

Training

2nd October 2008
Symbol based Solutions
Widgit Software

7th October 2008
Grid 2 Communication
Software

20th October 2008
Creating information in
Alternative Formats

4th & 18th November
2008 RSC TV
Accessible eAssessments
TechDis

16th December 2008
What's New in Texthelp
Read & Write Gold
Texthelp Systems

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Inclusion Blog:

www.scottish-rscs.org/access

User testing to check the Accessibility of your Website

Often when people think about accessible websites, they think about online validators. The lengthy online reports generated by these validators often result in a maze of indiscernible jargon that leave people in a state of puzzlement. While the W3C still provides universally recognised guidelines, recently developed web accessibility checkers provide a more 'accessible' way of checking websites. One in particular is IBM's aDesigner2, a freely available HTML checker which provides easy to understand graphs and pie charts in plain simple English.



Errol Luders, Coatbridge College

Usability

However, something that is often overlooked is the usability of the website. How, for example, does a learner with a screen reader, or someone with a complex motor difficulty access your website? Errol Luders, Media Support Manager at Coatbridge College, was keen to ensure that as wide a group of learners as possible would be able to access the information on the college's website. He wanted to test the College website with a range of assistive technologies. The Scottish RSCs became involved in this development as a way of highlighting how websites could be tested with voice recognition, screen readers, switch access (using EZ keys), Intellikeys (adapted keyboard) with a trackball as well as a head camera pointing device. Coatbridge's website was then tested with a variety of stylesheets enabling a learner with visual difficulties to customise a web browser to meet their individual preferences. Errol's hard work was not in vain as the College's web site passed with flying colours on all of the usability tests. Careful planning by Errol as well as easy-to-use navigation and use of plain English have all contributed to a successful and accessible and inclusive college website.

User Testing

Is user testing something that you have considered in evaluating the accessibility of your institutional website? To help inspire you, a video summary of the work carried out on the Coatbridge website is available to view on the Scottish RSCs Inclusion blog at: www.scottish-rscs.org.uk/access/ and select the tab 'making the web accessible'.

Some organisations that carry out user testing are:

User Vision at www.uservision.co.uk/

Abilitynet at www.abilitynet.org.uk/webtesting

eQuality

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If you require this newsletter in an alternative format please contact us, [your Regional Support Centre](#)

AccessApps: Enabling technologies in your pocket!

AccessApps is an initiative developed by the Scottish RSCs and TechDis. It attempts to reduce the digital divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. The factor which usually comes to mind when thinking about the digital divide is cost.

Many people benefit from being able to adjust or customise the way they access information and AccessApps aims to provide access to open source and freeware enabling technologies which will allow them to do just that.

In many cases, just small changes to the way in technology is used can make a big difference to the way in which a student can access it.

Much of the time problems can be solved just through knowing a little more about what is already out there. And as AccessApps shows, what is already out there can be completely free! Especially if someone requires a little extra support but does not need the sophistication of a commercial assistive technology.

There is nothing curriculum-specific about AccessApps. The applications provided are potentially invaluable to individuals in colleges as well as universities, and even workplaces.



They have the potential to be beneficial to so many people

including learners waiting for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), those not eligible for DSA, people who have difficulties that are not categorised as 'disability related', people with different learning styles, students with literacy support needs or those with English as an additional language.

Some of the applications are generic tools, such as free word processing and presentation alternatives in Open Office a free equivalent to Microsoft Office.

Others cater for specific needs such as magnification of the screen or being able to view the screen in different colours, or controlling a computer without using a mouse.

To find out more look at the Scottish RSC Inclusion Blog:

www.scottish-rscs.org.uk/access/

or email our eAdvisor for Inclusion Margaret McKay at:

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Access & Inclusion
in eLearning

From your RSC in
Scotland
South & West



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Keeping CALM @THE MET!

By Janis Carson, Vice Principal
Glasgow Metropolitan College

Developing strategy to address the personalised needs of learners, the equalities agendas, widening access and inclusiveness objectives at the same time as complying with legislative demands can be a tall order for College senior management teams. Implementing the high ideals committed to in our strategic plans can be even more of a nightmare when it comes to implementation.

We sought to address these challenges in very practical and real terms. **CALM** (Creating Accessible Learning Materials) Project was initiated as part of a whole college strategic commitment to inclusion and as a drive towards a comprehensive modernisation of learning resources within the College. We took the decision to ring fence a significant sum of money to digitise learning and teaching materials cross college and built into this concept the need to address issues of equalities, of format, copyright and plain English to agreed College quality assurance standards.

The objective was to have materials in an accessible, electronic format in to:

- proactively respond to the duties laid out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- increase staff uptake of the College's VLE which is Blackboard
- reduce the large (and growing) number of requests for note-takers
- present learning and teaching materials in an accessible, College-branded format

The project brought together two members of staff whose College wide remits matched the aims of the project: Pauline Halligan, Equalities & Staff Development Manager, and Jen Fuller, e-Learning Technologist. Margaret McKay, eAdvisor: Access & Inclusion at JISC RSC SW Scotland was heavily involved in advising the project initiation and early



training sessions. In its first year CALM was established as a College wide staff development initiative, aiming to train all academic and key clerical staff to create and maintain accessible electronic resources and present them in the College house style. Over the year all academic staff and key clerical/support staff were asked to attend a half day training session where they would learn:

Accessibility Why?

The legislative, business and personal case for being accessible. An emphasis on the DDA 2005 with the recognition that accessibility in information is as important as other environmental concerns.

Accessibility How?

Staff would learn some ways that they can alter teaching practice to be more inclusive to varied learners needs and preferences. This involves some case studies as well as practical examples of small changes which can increase accessibility and inclusion.

e-Learning & Accessibility

Staff received a demonstration of some interactive e-learning resources that can be integrated and repurposed to enhance their learning and teaching materials. At the training session staff were provided with a folder of supporting materials and a pen drive with accessible templates uploaded.

Supporting the CALM Project

To ensure that staff were fully supported in digitising their materials, all clerical/support staff who had any involvement in the creation of learning and teaching materials were trained at the start of the year. In addition, two new members of staff were hired to support the project in reformatting material and enhancing content.

Sustainable CALM

At its core the project is very student focused with accessibility and quality of materials as its prime objectives. Digitising has also allowed the Support for Learning Division to utilise assistive technologies and software to meet student needs.



The CALM Team

What's Happening at BRITE?

By Kellie Mote

BRITE Assistive Technology
Development Officer



BRITE (Beattie Resources for Inclusiveness in Technology and Education) works with Scotland's colleges, assisting them to build their capacity to be inclusive learning providers. Based in Edinburgh, we currently provide resources and training to all Scotland's FE colleges and have recently expanded our work into Northern Ireland, where delegates from both further and higher education institutions participate in our training programme.

As one of BRITE's two Assistive Technology Development Officers, I deliver training on assistive technology components of the BRITE PDA, Inclusiveness: Facilitating Strategies to Support Learners with Additional Needs. My colleague, Monty Lilburn, and I also regularly run half-day seminars, looking at ways technology can be used to make college a more successful experience for students.

BRITE also operates an Equipment Loan Bank, through which subscriber colleges can access a wide range of assistive technology.

The purpose of the Loan Bank is to enable students and staff to evaluate equipment in the context in which it will be used, to ensure that the right choice is made before purchasing. We have built up our loan bank in response to requests and have found this the best way to avoid having any expensive equipment sitting unused on a shelf!

Equipment is supported by easy-to-follow user guides and additional training and advice where required.

If you're not sure whether your college is a member of the BRITE Equipment Loan Bank, first have a look at the BRITE Participant List in the People section of our website at www.brite.ac.uk.

Once you have identified the BRITE Link (s) for your college, get in touch with them and they will tell you whether your college is currently a member and how they are your key to accessing it!

Your college BRITE Link (s) can also provide answers to any questions you may have about how best to support your learners.

On the BRITE website you can find out more about inclusiveness in FE, assistive technology and staff development opportunities. We recently launched a new design and have plans for lots of new content, do stop by and have a look!

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Danish Company Seek Staff with Autism

Danish software company Specialisterne employ people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to improve the quality of its software testing. Instead of seeing difference as a problem, the company harness the special skills of people with ASD ("motivation, focus, persistence, precision and the ability to follow instructions") with considerable success. The company are apparently looking to start up an operation in Glasgow.

Read more about this splendid organisation on:

<http://www.specialisterne.dk/html/english/Home.html>

Watch this space !