

sequel

deaf telecoms update

The key to the future of deaf telecoms may lie in Europe

How can the Information Society be opened up to all deaf and speech-impaired people? How can deaf organisations develop a Europe-wide strategy that will work with the new EU regulatory framework for electronic communications already being implemented in member states?

A very well-attended conference in Brussels organized by the RNID addressed these issues in February and a number of important themes emerged.

The production of specialist, assistive technology is not the right approach, claimed Guido Gybels, Director of New Technologies at RNID. He called for inclusive design because it made ethical and economic sense. As an example, he highlighted that the current user experience of text telephony falls well short of voice telephony and set-out his vision for a mainstream interactive texting solution.

Access to telecoms is a human rights issue said Johan Wesemann of the European Union of the Deaf. He was backed by Marcel Bobeldijk, President of the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, who focused on access to television and wanted to set a goal of 100% subtitling on TV by 2010.

In the keynote speech Erkki Liikanen, the European Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society, highlighted his support for a Design-for-All philosophy. He also talked of the powerful opportunities afforded by broadband and its ability to offer multiple services for different user needs.



Photo courtesy of NDCS

Don't forget the **NDCS Open Day** at Esher, Surrey in June – see diary dates on back page. 18 June is the Professionals' Day and 19th is Family Fun Day.

TAG's newsletter for advisers of deaf people and others interested in deaf telecoms.

Inside this issue:

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- ▶ new 118 Directory enquiries
- ▶ Vodafone first to give full relay access
- ▶ Hearing aid wearers & telecoms seminar

Instant Messaging

A way to text on the Internet that will come as second nature to many deaf people

Do you use a mobile phone with a camera? For anything unusual or special? Tell Sequel and we can pass on your ideas.
Email
sequel@palam.co.uk

Still wondering where all those text and email payphones are?

Go to www.btinternetkiosks.com/textphone/map.html for a listing.

TAG thanks Vodafone for its sponsorship of Sequel

Not so long ago, it seemed that deaf people were the only people wanting to communicate by text over phone lines. Not so today! There has been an explosion in mobile phone texting. And now Instant Messaging is beginning to spread from the hearing world into deaf communities.

What is Instant Messaging?

Instant messaging lets you send text (and files) direct from your computer to another computer when you are connected to the Internet and logged on to your IM account. You can send lines of text to anyone on your "buddy list" who is logged on at the same time.

The lines of text appear virtually instantly on the other person's computer screen, so you can have a conversation quite like you would on a textphone. And there are even some added benefits:

- you don't have to dial anyone up – but they do have to be connected to the Internet at the same time as you.
- you don't have to type GA (go ahead). Your text is not sent until you press return (or send).
- the line is sent all at once – not character by character – so you can change your sentence half way through without the other person seeing what you are doing.
- conversations can go on for hours with long gaps in between. It's quite acceptable to get on with something else and only reply when you are ready.

What do you need for IM?

If you use email, you can almost certainly use IM. All you need is an Internet connection, some IM software and a registration to an IM account (see box opposite).

The software and account registration are free and you can communicate at no charge across different accounts.

How do I find people on IM?

IM users have special IM addresses – a bit like email addresses. Just find out their IM name, tell them yours and if you both put those names in your buddy lists you can start chatting next time you are both online at the same time.

How many deaf people use IM?

Nobody knows! At a recent TAG meeting only about a quarter present used it. Expect to see big increases in users soon.

What is IM good for?

Friends use IM to keep in touch. For example, twins – one of whom is deaf – keep very close contact on IM. Some people use IM at work to collaborate on projects. You can use it whatever way you want to.

IM etiquette

Remember that your buddies cannot always be expected to reply immediately to your instant message – they might be busy doing other things when they receive it.

IM at work

Some employers won't let you use IM at work because it might breach their stringent security rules.

Instant Messaging services

You can obtain free software and free registration for an Instant Messenger account at:

AOL Instant Messenger
<http://www.aol.co.uk/aim/>

ICQ Instant Messenger
<http://web.icq.com/>

MSN Messenger
<http://messenger.msn.com/>

Yahoo! Messenger
<http://messenger.yahoo.com/>

All the services interconnect, so it doesn't really matter which one you pick.



What's that number?

Finding it is probably easier than you think with the new 118 numbers

About 16 different companies now provide Directory Enquiry services and all of their numbers begin with 118. These new Directory Enquiry numbers were introduced to encourage competition in the directory enquiries market.

Deaf people can access any of the 118 numbers using BT TextDirect. Just put 18001 in front of the 118xxx number you want to use. But remember calls to 118 numbers are not eligible for a text rebate.

If you do not know which 118 company you want to use, just dial 192 via BT TextDirect (18001192). The Typetalk operator will then relay information about the different 118 companies offering directory enquiries.

The 118 companies charge different prices and some even offer to connect you once they have found the number. So check your next bill to see that you are happy with the prices that you have been charged by the 118 company you've chosen to use.

Directory Enquiries on the Internet

You can also get your directory enquiry information free on the Internet from www.bt.com. You automatically get up to ten free searches a day – and if you

register on the www.bt.com site, you can get a further 200 free searches a month.

If you can't use printed telephone books

If because of a disability such as visual impairment or some upper body impairments you cannot use a printed telephone book and have registered this fact with Typetalk, you can still use the old 18001 195 number to call directory enquiries via Typetalk. This service has been around for quite some time, but many people are not aware of it. The direct textphone access 0800 838 363 will continue for the moment, but because of the introduction of 118 its future is being reviewed.

How new users can register for 195

If you are deaf and have a disability that prevents you from using the printed phonebook, you can register by calling the free number (18001) 0800 587 0195.

You will then receive a form to complete and return. If you are eligible, you will then be sent a pin number. From then on you will be able to use the FREE service by dialing 18001 195 and giving your pin number.

Text rebates no longer apply to 0870 numbers.

BT's Age and Disability unit celebrates its twentieth birthday this year.

Bob Twitchin, former chairman of DIEL under Oftel, has been appointed to the Ofcom Consumer Panel.

Mike Whitlam, former RNID boss, has been appointed Chairman of the Ofcom Advisory Committee on Older & Disabled People.

Vodafone first in relay

Vodafone is the first mobile network operator to offer full implementation of the relay service access as required by Ofcom.

TAG welcomes Vodafone's move, and wants other mobile networks to follow its lead promptly.

At present, the other mobile networks are not complying with Ofcom's regulation (General Condition 15) that full access to RNID Typetalk should have been in place on 1 January 2004. Currently, the others offer access only by Relay Assist and not via the BT TextDirect prefixes – 18001 and 18002.

New mobile textphone

Vodafone has just launched the 9210i, a mobile textphone for deaf people.

Incorporating RNID textphone software, Vodafone Mobile Textphone customers can make and receive real-time text calls and use the phone with RNID Typetalk.

Monthly and pay-as-you-go payment options are available.



The phone is available through Vodafone stores and RNID.



Is anyone answering yet?

Despite progress in so many areas of telecoms, hearing-aid wearers still face serious difficulties. Stung into action by a UK Government paper that ignored these problems, Hearing Concern joined forces with PhoneAbility to host a seminar to debate the issues on 3 March 2004 in London. Jack Sandover reports:

After a fast-moving address by John Suchet, the ITV news presenter and President of Hearing Concern, Vivienne Pozo of Hearing Concern outlined the maze of problems faced by the hearing aid wearer – from the interference from mobile phones to the difficulties in coping with call centres.

Professor Adrian Davis emphasised the extent of the issue by indicating the very large number of people in the UK likely to have problems using the phone. He said that the number of people with significant hearing problems may now be as many as one in five and not one in seven as is previously thought.

Suppliers and providers then reviewed the situation from their perspective. The influence of US regulation and standards on mobile phone development was outlined by David Dzumba of Nokia. The way responsibility for the inclusion of disabled customers has become a chicken and egg debate between service providers and telephone manufacturers was described by Fiona Miller of BT Age and Disability. The efforts of hearing aid manufacturers to improve the immunity of hearing aids to

mobile phone interference was discussed by Soren Larsen of the European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association.

In a thought-provoking paper, Tony Shipley described the tensions between regulation and competition. Regulation, he said, can lead to stagnation in design while competition can effectively isolate minority users like disabled people.

But has there been real progress over the past 13 years? No-one doubts the advances in technology, but Mike Martin amongst others expressed disappointment in the progress in resolving the problems faced by hearing aid wearers. He called for a united voice from the voluntary sector in its discussions with industry and Ofcom and noted the current lack of attention to the problems in recent UK Government and European Union documents.

By bringing together such a full range of interests, the seminar organisers ensured that issues were aired and that there was vital networking between the groups. They hope to ensure that the large consumer niche market of hearing aid wearers will not be left out as technology progresses.

[TAG website](http://telecomsactiongroup.org.uk)

telecomsactiongroup.org.uk


Events

NDCS Technology Exhibition

at Sandown Park

**Racecourse, Esher, Surrey
18 & 19 June 2004**

*(18th is Professionals' Day,
19th is Family Fun Day)*

 Rob Horrocks, NDCS on
0121 234 9820 (voice & text)
or email
[conference.exhibition@
ndcs.org.uk](mailto:conference.exhibition@ndcs.org.uk)

**TAG seminar on
communications –
telecoms and broadcast-
ing – on 19 October 2004.**
(Full details in the next
edition)

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receive *Sequel*, contact:

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Orange Award

TAG has won an Orange Futures Award for its communication initiatives. The Awards for up to £5000 are designed to reward projects that use communication to help people with sensory disabilities participate more fully in society.

TAG is using the grant for specialist work, travel and communication support.

Amongst the other 22 successful projects were the Leeds Deaf Club which is planning a Cyber Cafe and the Deaf Advice Service in Sheffield (with a claim as the only advice service in the country using British Sign Language) using communications technology.

Deaf telecoms survey nearly complete!

The research project into the use of text telecoms by deaf people is almost complete. The researchers from City University will be producing their report later this spring and presenting it to the Steering Committee of TAG, BT, Orange, O₂, Vodafone, Ofcom and DIEL.

“We are very pleased with the numbers of people responding to our questionnaires,” said Doria Pilling, leader of the City University research team. “The response from young people in schools has been particularly encouraging.”

The main survey findings will appear in the next Sequel.

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