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by Carter Hammett, Editor

# Editor's Notebook

## BABY IT'S A WIRED WORLD



**B**ack in 1983 The United Nations launched an agenda called The World Programme of Action Concerning People with Disabilities. It identified three major issues to address, including: prevention of disability, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities. While we have made progress in North America and Europe, many countries still lag far behind, either in terms of acknowledging the rights of people with disabilities or simply being unable to afford the costs of implementing associated legislation.

For many people with disabilities, access to technology and therefore, access to information--can be a determining factor towards social inclusion. Assistive technology (AT) can include everything from hearing aids to typewriters to wheelchairs. AT can be a major factor towards succeeding in both school and work for many with LDs.

It's easy to take for granted. The latest versions of Windows, for example include both text-to-speech and speech-to-text software. It's relatively easy these days to

find low cost or no cost screen reading software online. Apps that can help you organize your life or provide reminders or offer dictionaries appear to be a dime a dozen these days.

The bottom line is that access to information is a basic human right that facilitates participation in today's cultural fabric. It can improve on-the-job performance; facilitate access to news and improve the day-to-day quality of life for many individuals with LDs. And that's what this edition of *Communique* is all about: the celebration of technology. Whether it's a new font to help manage dyslexia, cloud technology that enables you to store files online or education in a virtual classroom, it's all in this issue.

Technology also brings with it unique issues too. That's why our cover story by the uber-talented Donna Shaw spotlights Lyndsay Green, author of *Teens Gone Wired: Are You Ready?* When your teen posts sexualized images of themselves in cyberspace only to have it mocked by an online community; when bullying morphs from the physical to the web; when

language itself is transformed into something else, these are causes for real concern. An in-depth review and interview with the author are offered here. On the other hand, the fall of Tunisia was captured on Twitter; looters were captured on film and names turned over to police after rioting occurred in Vancouver and was posted on YouTube.

Technology is changing the world and in many ways making it a better place for people with disabilities. Social media like Facebook and Twitter have helped build networks more than ever before and enabled a different kind of activism we are still trying to figure out. Part of why we are so slow to grasp technology's power is that, by the time we figure out how it can be used, the "latest thing" has dropped in our laps and we must struggle to learn how and why to use it.

But really, these are good problems and demonstrate the opportunities that are only limited by our imaginations! The world is knocking. It's time to answer the door. 

## This Issue We Were...

**Marlene McIntosh** BSc, MBA, MEd is a Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist at Cambrian College in Sudbury, Ontario who specializes in teaching adults with learning disabilities. She teaches learning strategies and assistive technology in combination to help students to determine which strategies and technology suit their learning needs. She is also the Director of Communications for the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Postsecondary Education (CADSPPE), a division of CACUSS. Marlene has a Bachelor of Science degree in Math/

Computer Science, a Master of Business Administration degree, and a Master of Education degree. • **Kenneth E. Seaton** is a Toronto freelance writer/researcher and small business consultant. He is the owner of Word Able ([www.WordAble.ca/](http://www.WordAble.ca/)), which offers particular expertise in writing and consulting services for people with disabilities. • **Donna Shaw** is a freelance writer and administrative professional with the municipal government. Donna has written a number of articles, short stories, online reviews and advertorial copy for weekly magazines in Toronto. She is

currently working on a book of short stories. • **Ashalea Stone** works for OLG in gaming marketing. She has a bachelor of business administrative from the University of Guelph and a diploma in international business from Guelph Humber. • **Deana Waples** is a graduate of Queen's University in Kingston. She currently enjoys freelance writing and is a adult learning instructor and job developer specializing in adult learning disabilities by trade.

Next Issue You Could... 



Lawrence Barns, CEO

## Message FROM THE CEO

Welcome to another packed edition of *Communiqué*. As always it is our hope that you will find information and inspiration in the articles. As you will quickly see, this issue focuses on the latest and greatest in technology. In a world where the rate of change is constantly increasing, technology can be a vital tool in reaching your potential.

Even for a gadget guy (which is a label thrust upon me rather than chosen) it can be increasingly difficult to stay ahead of the new release, new app or new phone, use of the cloud. I often wonder what my grandparents would make of how we live today. While it is exciting to see kids learning, using iPads or teachers using a Web-based tool to screen for interventions early in a school career, there is a flip side to the equation. In a recession and with people carefully considering costs, will our community find that the very lifeline needed now becomes a luxury?

In the corporate world the old adage was that the first casualty of budget cuts was training; a soft and easy target for managers to cut. So the challenge is how schools, universities and workplaces will look at technological assistance for a relatively small number. As a community we will need to stay focussed on our message that these tools are not a luxury, not an additional advantage, but the way LD individuals can truly show their potential.

Ultimately it will be about attitudes towards these tools, as well as attitudes towards our community in general. Our role is to show employers and educators that with the right support we will unleash a person's potential and ultimately the success it generates benefits a society in which we can all be proud.



# LDAC One of 17 Interveners in Moore Case

## AT CANADA'S HIGHEST COURT

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) along with 16 other groups has been granted intervener standing in the appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada of Moore v BC (Ministry of Education) and School District 44 North Vancouver. The Appeal which was heard on March 22, 2012, at the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in Ottawa, concerns whether the School District of North Vancouver and the Ministry of Education of BC discriminated against Jeff Moore, a severely dyslexic student by failing to provide him with meaningful access to an appropriate education.

Jeff Moore suffers from dyslexia and when he was in elementary public school, between 1992 and 1995; his family believed that because of funding cuts for special needs education, Jeff was not receiving sufficient early intervention and a range of services which would have allowed him to become functionally literate. At the beginning of grade 4, Jeff was placed by his parents at their expense in an independent school specializing in teaching students with learning disabilities (LD). In 1997, the Moores filed a complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal, claiming that Jeff and other students like him had been discriminated against for the foregoing reason, seeking reimbursement for their education expenses as well as other remedies. Hearings between 2001 and 2005 resulted in a decision in 2005 by the BC Human Rights Tribunal that the Ministry of Education and the School District had discriminated against students with LD including Jeff, by cutting funding and services and by not providing meaningful access to public education services.

The BC government and the School District appealed the Tribunal decision to the BC Supreme Court and the BC Supreme Court overturned the Tribunal decision, finding that no discrimination occurred. The Moore Family appealed this decision to the BC Court of Appeal and the appeal was heard by a panel of 3 judges. Two judges, forming a majority, dismissed the appeal but the third judge gave a written dissent in favour of the Moores. The Moores were granted leave to appeal the BC Court of Appeal decision from the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in December 2011.

LDAC has appeared at every level of the Moore claim as an intervener, represented at each hearing by their volunteer lead lawyer, Yude Henteleff, C.M., Q.C., a prominent and nationally respected human rights expert and advocate. Mr. Henteleff has advocated at each hearing for the right of children with LD to services which provide LD students with those resources that enables meaningful access to the education services provided to all other children.



# LDAO Settles Into New Digs

**O**n January 31, 2012, LDAO opened its doors at its new premises at 365 Evans Avenue, Suite 202, Toronto, Ontario. For the past 17 years we had been in the same offices at Bloor and Sherbourne but found that those offices no longer served the purposes of our office and programs.

When weighing the decision to re-locate at the end of our lease, three things were important to us – to reduce our footprint (and thus our costs); to be as close to public transportation for easy access to our location and a reasonable travel time for our staff. Change also forced us to look at better service; our on-site library was underutilized, but all our chapters have libraries so LDAO distributed books throughout the province to maximize the use of those resources. The building is accessible, and has free two-hour parking right on site for guests. For those of you familiar with Toronto, we are at the corner of Kipling and Evans Avenues, so if you are travelling by car, you can come in via the QEW/Gardner Expressway/Hwy 427 routes or by subway by exiting at the Kipling subway stop and taking the #44 Kipling South bus to the Evans Avenue stop. You can see our building next door to the Petro Canada station.

We have now settled into the new space and are pleased with the results. During preparation for the move a lot of memories surfaced, some of them over 45 years old reminding us of the legacy we continue to build upon. LDAO is excited to start a new set of memories in our new offices and if you are in the area during business hours, drop in and say hello.



# Singer Lesley Andrew Dazzles AT LDAO CORPORATE BREAKFAST

**“What’s the difference between a pizza and a Canadian artist? A pizza feeds a family of four.”**

**H**undreds of captivated listeners were held in thrall by singer Lesley Andrew’s humour and story at the 2012 Annual LDAO Learning and Leadership Corporate Breakfast in late March.



Andrew, who is gifted LD, shared her personal story of beating the odds; a story that refreshed and inspired everyone. More importantly, it reminded us of the uniqueness and accomplishment that can be released in an individual with the right environment and support. All of us will be challenged to be a catalyst to this process in our own lives and the lives of others.

Lesley Andrew has spoken across North America about ‘Beating the Odds – taking the responsibility for personal change and growth, overcoming obstacles, facing fears and attaining goals.’

Andrew speaks of herself and her own experiences through a mixture of stories, poignant memories, humour, lessons to be

learned, inspiration and music, demonstrating how anyone can triumph in the face of adversary. All giving excellent proof of what a person with LD can accomplish, that we all have gifts, and that uniqueness is to be valued.

A well-known Canadian singer and actress, Andrew has made guest television appearances on The Tonight Show, Oprah Winfrey, To Tell the Truth, Donny & Marie, The Comedy Network, YTV, Regis & Kathy Lee and many more. A popular motivational speaker, she is engaged across Canada by educators, universities, corporations, service clubs and student organizations.

We want to thank our major sponsors Ernst & Young LLP and Heathbridge Capital Management. A special thank you to Scotiabank who have supported the event both financially and with expertise from their fantastic staff team. We would also like to thank the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel for their wonderful hospitality. Finally, thanks to all of you for joining us March 28 for a very memorable event.

Finally, LDAO is so grateful to the breakfast committee under the joint chairs of Rob Richards of Heathbridge Capital Management and Jay Mandarino of CJ Graphics. Their tireless work is the foundation to such a successful morning and words simply cannot express how grateful LDAO is for the time and talent of this dedicated group.



# Bold Face: NEW FONT MAY HELP PEOPLE WITH DYSLEXIA

*Note: While the approach in the following article may be helpful for some people, it is important to emphasize that letter reversals and other visual distortions are not the main features of dyslexia. The preponderance of research still shows that most dyslexics have difficulty with the sounds of words. That said, we hope you find the content herein useful and interesting.*

A new font may help people struggling with reading disabilities. Created by Dutch graphic designer Christian Boer, who lives with dyslexia himself, a font called Dyslexie has actually been successful in decreasing the number of errors some dyslexics make while reading.

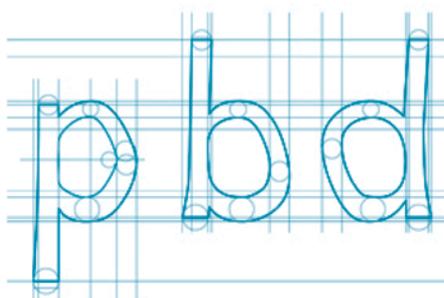
The font alters the appearance of some letters in the alphabet that some dyslexics misinterpret. For example, letters like "d" and "b" are made more recognizable. The English version of the font was released online for purchase in October.

Boer began working on the font in 2008 while studying at the University of Twente. The work eventually became his graduate school project. In 2010 a fellow student conducted an independent study on the font as part of a master's thesis and discovered a significant reduction in reading errors by dyslexics when reading Dutch text typed in Dyslexie as opposed to the Arial font.

Boer's research could likewise have a big impact on English speakers, given the prevalence of dyslexia when reading that language, as compared with Italian, whose words are pronounced more closely to how they are spelled.

Unlike other readers, dyslexics have a tendency to rotate, swap and mirror letters, making it difficult for them to comprehend what they're reading. For years it was thought that dyslexia was a vision problem, but scientists now know that the condition stems from the brain. Scans of dyslexic brains show that there are structural differences—including in the thalamus, which serves as an information way station—when compared with other brains. Some dyslexics even see letters as

suspended 3-D animations that twist before their eyes. "I perceived letters floating like balloons in my head," Boer says. As a means to finally "tie down" these balloons, Boer dedicated his time and graphic design skills to come up with Dyslexie.



*DYSLEXIE: The Dyslexie font works by tweaking the appearance of certain letters of the alphabet that dyslexics commonly misconstrue, such as "p", "b" and "d," to make them more recognizable.*

Whereas the majority of typography designers want their fonts to be aesthetically pleasing (think of the flowing serifs of Lucida Calligraphy or the chiseled lines of Arial), Boer was more concerned with reading comprehension. He estimates that the time he spent designing his font added up to 15 hours per letter. He even recruited dyslexic college pals for feedback.

He increased the boldness of letters at their bases, to make them appear weighted, causing readers' brains to know not to flip them upside down, as can occur with "p" and "d." Boer also enlarged the openings of various letters, such as "a" and "c," to make them more distinguishable from one another, and increased the length of "the tail" of other letters, like the "g" and "y." He also put

certain letters at a slant so that they would appear to be in italics, like the "j," a tactic to increase the brain's ability to distinguish it from the letter "i." Finally, he boldfaced capital letters and punctuation, and provided ample space between letters and words, to allow the brain more time to compute the letters and begin forming them into words and sentences.

Although Dyslexie is not the first font out there to help aid dyslexics, it has received much fanfare from sufferers thus far, including participants from the aforementioned University of Twente study, who commented that the font allowed them to read with improved accuracy, and for a longer time before tiring.



## Ontario Loses Dedicated Advocate FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

LDAO was sad to learn that Lindsay Moir passed away suddenly in his 66th year on Tuesday, January 10, 2012.

Lindsay retired from the Ministry of Education in 1997 and has been assisting agencies, associations and parents in obtaining appropriate special education services for 'exceptional pupils', including those with learning disabilities, ever since.

He will be greatly missed.



# Get Ready to Read!

## Website Launches: New Design and Expanded Content Improve Free Early Learning Resources for Parents and Educators

The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) recently launched the new and improved Get Ready to Read! website. The

redesigned site provides parents, teachers and families with direct access to free online early literacy resources. The dozens of resources on the Get Ready to Read! website are designed to help prepare 3- to 5-year-olds for early reading success in kindergarten as well as serve as a professional development opportunity for educators and daycare providers in key areas of early literacy.

The new website also provides parents and teachers with complementary resources in multiple languages, helping support effective communication between parents and teachers in building pre-literacy skills and offering guidance about what to do if children are showing signs of struggling to learn to read.

"For the past ten years the GetReadytoRead! program and website have provided parents and early childhood educators with free research-based activities, screening tools and resources to support the early literacy needs of every child in the years before kindergarten." said James H. Wendorf, executive director of NCLD. "Generous support from the Educational Foundation of America has enabled us to provide educators, parents and families with a menu of new and expanded resources targeted to support the needs of all children during early childhood."

For more information, visit : [www.GetReadytoRead.org](http://www.GetReadytoRead.org).



# Public Policy Roundup

## SPRING 2012



### Learning Disabilities Working Group

In June 2011 the Special Education Policy & Programs Branch of the Ministry of Education set up a Learning Disabilities Working Group to provide expertise and share knowledge with the Ministry of Education in the area of LDs, inform the review of PPM 8 Learning Disabilities, inform the development of Guidelines for Learning Disabilities, and support the development of a repository of relevant resources on LD that will be available to school boards electronically.

At their January meeting the working group members reviewed a draft of a new PPM and provided feedback. This feedback was incorporated into a new draft which was reviewed at the March meeting. Also at the March meeting, preliminary feedback was given to a draft Guidelines for Special Education Programs and Services for Students with Learning Disabilities. The process seems to be going well.

### Review of Social Assistance in Ontario

The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario released in December a summary of what they heard in the fall consultation, and a second Discussion paper with suggestions for reforms: [www.socialassistancereview.ca/commission-publications](http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/commission-publications). LDAO submitted a response on March 16th. Among other points, we said that "the use of standard assessment tools and the concept of assessing for 'work capacity' can be fraught with difficulties for individuals with LDs. Learning disabilities are complex, and some of the difficulties they cause are not easy to evaluate without professional assessment ... Simple checklists or other standard tools used by service providers would not be sensitive enough to evaluate 'work capacity' in most individuals with LDs."

### Report of the Drummond Commission and the Ontario Budget

In March 2011 the Ontario government established the Drummond Commission to provide advice on how to make long-term, fundamental changes to the way government delivers services, as part of its commitment to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18 while protecting education and health care. The report was received in February 2012, and there were a number of issues addressed that had the potential to impact individuals and families who are dealing with LDs. LDAO prepared a response and sent this with a letter to Premier McGuinty, copied to the Ministers of Education, Children & Youth Services, Community & Social Services, and Training, Colleges & Universities. Not all recommendations in the Drummond Report were followed up in the March 27, 2012 Ontario budget, but the Ministry of Education did decide to limit funding for high school credits beyond 34 (four more than required for graduation) starting in 2013-14. In a March 29, 2012 memo to Directors of Education, an Assistant Deputy Minister stated "As the mechanics of this cap must meet diverse student needs, the Ministry will consult on how best to achieve this, including consultation on possible exemptions." The memo went on to say that input would be sought from parents and students as well as sector partners. LDAO expects to be included in the consultation.



# Elsewhere

## BITS AND PIECES OF LEARNING DISABILITY NEWS COLLECTED FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

UNITED STATES

### Groundbreaking Spanish Initiative Assists Families With LD Kids

A first-of-its-kind Spanish-language initiative for children facing learning disabilities is being launched to increase early detection and intervention of learning disabilities, which can be pivotal to educational success. Until now Spanish-speaking families have had scarce resources to help them understand the signs of learning disabilities, nor have they had the resources available to help resolve learning issues or to find the answers to questions about how to access resources that will translate into school success.



The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) is pleased to launch an extensive toolkit and informational campaign in Spanish to help families detect the signs of LD, work with their children to develop and enhance skills, and be an advocate for their children at school. This comprehensive toolkit is the

first-of-its-kind for Hispanic families, with over three-dozen Spanish-language resources available including an interactive guide to help parents detect

*“... until now Spanish-speaking families have had scarce resources ...”*

learning disabilities and recommendations for helping young children overcome barriers to early reading.

The informational campaign also includes briefings with educational and community leaders nationwide, as well as an online advertising campaign that aligns with the growing use of search engines and social media among Spanish speakers. Additional Spanish-language resources will be publicly launched in the coming months, to create what will be the largest online learning disabilities resource nationwide.

Early identification of struggle is critical to ensuring educational success for children facing learning disabilities, and this initiative has the promise to profoundly help Hispanic families.

More information about NCLD can be found at [www.LD.org](http://www.LD.org).



UNITED STATES

### New Film Addresses Reading Disabilities

The *D Word: Understanding Dyslexia* skillfully explores the complex and often challenging world faced by those who have this disability. The film focuses on high-school senior Dylan as he shares his early struggles in school and prepares to begin studies at the college of his choice. Interviews with other young dyslexics, as well as highly accomplished businesspeople diagnosed with the learning disability, including Richard Branson, Charles Schwab, and California's Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom, are seamlessly incorporated into the story. Two prominent doctors, Bennett and Sally Shaywitz at the Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity, help demystify and mitigate the stigma surrounding this syndrome.

Focusing on the positive aspects of dyslexia and incorporating creative animation sequences, James Redford's film emphasizes specific areas where dyslexics excel and suggests thoughtful strategies for their academic success in our often-rigid educational system. 



# The ADHD Files

## MY MOTHER, MY SISTERS, MYSELF

By LuAnn Pierce

**H**oliday visits and reunions are often enlightening when ADHD is part of the family, as in, I get to see myself disguised in the person of my mother and sisters. It's always easier to see the traits we deny or minimize in ourselves when other people demonstrate them for us. Not that any of us are bad people; we are simply very much alike - a bit bossy, some control issues, etc. And we are family, for better or worse, I hope.

I managed to choose a husband who is so much like me/us that he may as well be from our family. In fact, people have asked if we are siblings. He appears to have what we casually refer to as "ADD without the H". He's a good reminder of my inattentive symptoms. It is usually when I am 'on task' that I notice those inattentive traits in others - meaning they are not keeping up with my chemically induced ability to get things done (as opposed to busily doing ten things at once and finishing none).

Since coming into my own ADHD (again) at the mid-century mark, both of my sisters and my mother have recognized the red flags in their own lives. Being both a sister/daughter and clinical social worker, I could have saved them some time and money on the diagnosis, but my credibility suffers a bit with them. There seems no overcoming the early and lasting impressions we make on the people who know us better than we know ourselves. And, when you are the oldest and have bossed the others around for 40-50 years, they tend to ignore a lot of what you say.

Imagine this scene from the holidays - the makings of a great ADHD commercial. The three sisters (ages 50, 46 and 40 - not kids)

are sitting in a small room lit only by faint Christmas lights and candles. We each have a glowing laptop in front of us and are glued to the screens. We are playing 2-3 games each (with each other) of a word game online - barely looking up - rarely ever speaking - shooting words via computer without comment to and from each other from across the living room.

Classic hyper-focus - two of us are on medication for ADHD - the other trying alternatives to avoid meds. It was a pretty

*"... I'm not talking about things that are horrible - just human ..."*

funny scene, if a sad statement of our times and perhaps, our family life. The revealing part is that we did this for HOURS. I fear the Scrabble board may never see the light of day again during the holidays!

Everyone behaved pretty well - no major outbursts or stomping around. This gave me an opportunity to observe (and judge and criticize) everyone else and myself. Had someone acted out or melted down (this is usually me) during the visit, it would have been easy to keep the focus on them and miss the bigger lessons. Since we had no high drama as a distraction, I had time to bring my observations full circle and realize (again) some uncomfortable, if valuable, truths.

1. It really is all about me. I may presume to know what others are thinking and intuit what others are feeling, but in the final analysis, I am the one with these

feelings and thoughts. Period.

Regardless of what anyone else thinks or feels - these are my own thoughts and feelings.

2. The very behaviors in others that are my least favorite are, in fact, the ones that I engage in the most with the least insight about. Ruminating about right and wrong or good and bad thoughts, feelings or behaviors in the name of analyzing them only keeps them active and gives them more power.
3. Until I stop judging these shadow behaviors and accept that I am not so self-actualized (or even nice enough) that I do not engage in these things I would rather not admit, these shadow traits will persist. Paradoxically, I'm told that by accepting and normalizing them as neither good nor bad, they seem to be less problematic than when being judged, denied or repressed. I'm not talking about things that are horrible - just human.
4. No matter how many times I accept my less desirable traits, there seems to be another opportunity to remember that I still have these on some level. Guess what - most of them I will always have to some degree. Being human, we all deal with these or similar issues to some degree - they are universal.
5. I must learn to give myself a break - beating myself up for having critical thoughts and judging myself for being judgmental, is redundant.

How about you? Anyone out there have any shadow traits you'd rather not acknowledge? Here's your chance to talk about it without being judged.



# Leveling the Playing Field with Assistive Technology!

By Kenneth E. Seaton

*Assistive Technology (AT) is defined in the American Technology -Related Assistance Act (Tech Act) as "any item piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities" (Tech Act, 1988).*

*A much simpler definition could be, "any type of technology or device that aids in lowering the barriers to active participation that persons with disabilities face on a daily basis. It should boost self-confidence, sustain or increase abilities and improve quality of life."*



## Helping Persons With Learning Disabilities (LD)

AT supports persons with LD by assisting them in maintaining, increasing and optimistically improving their physical abilities, academic or employment performances. An essential aspect of AT is ensuring that the technology not only works as advertised, but also that the user can operate it correctly. It sometimes requires much trial-and-error before the end user finds the correct AT device that works properly for them.

Having a disability should not be the reason for a less-than-full lifestyle, especially when there are tools and devices to help overcome challenges. All persons with LD should ensure that they get an assistive/adaptive technology assessment done by a qualified technician. Jan Richards, project manager with Toronto's Inclusive Design Research

Centre (IDRC) says, "There are many different learning disabilities, but in general the more that content can be personalized and flexibly interacted with (by touch, voice, keyboard, etc.), especially on mobile devices, the better".

When selecting a particular type of AT over another it is critical that the end-user be the one making the final decision. In order for the technology to become an important asset to LD users they must ensure that it not only fits their personality, but also that it is functional as well. There must be no

mismatch between the AT and the end-user because if a problem develops, typically the consumer will discard or refuse to use the AT.

Cost is often an important factor in choosing AT and persons with LD should consult with their school or school board, employers or other agencies for information on assessment or possible accessibility to funding or training assistance. It may also be worth checking out the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, the Ontario Disability Support

*“... cost is often an important factor in choosing AT ...”*

Program, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and/or private insurance companies.

Richards notes that, “The app store model has enabled many suppliers to make their offerings widely available at fairly reasonable prices.” iPad and the Android market offer numerous free downloadable apps specifically for persons with LD. Another Internet source for safe, free software is CNET’s Download.com.

### Low Tech Assistive Technology

The first stick used by early man as a crutch was a type of assistive technology. We can also consider car door handles and communication or cork boards as other low tech AT tools. Audio books on CDs have proven to be a great learning asset to many people. The wheelchair ramp running up to your neighbour’s porch is yet another form of low tech AT.

Further examples of low tech AT are; canes and walkers, handheld magnifiers, reachers or grabbers, highlighter pens, calculators, Velcro fasteners, daily or weekly pill organizers, grab bars, lever door handles, non-slip materials, large print text, ear plugs, graph paper, etc.

### High Tech Assistive Technology

A reminder watch or light signaler alerts for the front doorbell are a couple of high

tech devices. Additionally, Bluetooth headsets, power wheelchairs or scooters, computer software programs with voice recognition or talking screens that read in synthetic speech, portable e-book readers, voice-activated day planners, word prediction programs, and electronic pointing devices are other high tech examples.

When queried about the biggest advances in AT over the last decade, Richards says “I would probably say, built-in system-wide access systems such as Apple’s VoiceOver for iPhone and iPad. Being built-in means that the ATs are now shipped as part of the Operating Systems (OS) at no additional price. The drawback is that the operating systems are closely-controlled by large companies, so it’s hard for consumers to effectively advocate for bug fixes and new features.”

It is becoming easier for persons with disabilities to take advantage of the new and exciting technological advances that are now available. For many, a fear of the unknown or of not being able to figure out and to properly use the AT correctly has proved to be a major stumbling block.

*“... having a disability should not be the reason for a less-than-full lifestyle ...”*

Sometimes we must expand our comfort zone in order for us to move forward. This article was written with the assistance of Word 2010 and the Dragon program.

### What the Future Holds for AT

It is important to remember that technology is constantly evolving and changing. Not only are new technologies being invented but designers and technicians are also revisiting existing tools and are finding ways and means of improving them.

Another factor that will impact on AT is the changing demographics of an aging population. This new crop of seniors will be

more computer savvy and will be looking for more technological solutions to solve some of the traditional problems they face. On average they will have more ready cash, and a willingness to spend, to ensure that they have access to the latest and best of AT. Retailers and designers are aware of this and are developing products accordingly, a circumstance that can only prove beneficial to many younger persons with LD.

## DID YOU KNOW

*Persons with LD are affected in how they take in, store and process information. Assistive Technology provides support by concentrating on language, organizational skills, reading comprehension and processing information. Some LD focused AT aids:*

- *Help in focusing on tasks by utilizing calendar/task-management software, personal digital assistants*
- *Provide time and task management programs i.e. Post it note software, Email reminders or chimes, Scheduling (phone etiquette) reminders*
- *Utilize environmental controls i.e. Noise-canceling headphones, headsets, Environmental Control Units (ECU) to interact with and control environments, sensory stimulation*
- *Supply classroom teaching aids i.e. Lightweight laptop computers that electronically captures handwritten notes, phonetic spelling, talking calculators, word prediction software*
- *Aid in finding lost items i.e. Wireless item locator remote controls*



# Get Off of My Cloud!

*Our writer determines that the rise of this new technology definitely includes a silver lining*

*By Deana Waples*

It's no secret: *Cloud* technology is pouring down; reigning supreme over traditional computing platforms. But, just what is it?

In short, *Cloud* computing is the service of computing. It provides communal information to a wide array of devices over a network. In its virtual environment (i.e. the Internet), computation, software application, information storage and shared resources create an experience whereby users are absolved from the responsibility of details (even locations) of computing infrastructure. Basically, *Cloud* is a grid of computerized architecture that delivers software and data "hassle-free" to its users.

*Cloud* is a metaphor for the Internet and is represented as an actual diagram of cloud-like drawings. Essentially, the drawings illustrate complicated systems where end-users access cloud-based applications through a web browser (or mobile device), while software and data are stored on remote location servers.

The actual term "*Cloud*" originates from telephony. Until the 1990's, telecommunications companies offered only basic "point-to-point" data circuits. But since the turn of 2000, their cheap, high-quality *Virtual Private Networks* (VPN) are drastically changing the landscape of such linear modes of communication.

*Cloud* providers "switch traffic" to balance usage - meaning that they consume network bandwidth more effectively to replace user headaches with innocuous cloud symbols. *Cloud* computing expands

boundaries and maintains secure and operational networks.

*Cloud* providers outperform software programs installed on end-user computers, creating a broad-concept now

*"... experts see a promising future in global collaboration ..."*

referred to as "*Converged Infrastructure*". This new datacenter environment enables faster information services, with increased manageability and less maintenance and promotes the rapidity of information to satisfy erratic business demands.

The availability of high-capacity networks, affordable computers and mobile devices has caused explosive growth in *Cloud* computing much akin in metaphor to "*CloudBusting*"! As information showers end users, system dynamics are

*"... the advantages to Cloud technology are undeniable ..."*

increasingly obscured. We no longer need knowledge of or control over them!

Ironically, the concept of *Cloud* computing dates back fifty years, when John McCarthy wrote; "Computation may someday be organized as a public utility." The "elastic provisions" of *Cloud*, (i.e. automatic utility and illusions of infinite information), support pioneers such as author Douglas

Parkhill (in his 1966 book, *The Challenge of the Computer Utility*) and scientist Herb Grosch (author of Grosch's Law), in their prediction that private, public and government forums will be operated by innumerable "dumb" terminals ultimately powered by only a dozen or so global data centers.

Although certain "*Big Brother*" implications of *Cloud* computing are imminent, the advantages to its technology are undeniable, and Amazon continues to champion its development. In 2006, Amazon launched a product offer, resulting in "Amazon Web Service" (AWS), which operates on a utility computing basis, and in early 2008, Eucalyptus became the first open-source, AWS API-compatible platform for deploying private clouds. That same year, OpenNebula joined the race in *Cloud*-based infrastructures and succeeded in creating a "real-time *Cloud* environment"

The shift from complicated, expensive software models to *Cloud* technology is growing, and experts see a promising future in global collaboration. Traditional business applications that require a team of experts to install, secure and update them are becoming obsolete. *Cloud* is indispensable. It suits everyone, and its ease of application is especially useful to the millions of individuals globally who have memory, organization and executive function issues. Its "silver lining" will "even the playing field" for millions of users worldwide, helping those who once felt threatened by the challenges associated with computing technology feel "on cloud nine"!



# Reading With Assistive Technology

## WHEN YOU CAN'T GO TO THE WORDS, LET THE WORDS COME TO YOU...

By Marlene McIntosh

There are many assistive technology (AT) products available on today's market. Many schools have this technology available for student use, but it may not be used to its true potential. How can AT help students with learning disabilities (LD) to read better? Let's look at a specific type of software, text-to-speech.

### Reading with Text-to-Speech Assistive Technology

"Although assistive technologies make it possible for students with disabilities to profit from good instruction, technology is not magic; it is simply a tool of education. As with any tool, when used skilfully, it can help achieve spectacular results" (Hasselbring & Bausch, 2005, p. 75).

Ongoing research demonstrates that there are many benefits of assistive technology for students with learning disabilities. It is most effective when it is used as a compensatory tool to build on students' strengths and to compensate for processing deficits. It can be used as a motivational tool that allows students with LD to learn and achieve more and to complete academic tasks independently.

Text-to-speech software is one of the assistive technology tools. It allows students with LD to read and listen at the same time. Students can use this software to read books, articles, magazines, web pages, emails, and so on. Since eight-out-of-10 students with LD have difficulty with reading, they may require support in order to access reading materials at an age or



grade appropriate level. Thus, these students may not be able to read at this level without intervention.

Students who use text-to-speech software to read become better readers. Contrary to what some believe, the technology strengthens their reading capabilities.

*"... the technology can be used to help with decoding and comprehension ..."*

Assistive technology can help students with LD who cannot read very well in two ways. One way is that the technology can be used to help with decoding and comprehension. For example, when students use text-to-speech software, the words are read aloud while students read

along. This can increase reading speed because the software decodes the words. Students can also get immediate access to electronic dictionaries to improve comprehension. Sometimes just hearing the text helps students to understand it.

The second way that technology can be helpful for students with reading problems is that it can strengthen their overall reading skills because students will read more than they would without the software. Therefore, the technology allows students with LD to read and gain knowledge; they can then scaffold upon this knowledge afterwards.

In fact, many adults with LD stop reading at a young age. Many have never read any books.

When students with LD use technology to read, they are exposed to a wider variety of materials than those who don't use technology. The more materials that students with LD read, the broader their knowledge base becomes. Thus, reading with AT can alleviate a common problem that non-reading students face, a lack of background knowledge (Hasselbring & Bausch, 2005; Silver-Pacuilla, 2006).

Having access to appropriate technology, explicit instruction of its use and continual feedback from educators are key to the successful implementation of text-to-speech technology for students with LD.

For more information, please contact Marlene McIntosh at [marlene.mcintosh@cambridgiancollege.ca](mailto:marlene.mcintosh@cambridgiancollege.ca).



# Teens Gone Wired: ARE YOU READY?

*Technology is inevitable but how we let our teens manage it will have a profound impact on their future says a well-known sociologist*

By Donna Shaw

With *Teens Gone Wired*, sociologist Lyndsay Green has provided a useful support tool for parents anxiously attempting to manage the digital landscape, even as their children appear to navigate it seamlessly.

Green covers issues as diverse as sexual health/well-being, virtual trends, identity-building, privacy, unsafe conduct, violence in online gaming, online bullying, conformity, and ethics and values, amongst others.

Children are engaging media in ways different from previous generations. Green clarifies that it is often less about the media itself, than how parents choose to manage it and their children. Clearly advocating a strongly liberal parenting style, Green encourages parental involvement to the extent of learning what media their children are using and what they may potentially be learning, accessing and doing.

Using the example of children sending sexual images of themselves to one another, Green encourages parents to remind young people that the images may be out in cyberspace forever, sounding more like a mildly chiding schoolteacher than a shocked and outraged parent.

Green points out that children have been raised in a manner that is so child-centred that many have lost the capacity to delay gratification, to sacrifice, to work hard to achieve a long-term goal, to accept that they cannot get everything that they want when they want it. She concedes that the digital world exacerbates this problem by emphasizing speed, immediacy, availability and "apps" that make getting what you want when you want it, a fact of life.

Green's strengths lie in her ability to empathize and identify with parents intimidated by the digital media, and in her tireless and rich offerings of online support tools and resources for them. She furthermore, covers almost all areas of concern for parents. This might also be her weakness. In attempting to incorporate so much, Green occasionally digresses to



*Sociologist and Author, Lyndsay Green*

general parenting advice without any obvious link to the digital media and has made the book, sometimes confusingly, into one-half digital media/parenting advice and one-half parenting advice in general.

Here is what the author herself says of her book, *Teens Gone Wired: Are you Ready?*

**Donna Shaw:** What inspired you to write this book? Why now?

**Lyndsay Green:** Although I've spent my career working with technology, the digital world that our teens inhabit today is changing so fast I understand why parents might feel intimidated. It was when a friend said, "I feel really unlucky to be raising teens in this day and age," that I decided to write this book. I wanted to support parents with stories, tips, research and resources, and I hoped to change their opinion and help them see the benefits of today's environment.

**DS:** Re-state for us a few of the benefits of kids being online and tapped into so much electronic media? Why is it important that they learn to use digital media effectively?

**LG:** We know our children's lives will increasingly be lived in cyberspace and their future success will depend on their ability to exploit the benefits of the digital world skillfully and turn it to their advantage. They need to acquire digital literacy, which is about much more than mastering the technology: it involves learning the social skills and values that will allow them to use technology in ways that enhance their humanity and ours, rather than diminish it. That's where our guidance as parents comes in.

**DS:** Discuss some of the perceived pitfalls of kids being plugged into this new wired world?

**LG:** When you follow the media and read the research on teens and their digital world it's easy to focus on the catastrophic. There's cyber-bullying and its psychological damage; there's sexting and posting scandalous images that will ruin reputations; there's predators posing as

virtual friends luring our teens into unwise choices. And then there are the subtler problems: constant multi-tasking could be making our teens incapable of thinking profoundly or focusing deeply; exposure to online pornography could be distorting their understanding of healthy sexuality; gratuitous violence in videogames could be desensitizing them and reducing their ability to empathize; posting every detail of their lives on Facebook and Twitter could be turning them into narcissistic, self-absorbed individuals with a sense of entitlement. And, yes, the dangers do exist and my book explores all these issues but arrives at a more balanced and realistic assessment.

**DS:** Your book is not just about kids and the new technology; it is also about parenting in general. What role should a parent play in this brave new world or do they have a place at all?

**LG:** Because our child's world is completely integrated, you can't separate digital issues from parenting in general and parents have the same job we always did: to love, guide and support our child. One of the book's goals is to remind parents of the importance of our role. Even if we don't know how to retweet, upload a YouTube video or organize a flash mob we have a critical contribution to make to the lives of our teens. Let's take a specific problem such as a teen's addictive relationship with a gaming device. The tips and stories in the book include examples of a three-step approach: being proactive and staying alert for teachable moments before problems happen; if problems develop, engaging your teen in problem-solving; and, if all else fails, restricting the technology.

**DS:** How do you respond to the criticism that the book reads like a left-wing, liberal tome on rearing children?

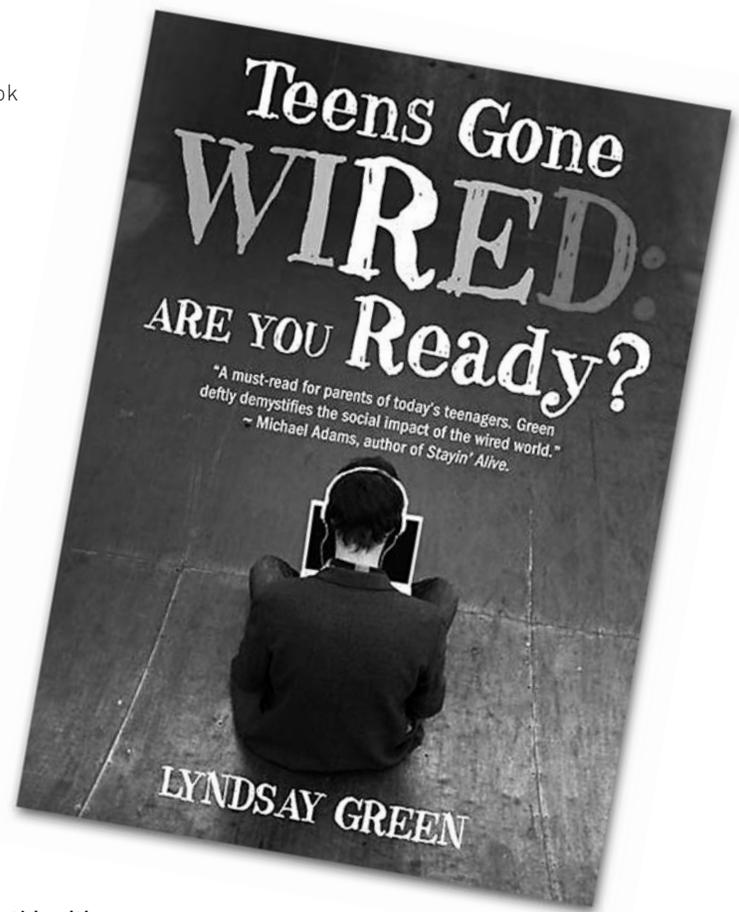
**LG:** If I understand the basis of the criticism it might be that the book focuses on the complexity of the issues. Life is not black and white and the challenges, and the richness, of life come from its complexities. I've been receiving feedback from readers through my website, Facebook page and at parent/teacher meetings. The readers are parents, teachers, teens and adults interested in

our young people's lives. What people seem to appreciate is that the book is not prescriptive and it recognizes that one size does not fit all. Each journey is unique and, at any given time, different parts of the book have more relevance than others. Each person will carve out a solution that works for them and their family and the book focuses on giving them the resources they need.

**DS:** More and more critical voices are being raised about the permissive, self-centered, non-parenting parenting occurring these days, turning kids into undisciplined, entitled, spoiled, unempathic citizens – how does social media or the online world either cater to this perception or exacerbate it more?

*"... I feel really unlucky to be raising teens in this day and age ..."*

**LG:** The book explores these issues in some depth with a focus on the teen spirit and teen as citizen. While the concern is that the digital media can promote self-absorption and narcissistic portrayals, there is equal evidence of the web encouraging social engagement. Social networking can inspire teen activism through the websites of organizations such as Free the Children and Me to We, and can facilitate fund-raising and petition-gathering on local issues. It's important to remember that self-absorption and trying on new identities was part of our teen years as well - just acted out on a different stage.



**DS:** Naomi Wolf writes in the classic *The Beauty Myth* about how pornography has become the new normalcy, the paradigm within which young women, regardless of race or income bracket, define their sexuality – girls appear to be missing the modesty gene these days, and are not afraid, at younger and younger ages, of sending nude, risqué or sexually-charged photos of themselves to boys they know or even strangers. What is going on socially and culturally, and how does the wired world contribute to this problem?

**LG:** One of the resources discussed in the book is a website called "It's a Teen's World" that includes questions for teens such as, "A lot of famous and rich people make sex tapes, post nude photos or send them to others (sexting), so it must be cool." True or False. The website is asking teens to consider the price they pay to be cool, hip and popular in a sexually charged world. However, although we get the impression that our teens are becoming more sexual, the research says we're wrong. Research, including a major

# Teens Gone Wired

longitudinal study, has found that little has changed over the past 15 years in terms of teens' attitudes to sex or when they first have sex.

**DS:** A number of times in the book, you refer to young women's empowerment as being tied to their "hotness" – that their power is not just that which sits between their ears but that they can also be "hot." How does that develop a girl's self-esteem when her worth and power are perpetually tied to her sexuality? That she can never just be smart, but that she must also bear the burden of being smart and sexual at all times? Isn't this a dangerous message to young women?

**LG:** The book looks at this issue from different angles including self-aversion vs. self-acceptance. Since perfection is unattainable, it is extremely dangerous to base one's sense of self on appearance. The beauty industry profits from our sense of inadequacy and the effectiveness of their message is reflected in the number of teen girls longing for bigger breasts, thinner thighs, smaller noses or plumper lips and teen boys trying to bulk up and look "ripped." Since teens are very sensitive to being "duped by the system," I like the approach of helping them understand they are being manipulated for commercial gain. There are a number of websites cited in the book that allow teens to explore these issues, including talking back to companies that perpetuate these stereotypes.

**DS:** It appeared that the panel of kids were more adept at saying that parents should set rules where internet conduct was involved, more so than the parents themselves. Why are parents so afraid of well, behaving like parents, especially given some of the dangers inherent in the digital age?

**LG:** Teens have always been very good at making parents feel they're out of it and don't have anything of relevance to contribute to their lives. Given that technology is changing minute-by-minute and many of us need our kids to program the TV channel changer, it's easy to feel intimidated by the world they inhabit. Part of the challenge is that there is so much pressure from our schools, as well as from society, for our teens to be online all the



time, so it's difficult for parents to tell the difference between a required use of technology and one that's unhealthy. A mother of a 10-year-old told me that his school requires him to have a ThinkPad; he maintains a regular blog and brings work on a digital stick. An older teen told me the administrator of her high school told her she couldn't be student vice-president unless she had a smart phone. I hope my book helps parents make an assessment for their child when parental intervention is required.

**DS:** Internet use presents a number of ethical and moral issues for kids. Can you list a few?

**LG:** Teens may understand the technology but not how to use it ethically and with respect. When it comes to mean behaviour, the Pew Research Center has found that girls ages 12-13 have the most negative assessment of social network spaces. One-in-three say that people her age are mostly unkind to one another on social network sites. Older teens told me they worry that younger teens are developing fewer social skills because they allow themselves to hide behind technology. They break up with their boyfriends and girlfriends by texting or changing their Facebook status to "single" without informing their partner in advance. I met with a group of young people in their community centre that supports people with mental health issues. The young people have instituted a rule that people cannot text others who are in the building. They compare it to whispering behind people's back and find it to be hurtful.

Picking up digital skills is child's play compared with educating our teens about humanity-affirming social mores and values.

**DS:** Do you have any other books on the horizon? Anymore on the wired world we live in? Any more on parenting to come?

**LG:** My books will continue to emphasize the dual themes of intergenerational learning and harnessing technology. *Teens Gone Wired* talks about the importance to our young people of having loving, meaningful relationships with adults other than their parents. My earlier book, *You Could Live a Long Time: Are You Ready?* focused on the flip side and recommended staying connected with young people as we age. The book I'm working on now *Where Shall We Live: Finding Community* is about creative housing options for old age and emphasizes the importance of living in intergenerational communities.

Any parent, teacher or figure of authority intimidated by the power and influence that the new digital media hold over their children would be well-advised to pick up a copy of *Teens Gone Wired*.

As both sociologist and mother, Lyndsay Green has written a well-researched, mindful book for parents about the tremendous benefits and pitfalls of the digital age as they raise their children. Despite its advocacy of a more lenient or liberal approach to parenting vis-à-vis the digital media, it is nevertheless, a useful guide to resources and advice well needed in a time rife with tremendous possibility and unanticipated challenges.



# Online Learning

## WITH ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY:

### *One Student's Experience*

By Ashlea Stone



Less than a decade ago, many of us reluctantly began charting into the unfamiliar territory of the online world, fighting hard to avoid the inevitable change from the safe and familiar to the scary unknown 'Inter-realm.' Fast forward to 2012, a time when Canadians have fully embraced the 'e-world' and can't get enough of it. Previous mistrust has succumbed to acceptance and even shock if a brick and mortar establishment is not complemented by a www page. The world is at our fingertips and everything from 'tweeting' updates from your favourite singer, to emailing money transfers, to obtaining a full-university degree, is now available in ways never dreamed of by previous generations. The online learning enigma is no longer, as many established universities offer online and hybrid learning as a complement to traditional courses and 'open' universities have gained the acceptance and recognition of the educational community and employers alike.

My curiosity about online learning was sparked by an online banner ad for the University of Athabasca. When I clicked on the advertisement I learned that not only university courses but entire programs at the undergraduate, graduate and even PHD

*"... in retrospect I probably could have planned it better ..."*

level are offered online. As I browsed through the options, the curriculum and the course syllabi, I realized that through a broad spectrum of distance educational methods, structured lessons and individualized study, students can learn at home earning the same university credits offered at conventional institutions. At the time, I was attending a traditional university and seemed to be attending lectures and taking notes on regurgitations of the text book chapters. So I figured I could get as much, if not more, from an

online course as from a regular university course, and I didn't have to go to class.

At this point, I would like to say that I have taken online courses provided by traditional institutions and have opinions about them as well, but this article is going to focus on my experiences with Athabasca University.

This university does a phenomenal job clearing up the ambiguity of online learning. From the university's website, I learned that I could work at my own pace and take on additional courses to my current university course load if I wished.

I enrolled in my first course, Administrative Principles. A week later when my 'study kit' arrived, I was surprised at everything Athabasca offered. In one little box, was a text book along with a study guide with everything from course objectives and assignments to technological instructions to information on invigilation services and exam writing. The course was laid out in an easy to follow format, and I was given a

# Online Learning

biography of my course tutor as well as the tutor's contact information. My tutor was there to help me with any questions and mark my assignments.

The hardest thing about online courses is the same thing that makes it so attractive. Having the option to study on your own time is great, but it definitely takes discipline, to actually sit down and study. Furthermore, students taking online courses through universities such as Athabasca do not have others around them to motivate them nor a professor to interact with and keep them on track.

I found that I was able to best manage my time by actually setting my own deadlines. Marking these deadlines in my calendar and actually calling and booking a time to write my exams with an invigilator made me very aware that I had to do the work, or I would fail the course and waste my money.

*"... I became a self-proclaimed veteran of the online learning world ..."*

After being quite successful and enjoying my first online course, I enrolled in more courses which were a lot more challenging. However, by following the suggested timelines and taking note of the learning objectives, I was able to again do quite well. While taking these courses, I took full advantage of my assigned tutors. I contacted them via email when I had questions, and usually the next day, I would receive my answers. One tutor was also kind enough to call me the night before my exam and give me extra help and guidance to help me study. She asked that I email her with feedback about the exam and feedback about the invigilation site and staff. Needless to say she was the best support person I could have asked for, as she understood how hard it is to try and learn on your own without having clear guidelines and people to discuss the course content with.



After the successful completion of these and other online courses, I became a self-proclaimed veteran of the online learning world. With my regular university only offering specific courses during certain semesters, and Athabasca offering courses year round, I decided I was ready to enroll in two online courses during my already full university semester.

This task is possible, but in retrospect, I probably could have planned it better.

*"... I found that I was able to best manage my time by actually setting my own deadlines. ..."*

Juggling that many courses takes a lot of planning and talent. For one of my courses; I decided to recruit the help of an outside tutor. This course was Quantitative Methods, a purely mathematical course. I had always been an average math student and had always learned math in a classroom setting. When I opened my Quantitative Methods textbook for the first time and began treating the material like any other, I realized I was in way over my

head. I decided then and there to search for a tutor who I could actually meet and who could work with me on my assignments. I eventually found one who helped me with my assignments and taught me the material. I ended up with a B+ in the course, and, given my heavy course load, I was happy.

As a student who obtained a university degree with a combination of online and traditional courses, I would have to say that I enjoy the experience of traditional learning a lot more, yet I felt that I had learned a lot more from my online courses. I think online learning not only forces you to focus, and learn the course content as well as meet the learning objectives, it also forces you to learn on your own and forces you to grow up, manage deadlines and juggle schedules.

Online learning has many benefits and is a great option as it can accommodate to most schedules. However, a word of warning: Taking an online course requires real self-discipline, commitment, and motivation; if you can manage yourself, you will manage a good grade as the online learning community gives you all the tools necessary for success, but it is up to you to take advantage of those tools.



# Listen

**We've got 80,000 books for people with print disabilities**

- Audio books & magazines
- Braille books
- Described video
- Accessible e-books

To find out more just ask your librarian or visit [cniblibrary.ca](http://cniblibrary.ca)!



## Trillium Supports LDAO Research Project

LDAO is delighted to announce that the Ontario Trillium Foundation recently approved an application for research support. The one-year project is designed to examine the chapter network and provincial services with a view to building a sustainable funding base and a more coherent brand image across the province. Lawrence Barns, President & CEO, will lead the project with the support of the Chapter Committee of the Board and insight from all chapter staff, board and volunteers.

"The greatest challenge in Canada today is to have your voice heard in such a crowded charity environment" said Barns. "With Trillium's support we are able to truly look at our collective voice in Ontario and find ways to make sure the outstanding work happening in the chapters and the advocacy and product development of the provincial office gel to advance our cause in the public consciousness."

The plan for the project is to build a solid foundation to make decisions on what the future should look like for LDAO and the chapters in Ontario. This province is unique in Canada with its breadth of chapters and services offered, increasing the need to truly spend time to collaborate and communicate with the chapters and stakeholders and find mutually beneficial solutions to local delivery with a strong brand image and message. It is a crucial time in the history of the LDA community and this support couldn't be more timely, Barns comments.

"The key is to have a brand that will bring the support the LDA community needs and deserves. Too much of our time is spent chasing funding to keep open doors and deliver services. With the economy still in difficult times, traditional funding has eroded. However mega-charities continue to grow and dominate the public awareness, which in turn dominates support dollars, both public and private. Our hope is to see learning disabilities take its rightful place in the public awareness and funding support appropriate to the need and the changed lives that our services achieved."



# Free Software

## Firefox with Click Speak

- Click Speak is a Firefox web browser add-on. It reads web pages out loud, whether a page, paragraph or sentence.
- It gets built into the program so no copy and pasting is needed.

To download Firefox: [www.firefox.com](http://www.firefox.com)

To download Click Speak:  
<http://clickspeak.clcworld.net>

*For Windows, Mac and Linux*

## ReadPlease

- ReadPlease is a program that reads any text pasted into it.

To download ReadPlease:  
[www.readplease.com](http://www.readplease.com)

*For Windows*

## Google Calendar

- Google's online calendar allows you to schedule in classes, meetings and other events, as well as keep a to-do list and notes. Changes are saved automatically.
- You can set it to send text message reminders to your cell phone or email addresses.

[www.google.com/calendar](http://www.google.com/calendar)

## Google Notebook

- Google Notebook is like a workbook that you can access from anywhere. Changes are saved automatically.
- You can add links to research, work on school assignments and add notes.

[www.google.com/notebook](http://www.google.com/notebook)

## Mozilla Sunbird

- Mozilla Sunbird is a calendar and scheduling program.

- It lets you put in your appointments, classes and schedules and has a to-do-list with day, week or month views.

To download Sunbird:

[www.mozilla.org/projects/calendar/sunbird](http://www.mozilla.org/projects/calendar/sunbird)

*For Windows, Mac and Linux*

## OpenOffice.org

- OpenOffice has most of the same features as Microsoft Office, but is completely free. It can open Office files and also save them.
- It has spell-check with auto correct, tables to better organize thoughts, a thesaurus and image support.

To download: [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org)

*For Windows, Mac and Linux*

## TinySpell

- TinySpell is a Windows program that lets you use a spell checker in any Windows application.
- It checks your spelling while you type and underlines misspelled words (like Word, but in every program).

To download: [www.tinyspell.com](http://www.tinyspell.com)

*For Windows*

## Microsoft Reader

- Microsoft Reader is a free, downloadable software application that allows you to read eBooks on Windows-based devices. It maintains the look of the original book (page numbers and graphics), and offers bookmarking and other helpful features.
- There is a growing marketplace of over 60,000 eBook titles.

To download: [www.microsoft.com/reader](http://www.microsoft.com/reader)

*For Windows*

*Source: Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.*



# Shelf Life

Do you want that boy to read? Plad up for a pladventure! Hook this book!

## Plad Not Plaid - THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY OF THE BROTHERS PLAD

It started in Vermont, with a caring teacher, a dyslexic student, and a dyslexic carpenter.

She was a fourth grade teacher, and a friend of Sean Plasse. She called the thirty-three year old carpenter one day...

*"I have a boy who won't read. He's dyslexic, like you."*

*"Really? Well what does he like to do?"*

*"Fish, hunt, camp..."*

*"That's the stuff I like to do. Get him some books on that."*

*"There aren't any."*

*"You've got to be kidding me. Do you have many kids like that?"*

*"All of them."*

So began the quest of Sean Plasse, to write the best book for reluctant readers. *The Brothers Plad and The Mystery Trout* was first written as a five page short story. It was originally titled *Plaid*, but it didn't look right to Sean's dyslexic mind. He changed it to *Plad*. He wanted it to be inviting to dyslexic readers. It was a true fishing story from Sean's childhood with his brother Matt. The teacher read it out loud to her fourth grade class.

*"I read your story and they loved it!"*

*"And the boy?"*

*"I went to his trailer last night, and he read it*

*out loud to his parents. The kid loves it. You need to write us some more."*

Eight short stories later, her class ended the year with a *Plad Party*. Sean, writing under the name *Watermelon Tourmaline*, was their favorite author of the year. At the party, the kids wore plad and ate watermelon.

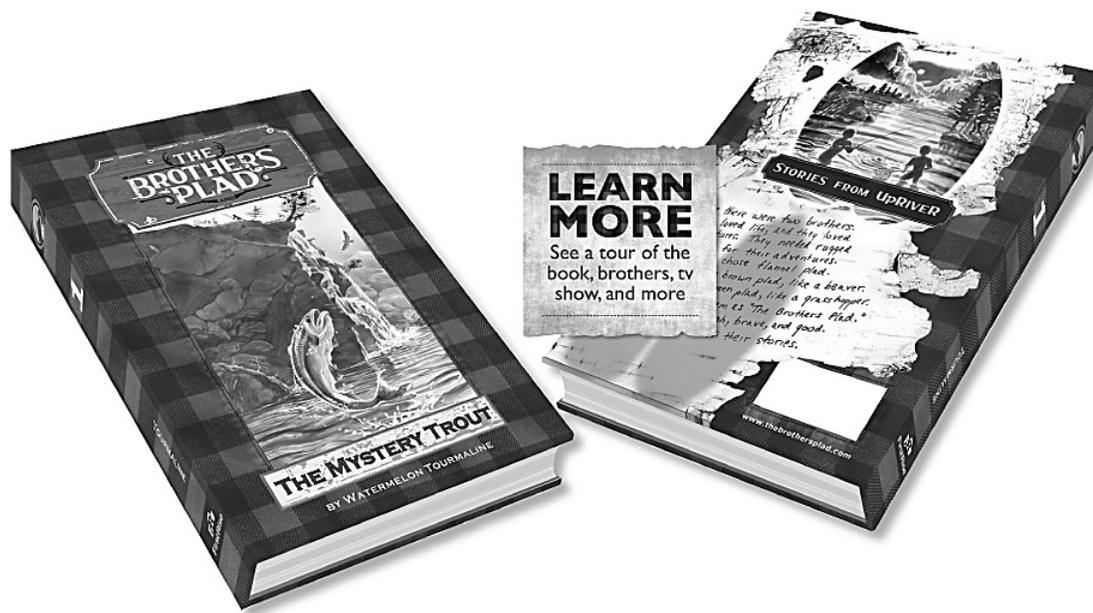
### A Tale of Two Brothers

*Watermelon Tourmaline* had struggled with dyslexia his entire life. He had become a carpenter, because it was a visual field. In his late twenties, he had served on the board of directors for a Vermont literacy non-profit, giving speeches on dyslexia to

the Governor of Vermont, National Public Radio, local television, famous CEOs, teachers, students, and more. Everywhere he went, he heard about the same struggle...getting boys to read. He worked for five years on *The Brothers Plad*. It was his quest to write a book that boys would read. He wanted to make reluctant readers into relentless readers.

*"Let me read some of your stories,"* said Watermelon's younger brother, Matt.

Matt read about their childhood fishing trip...*The Mystery Trout*...and loved the story, characters and themes. He was, after all, one of the true *Brothers Plad*. Matt, like his brother Watermelon, was clothed in plad at



## Shelf Life

birth by their parents. Fishing before they could walk, they took after generations of New Englanders, their family dating back to the Mayflower. Matt was one of the best. He once caught a trout with its own...

Matt had slaved for years to become a banker. Frugal, disciplined, he had eaten the same breakfast, egg on toast, for five straight years. All his money had been saved for a house. Every penny had been scraped to create a stable life in Vermont. Now he had a decision to make. He had bailed Watermelon out of disasters many times in life. Matt, the steady brother, with a thriving banking career, savings, and a house at his fingertips, decided to stay in his small apartment, and bet his fortunes on a children's book. He turned out to be an amazing editor and writer. He became the Editor in Plad, *Hignus Harkaway*. Hignus wanted a true book for boys. *Not for wizards or wimps*.

### "Let's go it together."

With that, Watermelon and Hignus, the real *Brothers Plad*, united in a dream to change

the world. Their belief, handed down from generations of family, is that *stories are life*. The brothers worked day and night, fought, argued, laughed, and invested everything they had into their story. To their dismay it grew, and grew, and grew into a large novel. The journey brought them to lawyers, editors, designers, artists, illustrators, printers, and more. They realized the impossible magnitude of their quest, and the forces against them...

*"Do you think we should contact a publisher, and try to sell the idea?"*

*"No! Let's go it ourselves. It will be a pladventure."*

With that, the brothers turned their back to the publishing industry. Without any idea on how to create, print, market, or sell books, they decided to do it their way, and create their own publishing company...*First Rise, LLC*...their own book...*The Brothers Plad and The Mystery Trout*...and their own story. They never sent a single manuscript to a publisher, agent, or book company. This would be their story. They would write

the best book for boys, or they would go broke trying. Either way, it would be a good story. And *stories...are...life*.

### Making Reluctant Readers Into Relentless Readers

Although all children and grownies love the *The Brothers Plad*, the book itself was designed with dyslexics in mind. The font is easy to read. Paragraphs are short, with ample spacing. There are visual icons which follow the story, and summarize at the end of chapters. There is one word purposefully misspelled in each chapter. The title, *Plad*, is spelled phonetically. One of the brothers, Tommy, is dyslexic, and struggles to read throughout the book. And of course, there is plenty of pladventure, worms, dirt, blood, sweat, and fishing. The *Brothers Plad* turns reluctant readers into relentless readers.

**Do you want that boy to read?  
Hook this book. Plad up!**



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# Chapter News & Views

## NEWS AND VIEWS FROM AROUND THE PROVINCE!

### OTTAWA

#### Latest Edition of Sunshine Day Camp Launched

The Sunshine Day Camp is a social skills program in a day camp setting!

#### 2012 Dates

Session 1: July 9– July 20

Session 2: July 23– Aug 3

Session 3: Aug 13– Aug 24

What is Sunshine Day Camp?

- Day camp program for kids aged 7-12 with learning disabilities and/or ADHD
- Goal of teaching social skills in communication, self-control, problem-solving, leadership, and peer relations
- Social skills are reinforced and modeled throughout all of our structured, non-competitive and fun-filled activities
- Specialized, experienced staff with a low counsellor to child ratio of 1:4

For information and applications contact LDAO-C at 613-567-5864, E-mail: [resources@ldaottawa.com](mailto:resources@ldaottawa.com), or go to [www.ldaottawa.com](http://www.ldaottawa.com)

### SIMCOE COUNTY

#### Annual Conference: Many Minds Meet

The Learning Disabilities Association of Simcoe County is inviting you to our Annual Conference where “Many Minds Meet” for a time of learning and discovery.

We are pleased to present guest speaker Jill Hewlett from Brain Works Global. Jill’s expertise is as a licensed Brain Gym®

Consultant/Instructor of 15 years ([www.brainworksglobal.com](http://www.brainworksglobal.com)).

Brain Gym® is a program of physical movements designed to improve the brain’s functioning and reduce stress in the body. The Brain Gym® program uses 26 specific developmental movements to enhance whole brain/body integration. Because the 26 exercises balance the body’s energy and enhance the three dimensions of brain functioning, anyone can notice an improvement in focusing, concentration and memory skills. The conference will give you the opportunity to learn 12 of these movements.

Brain Gym® helps school children learn better, business people to be more productive, seniors to feel more alert and coordinated, sport participants to perform better, and everyone to feel less stressed and anxious. Come and playfully discover the power of Brain Gym® to enhance your brain integration and personal effectiveness.

The afternoon will give participants the opportunity to attend breakout sessions on topics such as ADHD, literacy development tools, movement and dance and assistive technology.

Get more information and Register Now!

If you have any questions or require further information please do not hesitate to contact our office.

We look forward to seeing you at the LDASC Annual Conference. It’s sure to be a great event!

### WINDSOR-ESSEX

#### Building a Smart Community through Partnerships

Since receiving assistive technology training and equipment through LDAO in 2006, LDAWE has been forging community partnerships to expand the use of and access to assistive technology throughout the Windsor-Essex region. In 2010, LDAWE was awarded the 2010 Smart Community Success Story Award from the University of Windsor’s Centre for Smart Community Innovation for the Association’s progress in increasing access to assistive technology for individuals with LD/ADHD in our community. Our success story was included in the City of Windsor’s successful bids to become a SMART 21 Community in 2010 and a SMART 7 Community in 2011. Currently, LDAWE provides the following services involving assistive technology:

- LDAWE’s Computer Enrichment Camp introduces a variety of assistive technology software to youth ages 10-15 and teaches them how to effectively utilize the software for class work, homework completion, and test taking.
- The Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board contracts LDAWE to provide assistive technology training for at-risk students within a variety of different After-School Programs, March Break Camps, and Summer Camps.
- The Greater Essex County District School Board contracts LDAWE to provide one-to-one assistive technology training to students who have recently received SEA Claim equipment through the Ministry of Education.

- LDAWE's Strategies and Adaptive Technology Program provides adults with the tools and skills they need to independently and effectively manage time and paper, read, do research, and write with the use of assistive technology software.
- The Windsor Public Library partnered with LDAWE to purchase four computers with a variety of assistive technology software. Of these, two computers were placed in library branches and two were placed with the library's Adult Literacy Program. LDAWE also provided assistive technology training to library staff members.
- LDAWE has had discussions with a variety of other community partners to determine whether partnerships can be created to allow further access to assistive technology equipment throughout the Windsor-Essex community.

## YORK REGION

**LDA York Region is pleased to announce several exciting projects this year, including the latest installment of its Technology Camp!**

Summer Break~ August 20-23 2012

Learn to use Assistive Technology tool to organize, story board, edit and produce movie. Target Grade 4 to Grade 12

### SOAR

One-to-one opportunities or small group session during school holidays- March break and summer holiday to learn and talk about LDs, making choice, choosing paths, developing self-advocacy skills, study skills and strategies for success. Target Group Grade 7 to 8

### SOAR TRANSITION

Provide individual session for SOAR TRANSITION for students who are transitioning into post-secondary education or the workplace. Target Group Grade 11 to 12

Topics Include

- Self advocacy
- What is my Learning Style?
- What does my LD mean for me?
- Learn and build study skills
- How to transition into post secondary
- How to transition into the workplace

### ABC's and 123's Tutoring Program:

To build the skills parents needs to effectively encourage their child/youth in emerging literacy and numeracy skills.

Target Group: SK to grade 8

### One on One Coaching

The sessions will give participants a more positive outlook and help them reach their academic and personal potential. Target ages 12+

### Social Skills Summer Camp

This program provides a fun and supportive environment to encourage friendship, positive social/emotional behaviours and positive conflict resolution. Target Group: Children ages 5 to 12. July 23rd to July 27th & August 13th to August 17th

### Conference/ Events

Two Day Workshop and Assistive Technology Fair for Parents and Educators of Students Grades 7-12. Featured keynote speaker Dr. Sheryl Feinstein, Dana Sahian and Melissa Cait.

- Dr. Sheryl Feinstein- a professor and chair of the Education Department at Augustana College in Sioux Fall, SD USA
- Dana Sahian - Speech Language Pathologist, she works with individuals

with diverse communication and learning needs.

- Melissa Cait- a Psychological Associate and the founder and Clinical Director of the Cornerstone Clinic. Melissa has more than 20 years of experience in school based Psychology

Topics included:

- Teaching and Reaching the Teenage Brain
- Turning Up the Cool Factor with Assistive Technology
- Assistant Technology Fair: Test and explore a variety of technologies that help support student learning in and out of the classroom

LDAYR had an amazing turn out and positive feedback, close to 200 people attended the conference.



# In Person

## SHAWN MINTZ

By Carter Hammett

### If You Build It They Will Come

*"A lot of people went further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could." -Unknown*



**B**y now the benefits of mentoring can't be denied. The practice, formal or informal, crosses industries, nurtures and develops talents, and in short, benefits everyone.

Coordinating a mentoring program on the other hand is a position that requires a lot of skill and commitment and it's something that Shawn Mintz offers in spades. A scant few months ago, the former employment counsellor saw an opportunity to fill a void and decided to launch the online enterprise, Mentor City.

"Mentor City provides a structure to engage in a meaningful mentoring relationship on the site," says Mintz. "It's clear and concise and mentees tend to take the lead and make the most of the relationship."

Whether you're an entrepreneur starting a new business and looking for guidance, a new comer to Canada looking for resources or a person with a disability trying to adjust to a new job, mentoring is a unique solution-based temporary relationship between two people who come together to work on a specific task for an agreed upon amount of time. Each situation is unique and each situation holds benefits that work for both mentor and mentee. The mentee benefits from the wisdom and experience of a person skilled in his field; the mentor sometimes learns to see the world through fresh perspective.

The web site is easy to navigate and registration is free says Mintz. Mentors and mentees decide if they want their relationship to be formal or informal based

on a suggested 15-minute discussion. They also decide on goals that need to be accomplished and how long the relationship will last. Evaluation-driven, the web site keeps a running record of all correspondence between participants so accountability is built right into the relationship from inception. (Incidentally,

*"... accountability is built right into the relationship from inception ..."*

this also creates a great accommodation for people with memory issues)

Both parties complete professional profiles clearly outlining what they are looking for or offering. Relationships are identified based on search. The relationships can be industry-specific and related to specific goals. Furthermore, the web site is compatible with Linked In so profiles don't have to be complicated to complete.

During his previous employment, Mintz was handed the responsibility of launching a marketing department, which included a mentoring program for new Canadians. He consciously reached out to numerous mentors to support him with everything from public speaking to event planning. "I had mentors I could call up all the time and that's why I love mentoring. I am passionate about those conversations and it's exciting to see so much potential for learning and growth," he says.

People with learning disabilities can use mentoring as an effective accommodation in a variety of contexts. Time is often the single greatest accommodation a person requires and a mentor can act as a nurturing "go-to" person to guide a new employee through the acclimatization process. They can act as the go-between between supervisor and employee; introduce new accommodations, provide job analysis and enhance a new employee's overall performance through feedback, role modelling and resource.

Mintz says it's important for mentees to "think about what you want to achieve and who it is you want help from. Reach out to them and make the most of the experience. Mentoring is a natural thing to do. Don't think that people don't have the time for it. It's an honour to be approached and people want to give their time."

And it's that gift of nurturing that's so special to so many. Because of its online nature, mentoring can be done at the touch of a button and at the participants' convenience and in private as well. Mintz himself benefits from several relationships on the site, both as mentor and mentee. With one relationship he benefits from developing his business sales, but in another he supports someone launching their own business, thus emphasizing the give-and-take elements of mentoring.

"Mentoring has huge potential and this is a very exciting period," he says. "I can see several communities helping specific groups of people. Yes. It's for everyone"

For more information, visit [www.mentorcity.com](http://www.mentorcity.com)



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## The Web Based Teaching Tool

Early Screening and Intervention Program

### *Early Intervention is Key!*

The Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) is a **bilingual, universal, online program used by primary teachers** (JK -Grade 1) since 2003 for **early screening and intervention**. Teachers use WBTT to screen their students in the following areas that have proven to be predictive of students' academic success:

- School Readiness
- Early Literacy Development (Phonological Awareness)
- Mathematics

#### **The WBTT program helps teachers determine:**

1. Which students are struggling
2. What areas they are struggling with
3. How these areas of need can be addressed in the classroom



*For More Information on WBTT,  
Please Contact Us!*



[www.WBTT.ca](http://www.WBTT.ca)

[info@WBTT.ca](mailto:info@WBTT.ca)

1-888-239-1946

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