

## Outcomes and Benefits in Assistive Technology Service Delivery

Phil Parette, *Editor*

David Dikter, *Associate Editor*

Since publication of the first issue of ATOB in Fall, 2004, and its archival on the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) Web site (<http://www.atia.org/atob/ATOBV1N1/index.htm>) more than 7,000 downloads of the journal have been logged. In recognition of the successful partnership between ATIA and the Special Education Assistive Technology (SEAT) Center at Illinois State University in publishing the journal, a case study of the partnership was recently prepared by National Center for Technology Innovation (see <http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/partnership/casestudies7.asp>). The Editors wish to reiterate their commitment to ensuring the journal's timely dissemination of information regarding the outcomes and benefits of assistive technology (AT) practices across multiple constituencies nationally. We think of these constituencies collectively as a 'community.'

In this issue of ATOB, six articles are presented that provide a cross section of national issues impacting the field of AT, coupled with specific practices having important outcomes and benefits implications for our community.

In the first article, Phil Parette, George Peterson-Karlan, and Brian Wojcik describe an AT visioning activity designed to support the development of a national AT agenda. Conducted in December of 2004, this activity was attended by individuals from across the country representing diverse constituencies (see <http://www.seat.ilstu.org/aboutus/Visioning2004/index.shtml>). A series of

questions were presented to participants including: (a) What do you see as the state of AT services nationally? (b) What do you see as the challenges for the development of AT services nationally? (c) What is your vision for AT services nationally? (d) What do you see as needed 'tomorrow' that is not available now? As needed within 5 years? (e) Who are the existing entities available nationally that could be more effectively integrated to make the power and promise of AT a reality? (f) How could existing entities be integrated into partnerships and/or coalitions to create more effective AT services nationally? (g) What are the critical outcomes that would make this possible? Participant discussions were collapsed into a series of themes that are discussed, providing a clearer perspective of the status of AT service delivery with implications for future planning and systemic change.

In the second article, Dave Edyburn, Sally Fenemma-Jansen, Prabha Hariharan, and Roger Smith acknowledge the paucity of information available regarding the integration of outcome data collection into daily professional practice. The authors use the metaphor of a 'snapshot' as a suggested approach to consider the collection of AT outcome data. Based on work conducted by the Assistive Technology Outcomes Measurement System (ATOMS; see <http://www.uwm.edu/CHS/r2d2/atoms/>), the authors analyze four strategies designed to collect school AT outcome data, with an emphasis on the 'pattern' of snapshots revealed in each strategy. However, the authors also caution that the development of

snapshot theory may result in initial foci on practical issues (e.g., when, where, and how to take snapshots), though there must also be a “focus on methods of organizing, sharing, and interpreting the data obtained through data snapshots.”

In the third article, Bonnie Mintun describes her family quest for augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technology for their daughter, Anna. Though the process of finding an appropriate AAC system was compounded by Anna’s severe cognitive, visual and orthopedic disabilities, low expectations held by others regarding Anna’s capability exacerbated the challenges. Reported successes with the Vanguard™ and the Vantage™ supported the family’s “conclusion that prerequisite skills should not be used to restrict access to AAC.” The author further notes that despite lack of ‘fluency’ with her AAC device, Anna’s observed competencies strongly support use of a more complex device that has given her a sense of Self, increased communicative assertiveness, and a higher social regard by others.

In the fourth article, Karen Erickson, Sally Clendon, Linzy Abraham, and Vicky Roy report an 8-week study involving three classroom teachers and 23 students with significant developmental disabilities in which a new literacy and communication instructional program, *MEville to WEville*, was implemented. Data collection included a variety of pre- and post-implementation literacy measures, teacher interviews, and classroom observations. Though non-statistically significant, ‘practical’ measured outcomes and benefits of the *MEville to WEville* program were demonstrated through increases in students’ attempts to initiate and sustain social interactions, and improvements in literacy skills and understandings.

In the fifth paper, Patricia Murphy describes a combination of strategies and supports (i.e., strategic pooling of AT, human resources and funding options) resulting in ‘meaningful’ employment for a 25-year-old man with cerebral palsy. Use of an AAC device that interfaces with a bookseller’s warehouse computer system and scanner has enabled the consumer to maintain a part-time job processing inventory. The author discusses an additional AT ‘mix’ necessary to successfully ensure the consumer’s employment success, including a new scanner, conveyor belt, an automated book loader, and an attendant to assist with manual job tasks.

In the sixth article, William Morrison, and Tara Jeffs describe a preservice study designed to engage students enrolled in a reading and writing methods course in meaningful and effective uses of the AlphaSmart 3000® and to facilitate ‘active’ thinking. Employing a split-half design, students were alternately team-taught using both traditional lecture/discussion format and a technology-rich environment that emphasized the infusion of AT techniques. Alternation of quiz formats (traditional vs. technology) coupled with student perception ratings were primary means of data collection. Data analysis revealed that (a) positive experiences using the AlphaSmart 3000® were related to quiz grades; (b) a positive experience with the AlphaSmart 3000® during their pre-service training influenced a student’s decision to use the device in his or her future classrooms; and (c) the use of the technology as a test-taking tool did not have a positive or negative effect on the score a student received on a test.

Collectively these articles reflect the interest of and commitment to a diverse range of constituencies that the journal wishes to include in its community of readers. However, we encourage contributions to the ATOB community from even more individuals representing vendors, government,

institutions of higher learning, AT consultants and specialists, not-for-profits, community groups, consumers and families. We also anticipate sharing information about the journal at the ATIA 2006 Annual Conference (see [http://www.atia.org/conf\\_2006.html](http://www.atia.org/conf_2006.html)) and hope to see our readers and those interested in submitting manuscripts for publication consideration at the conference session. A Call for Papers is included in a separate section of this issue. Thanks again to all of you for your support of the ATOB, and more importantly for your dedication to ensuring that AT makes a difference!