

From the Editor

This issue of *Technology and Disability* is a landmark in the history of the journal. The journal is now 9 years “old”, and the founders are leaving the position of editorship-in-chief. The founders and Editors, Joe Lane and Bill Mann, decided more than a year ago to find another host for the *Journal of Technology and Disability* and contacted the AAATE for this: the Association for Advancement of Assistive Technology. Before I introduce myself as the new editor I would like to elaborate a bit on the past and the new situation.

The journal was founded in a situation where the field of Assistive Technology was starting to develop rapidly into a professional field, where many different disciplines contribute to research and development in Assistive Technology. Even the name at that time was not yet a common term. Assistive Technology indicating the technology needed for anybody who needs special support. These are persons with any disability or impairment due to trauma, birth or aging. In the concept of the word “Technology” is included the notion of support human beings.¹ Thus Assistive Technology is basically a Pleonasm, but it is a term which is clear to all of us. This illustrates the pragmatic approach of the editors and the field where this word is used to indicate something special. The definition of the scope of the journal attracts attention: it is well chosen and points at the necessity that technology is only of value in combination with human beings who keep control of what has to be done and which tasks have to be performed. The T and D journal does have a marked quality. This is due to the hard work of the past editors in chief. The reference listings prove this.

The AAATE thanks Joe Lane and William Mann for their work and their trust in handing over the journal, a journal with an excellent focus very much suitable for the AAATE.

The next step to be taken is that the journal has to be brought to a wider international acceptance: in practice this means that the list of editors will be enlarged with a number European names.

Other changes are presently under discussion:

1. Until now the journal has had a strong thematic approach. Each issue addresses a particular topic which does have some advantages, but also disadvantages. A “Free Paper” category might get some more space in the journal.
2. Other categories containing interesting information for the readers will be considered: major (product-) developments and opinion papers.

Anyone who would like to express a particular opinion on this matter is very welcome to write us.

Who is your new editor for *Technology and Disability*? Well, my name is Thijs Soede and I will not give you a formal Curriculum Vitae but there are some facts and notions that I would like to share with you.

My background is in mechanical engineering training and I have been specializing in Human Factors. My main drive is to study and stimulate innovation that leads to enhanced quality of life for persons with disabilities. The topics and types of technical aids I have been working with are various: from communication aids to mobility and prosthetics. It is my belief that research is of major importance for innovation in the Assistive Technology field. But it has to be research that is aimed at concrete and exploitable applications. This might be obtained very directly but sometimes needs some more time than taking a short-cut which might lead to a lesser continuity of the final product coming out of the R&D.

I am proud that I could contribute to this field by organizing the ECART conferences in the past and helping to found the AAATE in Lisbon at the third European Conference on The Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe in 1995. Acquiring this journal is for the AAATE a major step forward in being a respected and effective organization of AT-researchers and developers. We have an obligation to the founders of *Technology and Disability* to make it a success. This can only be achieved by good co-operation between authors, editors and publisher.

Finally, the contents of the present issue. It is an issue in the context of the previously mentioned change: free topics serving a wide audience.

A paper on evaluation of a so-called Traffic Chain offers a methodological approach and evaluation of Urban Public transportation means. The methodology

¹Kip Finch, J., *The Story of Engineering*, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1960.

asks for wider recognition because a forerunner of the research has been in housing and accessibility.

“Seeing” three-dimensional objects by blind persons has been for years a challenging question in research and development. It is a very serious challenge because nowadays new media and systems, are more and more enlarging the gap between the possibilities for blind and non-visually Disabled persons.

The third paper gives a very practical application of R&D for older persons with a hearing impairment: a better performing sound system for the TV.

After contributions for mobility, blindness and hearing a paper is included on mechanisms in enhancing the production and delivery of technology by creating private-public partnerships. It would be interesting to see if this model works in all countries; and (if it works) how well it is accepted by the key-players determining the markets.

The last two papers contribute to the basis of any science and research: studies in the field on usage of AT (i.e. telecom devices) and effects of particular impairments on device usage (i.e., Unilateral Neglect). These papers review practical problems which properly reviewed, can be the basis for further studies and development c.q.: innovations.

It is a very interesting issue which has been compiled by the past editors. Again we thank them very much for

their contributions and we hope that they will now have some more time to show and report their own research in Technology and Disability.

We thank Joseph Lane and William Mann, not just for this reason but for all that they both have done for the journal and for the field of Assistive Technology.

Thijs Soede, March 2000



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