they will 'take care of their own' with the help of the extended family.

Services may be inappropriate or unacceptable because of providers' lack of familiarity with cultural norms. The importance of not establishing services which adopt a 'colour-blind' approach and which in reality provide for all users as though they are white is well recognised. Baxter et al (1990) have highlighted how the normalisation philosophy can involve the imposition of white norms on people who do not share them. In the same idiom, Shah (1992) has pointed to the danger that behavioural and educational programmes may be devised to teach Asian children skills which will not be useful in their home setting. (The example she gives is of the use of cutlery being taught to an Asian child whose family will prefer to eat with their fingers).

Three prominent themes emerge in the literature as useful means of addressing deficits - employment of staff from black and ethnic minorities, the use of interpreters and ethnic monitoring (Atkins & Rollings, 1992). However, while all these strategies are important they have not always been effective in bringing about change. For example, the employment of a multi-racial work force needs to take place in an organisational context where race is not seen as primarily a black responsibility. Moreover, black and minority ethnic staff need opportunities for development and training, if they are to achieve positions of seniority and influence (Azmi et al, 1996).

Research is beginning to indicate the broader context within which can be considered the experience of service users with PMLD who are from minority ethnic groups. The 1991 Census data which asked people to classify themselves ethnically for the first time gives us a clearer picture of Britain's ethnic composition. Just over 3 million people out of a population of 55 million, ie 5.5%, are from ethnic minorities. Forty five per cent of all people from minority ethnic groups live in London, including 6 out of 10 of Britain's West Indian population and 8 out of 10 of black Africans. However, the largest minority group in the country is the 840,000 people whose families came from India and who, the census figures indicate, are on average as well-off as their white counterparts and with better educated children.

Even the scanty statistics quoted above indicate that minority ethnic groups are not a single, undifferentiated mass, but people with differing customs, experience and aspirations. Racism is a very pervasive influence so that important commonalities exist. However, service providers also need to work with the individual nature of service users' experiences.

The complexity and ambiguity of this area is well recognised. Stuart (1992) queries the value of the often quoted notion of 'double discrimination' towards disabled people from minority ethnic groups and notes the heterogeneity of black disabled people's experiences and attitudes. It is important to recognise that there are differences not only between groups but also within groups, one significant factor being to which generation of immigrants a service user and their family belong. Husband (1996) highlights the sophistication needed to confront 'the rich complexity of the identities of service users' (p45).

How can service providers in the field of PMLD best approach this aspect of service provision? The next edition of PMLD Link aims to share information about practice which recognises the importance of the culture and ethnicity of service users. This includes white people from cultural minorities as well as black and Asian people. Addressing this issue is the responsibility of us all, whatever our ethnicity. Contributions about facilitating good practice, both in mainstream and specialist settings, are very welcome.

JUDITH CAVET
Staffordshire University

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Beresford B (1995) *Expert Opinions. A National Survey of Parents Caring for a Severely Disabled Child*, Policy Press, Bristol.

Husband C (1996) Defining and containing diversity: community; ethnicity & citizenship in WIV Ahmad & K Atkin *'Race & Community Care'*, OUP.

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Shah R (1992) *The Silent Minority. Children with Disabilities in Asian Families*, National Children's Bureau.

Stuart O (1992) Race & Disability: Just a Double Oppression? *Disability, Handicap & Society*, 7:2.

Drawings from *Double Discrimination* reproduced with kind permisson from the King's Fund Centre.

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Movement, gesture and sign: An interactive approach to sign communication for children who are visually impaired with additional disabilities

Lee, M. and MacWilliam, L.

Royal National Institute for the Blind, 1995, .54 pp, £7.50

ISBN 1 85878 068 3

This booklet is intended to be a practical guide for those who are working with and caring for children who are multi-disabled visually impaired (MDVI). It describes a system of communication which was developed by staff at the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh.

The book is set out into four chapters, and although the writers of each chapter are different, the style throughout is clear, informative and free of jargon. The main emphasis throughout the booklet is on the child with visual impairment, but it is relevant for all children and, indeed, adults with PMLD who need enhanced sensory information, whether or not they have any visual loss.

The first chapter, written by Iain Prain, sets out in a simple and yet graphic way, the importance of sight in the normal course of early development. He discusses the implications for MDVI children in all areas of learning, and he describes the complex nature of the disabilities of a MDVI child who also has learning disabilities.

The second chapter, by Mary Lee and Lindi MacWilliam, describes the communication programme and is the main substance of the book. It is divided into four sections.

Section 1 expands upon the theoretical background introduced in the first chapter. In it the writers explore the natural development of mother-child interaction and the early interactive skills and non-verbal exchanges. They go on to describe the implications of visual impairment at these early stages.

In Section 2 they introduce the communication programme which is based on three main principles: it is interactive, it is child centred, and it is designed for the particular needs of visually impaired children. A brief outline of the three stages of the programme is given, followed by a more detailed discussion of each stage.

The first stage of the programme, 'movement – interaction' is described, and practical guidelines for carrying out a session are given. Special considerations for MDVI children are discussed and these are particularly relevant to those who work with children with PMLD. A very clear summary of what the child is learning is a useful reminder of the main purpose of the programme.

The second stage of the programme, 'developing natural gesture', describes the process of expanding the use of gestures beyond the intimacy of the adult child relationship to include objects or activities. Again, many practical examples and suggestions are given for picking up on a child's own gestures, and developing them into signals linked with particular objects or activities.

The third stage of the programme is the introduction of a more structured sign system which builds upon the use of natural gesture which has already developed in the previous stage. Suggestions are made for helping to overcome particular visual difficulties, and guidelines for helping a child to start to learn the signs. The writers discuss the reasons for using an adapted sign system and the importance of using a system which gives the greatest advantage to each child. The unconventional and idiosyncratic nature of the system developed by many children will reflect their individual abilities, needs and interests. The need for additional sensory feedback means that most children will continue to need an adapted system, such as that described in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 3 Catriona Beckett and Anne Taylor give a brief but very clear explanation of the use of objects of reference. They show how objects acquire meaning to children in the course of normal development, and describe how objects of reference are used in their own work. They describe how this concrete system can be

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developed so that a child can combine it with a communication aid (such as Introtalker or Echo 4) or with the signing system.

In Chapter 4 Paula Graham and Helen Herbert describe the Canaan Barrie Signs which are "an interactive signing system for multiply impaired youngsters with visual impairment". They start by giving guidelines for introducing and using signing, encouraging a child to start signing, and developing the use of signs. Photographs are used to illustrate the points they are making.

For those people who work with children or adults with PMLD, the notion of an adapted signing system is probably not new. Many will already be using signs based on natural gesture, touch cues and also Makaton, adapted to the abilities, needs and interests of each individual child or young person. The Canaan Barrie signs show how a multisensory vocabulary can be developed. Like Makaton, the signs are based on the British Sign Language, but many of the adapted signs differ from those most commonly used in schools. Despite this, the principles underlying the system could be applied to any kind of communication system being devised for individual pupils or clients.

This booklet provides theoretical background, practical information and suggestions and a framework which could be used to formalise an adapted communication system. The clarity of style and of the explanations, together with the use of examples and case studies to illustrate the points, make it a most useful publication for reference purposes, even if the signing system itself is not adopted. References are given in each chapter which provide a further source of information.

The size, layout and clarity of the booklet makes it likely that it would actually be used. Although it is written for those who work with children, it is equally relevant for people who work with adults with PMLD. This would be a good addition to any library.

Carol Ouvry, July 1996

Another recent book also addresses the issue of communication:

Advocacy, Self–Advocacy and Special Needs

Garner, P. and Sandow, S.

Fulton, 1995. 186 pp. Paperback £12.99.

ISBN 1-85346-349-3

This collection brings together a number of contributions on the topic of advocacy and self–advocacy. The editors say that 'empowerment is an alarming, dangerous and thrilling enterprise. It is what education is for.' Their work seeks to further ideals of pupil empowerment and inclusion. Thus the first section, written by Philip Garner and Sarah Sandow, sets a context for advocacy and self–advocacy in legal and political terms. It explores the dilemmas (advocacy for all? at any age? can self–advocacy be taught?) and the benefits (for pupils and their schools) implicit in the development of advocacy.

Section two brings together a number of practical contributions – exploring partnership with parents and inter-disciplinary collaboration as well as classroom processes and curricular issues. Much of the work described here takes place in primary schools. While it is encouraging to know that pupils are being involved in primary school management, the task for many readers will be to implement the admirable principles expounded here for pupils who experience more profound forms of special need.

The book closes with a section on professional development. There is a plea here for institutions of higher education to do more to encourage teachers to provide 'empowered classrooms'. The most important factors are seen to be: the curriculum; classroom organisation and management issues; and the Code of Practice.

Important though it is, this book it will be likely to raise more questions than it answers for the readers of *PMLD Link*.

Richard Byers July 1996

BOOKS
Interactive Approaches to Teaching: A Framework for INSET by Mark Collis and Penny Lacey published by David Fulton. 1996.

Whose Choice: Contentious issues for those working with people with learning difficulties edited by Judith Coupe O'Kane and Juliet Goldbart published by David Fulton. June 1996.

Enabling Access: Effective Teaching and Learning for Pupils with Learning Difficulties edited by Barry Carpenter, Keith Bovair and Rob Ashdown published by David Fulton. Publication date October 1996.

Learning through Interaction: Technology and Children with Multiple Disabilities edited by Nick Bozic and Heather Murdoch published by David Fulton 1996.

Play it Mmy way published by RNIB 1995

Objects of reference - revised edition by Adam Ockelford published by RNIB 1994

Movement, gesture and sign : An interactive approach to sign communication for children who are visually impaired with additional disabilities by Lee, M. and MacWilliam, L. published by RNIB 1995

Movement, gesture and sign supplement: one hundred adapted signs published by RNIB 1996

Making sense of the world by Bradley, H. and Snow, B. published by Sense 1994

Organising a specialist play/leisure scheme for young people who have profound and multiple disabilities by Helen Mount published and distributed by Mencap PIMD section (0161 998 4161)

RESOURCES
Packs
All join in! by Adam Ockelford published by RNIB 1996

Equipment'
BeActive Box a versatile alternative to 'The Little Room' available from Suffolk Playworks , Red House Yard, Thornham Magna, Suffolk IP23 8HH Price (at time of printing) £120 plus VAT

Beach Shelter available from Innovations (01793 431441) and Home Free (01793 542685)

Video
Movement, gesture and sign: the video published by RNIB 1996

One of the Family a series of four videos produced by RNIB

COURSES AND CONFERENCES

SEPTEMBER

12th   Sherborne Foundation Basic Introductory Course
Level 1 Part 1
Run by: Sherborne Foundation
Led by: Bill Richards
Venue: Rolle Campus, University of Plymouth
Further details: Sherborne Foundation Centre
Tel: 0117-961-0010

16th   ***b i l d*** Annual Conference - Working in Partnership with Service Users
to   Major forum for collaboration between researchers, professionals,
19th   carers and people with learning disabilities
Venue: Swansea
Further details: Liz Howells, Conference Adminnistrator
BILD, Wolverhampton Road, Kidderminster, DY10 3PP
Tel: 01562-850251

25th   Leaving home
Opportunites to explore the issues involved in preparing and
supporting an individual leaving the family home.
Run by: Playtrac Training Consultants
Tutors: Noelle Blackman and Irma Mullins
Venue: Training Suite, Harperbury, Herts
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
Tel: 01923 854861 x 4385/6

OCTOBER

2nd   Play for People with Profound Learning Disabilties
Issues will include presentation, responses, stages in play and
initiating play activities and will include consideration of
object and non-object play.
Run by: Playtrac
Tutor: Charlotte Wilmer
Venue: Playtrac , Radlett, Herts
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
Tel: 01923 854861 x 4385/6

7th   Assessing Communication
How to assess and develop the communication skills of
people who are pre-verbal
Run by: Playtrac
Tutor: Charlotte Wilmer
Venue: Playtrac, Radlett, Herts
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
Tel: 01923 854861 x 4385/6

14th   Intensive Interaction
The focus will be on developing communication skills
through play.
Run by: Playtrac
Tutor: Andy Battell
Venue: Playtrac, Radlett, Herts
Furtrher details: Playtrac Training Consultants
Tel: 01923-854861 x 4385/6

15th	Relaxation
	Discussion of relevant issues and experiencing various exercises for using relaxation, simple massage and body awareness with people with learning disabilities.
	Run by: Playtrac
	Tutor: Andy Battell
	Venue: Playtrac, Radlett, Herts
	Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
	Tel: 01923-854861 x 4385/6

18th	Assessing Communication
	A repeat of the above course.

25th	Disabling Barriers - Enabling Environments
to	Residential weekend conference and workshops for professionals
27th	working with visually impaired children who have additional and complex needs.
	Run by: RNIB
	Venue: Woolley Hall, Wakefield
	Further details: Ken Bore, RNIB Education Centre North
	Tel: 0113 2748855

30th	Managing Difficult Behaviours
	Run by: BILD
	Venue: Ibis Hotel, Birmingham
	Further details: BILD
	Tel: 01562-850251

NOVEMBER

2nd	Sherborne Foundation Introductory Course
	Level 1 Part 1 To be held at two separate venues.
	Run by: Sherborne Foundation
	Led by: Elizabeth Marsden or Bill Richards
	Vemue: Aberdeen University, or Rolle College, Plymouth
	Further details: Elizabeth Marsden Tel: 01339 882720
	Bill Richards Tel: 01395 270603

16th	Play for Children with Profound Learning Disabilities
	Opportunity for parents to discuss play provision for their children. Issues discussed will include presentation, responses, stages in play and initiating play activities.
	Run by: Playtrac
	Tutor: Noelle Blackman
	Venue: Playtrac, Radlett, Herts
	Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
	Tel: 01923-854861 x 4385/6

25th	Aromatherapy
to	Benefits of using aroma therapy with people with
26th	learning disabilities. Theory and practice.
	Run by: Playtrac
	Tutor: R.D. Mugan
	Venue: Playtrac, Radlett, Herts
	Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
	Tel: 01923-854861 x 4385/6

JANUARY 1997

9th
to
10th

Aromatherapy
Repeat of course held on 25th/26th November
Run by: Playtrac
Tutor: R.D. Mugan
Venue: Playtrac, Radlett, Herts
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
                    Tel: 01923-854861 x 4385/6

20th

and
21st or
22nd

Stimulating the senses
The role of the senses, and how to enhance the service user's
        lives and develop communication abilities.
Participants will experience a sensory room on one of these days.
Run by: Playtrac
Tutor: Charlotte Wilmer
Venue: Playtrac
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
                    Tel: 01823-854861 x 4385/6

FEBRUARY

8th

Sherborne Foundation Introductory Course
Level 1 Part 1
Run by: Sherborne Foundation
Tutor: Zilla Harford
Venue: Sherborne Centre, Bristol
Further details: The Sherborne Centre
                    Tel: 0117-961-0010

11th

Learning Disability - examining the issues
Participants will examine their concepts of disability,
consider how service users are devalued, and discuss
how to change the situation
Run by: Playtrac
Tutor: Andy Battell
Vemue: Playtrac, Radlett, Herts
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
                    Tel: 01923-854861 x 4385/6

MARCH

3rd

Observation Skills
Practice and discuss various techniques of observing
and recording. How to store information, give feedback
to colleagues and use the information constructively.
Run by: Playtrac
Tutor: Ann Mathon
Venue: Playtrac, Radlett, Herts
Further details: Playtrac Training Consultants
                    Tel: 01923-854861 x 4385/6

APRIL

3rd
to
5th

Sherborne Foudation International Course
Level 2 Module 1
Run by: Sherborne Foundation
Venue: Heathermount School, Berkshire
Further details: The Sherborne Centre
                    Tel: 0117 961 0010

EXHIBITIONS

24th	Naidex International Exhibition
to	Venue: Wembley, London
26th	Further details: Reed Exhibition Companies
	Tel: 0181-910-7873

PLANET will be exhibiting and selling equipment at the following events:

September 24th-26th	Naidex International
September 27th-29th	1996 National and International Portage Conference and Exhibition
	Venue: Guildhall, Winchester
	Further details: Mrs. Chris Walker 0181-466-8822
October 11th-13th	Wales Pre-school Learning Alliance AGM and Exhibition
	Venue: Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells
	Further details: 01978-3588195
October 18th-20th	Nursery World Exhbition
	Venue: Olympia, London
	Further details: 0171-837-7224
November 15th-17th	Pre-School Learning Alliance AGM and Exhibition
	Venue: Scarborough Spa Compoex
	Further details: 0171 833 0991

TRAINING

In-house training

Catalyst Education Resources Ltd. provide a number of workshops in the workplace tailored to specific requirements of the organisation. These include: *Sex Education for Learners with PMLD, Prerequisited to Learning; 'Age appropriate'; ReligiousEducation and Worship; Challenging Behaviours; Meaningful Self Advocacy; Integration of Pupils within School; SEnsory Education: National Curriculum*

Further details from Flo Longhorn or Catherine Attridge, 35 Send Road, Send, Woking, Surrey GI23 7ET Telephone: 01483 223707

Long Courses

Diploma in Information Technology for Special Needs
C.A.S.E. Unit at Keele University
One year distance learning course in theory and use of IT for people with
  special needs, particularly children/adults with learning disability.

Applications to :	Postgraduate Admissions
	Academic Affairs Department
	Keele University
	Keele, ST5 5BG
	Tel: 01782 583386