

PEC NewsLinks

A507 Claxton Complex
Knoxville, TN
37996-3454
865•974•0607 (v/t)
865•974•3522 (fax)
email: pec@utk.edu

STSN: Speech-to-Text Services Network

Ball State in '64 (RID) • NAD Conference in 1975 (ASLTA) • St. Paul in 1979 (CIT)

What do all these have in common? Each signifies the beginning of a professional organization for each of these groups, and an end to working in isolation and having no support!

Well, to that list let's add... Pittsburgh in 2004!

A new professional organization has been established for users and providers of speech-to-text services, called STSN: Speech-to-Text Services Network.

Some background – For those of you who may be new to this concept, speech-to-text systems convert spoken language into words on a computer or projection screen, as the words are spoken. These include the traditional court reporter verbatim stenography systems; more recent, non-verbatim meaning-based systems; and even more recent, automatic speech recognition systems.

There is a growing use of these speech-to-text technologies to provide communication access in classes and meetings for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. These include CaptionMic®, CART, C-Print®, RapidText®, TypeWell® and others.

Setting up the organization – STSN was conceived in July 2003. An ongoing discussion about the need for an organization for speech-to-text providers in the country sparked a small group (Judy Colwell, Sharon Downs and Cheryl Thomas) to take charge and begin the process. They saw the need for an organization that would provide support for speech-to-text providers, and serve as an information resource for consumers, administrators, and service providers, and would promote educational guidelines and best practices.

The huge challenge with setting up an organization like this is the fact that the systems used to provide speech-to-text services are competitors. Getting everyone to the table to establish this organization for the good of the field was difficult, but worth the effort. They said it couldn't be done, but they've been proven wrong!

A small working group of concerned professionals from around the country was established, with representatives from CSUN, NTID, PEPNet, National Court Reporters Association, Western Oregon University, and Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to name a few, with Sharon Downs from the Arkansas

(continued on page 2)

PEC NewsLinks
June 2004
Summer Issue

Postsecondary Education

Consortium

serves the Southern region of the United States, and is a consortium of state outreach and technical assistance centers which are housed at postsecondary programs serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The mission of the PEC is to enhance learning environments that empower these individuals. PEC promotes quality programs and services through innovative practices and outreach.

A Member of PEPNet

What's Inside?

- 1• STSNetwork
- 3• Ticket to Success for DSS
- 5• Accommodating Students who are Deaf/Blind.
- 8• Student Spotlight: Juan Lopez

(continued from
page 1)

SOTAC serving as Lead Facilitator. To see a complete list of the founding members, go to <http://www.stsn.org/Membership.html#coregroup>.)

*Article contributed by
Arkansas State
Outreach and
Technical Assistance
Coordinator:
Sharon Downs*

The initial objectives were developed to:

- Establish a website with resource information for service providers, administrators and consumers
- Review credentialing system
- Review Codes of Ethics
- Review Ethics panel procedures
- Design Continuing Education program

... and the mission statement was envisioned: *The mission of the Speech-to-Text Services Network (STSN) is to provide information and support to service providers, administrators, and consumers about this growing area of support services; and to foster excellence of service.*



The unveiling – STSN recently was presented in April at the PEPNet 2004 Conference in Pittsburgh. Dr. Judy Colwell, Dr. Cheryl Davis, Sharon Downs and Dr. Marcia Kolvitz presented a concurrent session on the concept of and need for STSN, and work done so far by the founding members. The presentation was a resounding success! Since the presentation, membership and support has taken off. Ideas and expressions of interest from across the country have rolled in, and STSN seems to be off to a very strong start.

From left: Sharon Downs, Marcia Kolvitz, Judy Colwell, and Cheryl Davis presented the vision for STSN at the recent PEPNet 2004 conference in Pittsburgh.

What's next for STSN – The three priorities currently being discussed for STSN are:

- Setting up a formalized structure for STSN,
- Conducting a needs survey of providers, administrators and consumers, and
- Begin planning for an STSN pre-conference at PEPNet 2006.

Please take a moment to review the informative website for more information or to join: www.stsn.org.

*“It is difficult to say what is impossible,
for the dream of yesterday is the hope of today
and the reality of tomorrow.”*

Robert H. Goddard (1882-1945)

Ticket to Success: Disabled Student Services Coordinators Educating the Faculty

Most faculty want to do the best job they can and want to help all their students learn. However, they may not know how to accommodate students who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Even if they have had education courses, they may have only cursory knowledge of working with students with disabilities. What may be common sense to the disability support services office may seem foreign to the faculty. For this reason we need to provide educational opportunities and training for the faculty.

Suggestions:

Most people are intrigued by sign language. DSS staff can use this to their advantage by offering a variety of opportunities for faculty and staff to learn about sign language and Deaf culture. Continuing education or community sign language classes for which there is a fee could be offered without charge to faculty and staff on your campus. The fact that others are paying for the class will add validity to the quality of the information and may encourage instructors to attend. This is also a good way to encourage an on-going relationship with the DSS office since the classes tend to be offered at levels such as beginning, intermediate, and advanced.

You may also offer short-term classes or one-time seminars on sign language and Deaf culture for those instructors who do not have time for weekly classes. Be sure to include simple sign vocabulary that the instructors can use in their classes. This will make the instructors feel that the training was worthwhile as well as allowing them to use what they learn with the students.

Food will always attract an audience. You could set up a luncheon for deans, department heads, and administrators. Along with the luncheon provide some type of learning activity. Suggestions for these activities might include:

Have a student panel talk about their experiences in the classroom: what worked and what didn't.

Invite a speaker who is Deaf from the community to do a presentation.

Connect to live satellite training. PEPNet offers one each year. The schedule and topic can be found on the Web at <http://www.pepnet.org>. Also, other organizations related to disabilities such as AHEAD (the Association on Higher Education and Disability) provide this type of training at a very reasonable cost.

Show a movie related to deafness and then have a round table discussion of the issues presented. There are many good sign language and deafness movies available, from documentaries to entertainment and drama. Some suggestions are these: *Sound and Fury*, *For a Deaf Son*, *Love Is Never Silent*, and *So Long Silence*. Check out the Captioned Media Program at <http://www.cfv.org> to borrow these captioned titles for free.

Contact each department prior to the start of the semester and see if you can be placed on the agenda for a departmental meeting. You probably won't be given a lot of time, but in 10 to 15 minutes you can provide an entire department with basic information to work successfully with students who are Deaf or hard of

From the book: Six Habits of Highly Successful Disability Support Service (DSS) Coordinators by Carol Kelley and Cindy Camp. The full contents of this book are available for download from the PEC website at: <http://sunsite.utk.edu/cod/pec/publications.html>

(continued from page 3)

hearing. And since these meetings are usually mandatory, you will have a captive audience. Some instructors might welcome this as an opportunity to ask questions.

Provide focused instruction to specific departments, such as student health services and the campus police. You can teach them survival signs, but more importantly you can provide them with information about deafness that will be very helpful to them and to the students. For example, the campus police need to be able to determine that a person is Deaf in order to avoid potentially dangerous situations. They should also know that many individuals with a hearing loss may not be able to pass standard sobriety tests that are based on balance. This doesn't mean all people who are Deaf are drunk. In the same way, student health services staff need to understand the limitations of writing notes in English as an alternative to communicating through an interpreter. In medical situations clear communication is imperative.

Provide individual instructors with a few signs they can use with their students. This communicates to the student that the instructor is genuinely concerned and interested in communicating. It can also decrease an instructor's anxiety about working with a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing.

Provide short workshops during which you explain various methods of communicating with individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. It provides an opportunity to explain that instructors do not have to know sign language to be able to communicate with their students. It is also important to dispel myths such as "all individuals who are Deaf can lip-read every word you say and even in the dark, like they do on television."

Remember to provide training opportunities for

teaching assistants and adjunct instructors as well. Often these individuals are not included in the departmental staff meetings and other activities designed for full professors, yet these are the individuals who may work more closely with students who are Deaf or hard of hearing. These are the individuals who are most likely to teach freshman-level classes and to work with students who need additional help. They will work closely with students who are Deaf or hard of hearing and may need our assistance. Since teaching assistants and adjunct staff are often overlooked for training, the fact that your office is taking time to focus on them specifically will be appreciated.

PEPNet offers a free online training called "Orientation to Deafness." It is designed to introduce the basics of working with students who are Deaf or hard of hearing to administrators and faculty. This training will offer an introduction to Deafness and some additional legal issues that could arise. At the end of the training a certificate can be printed. Some college administrators have required their staff to take the training as a continuing education credit. This helps to promote the school's public image because it shows a willingness to enhance services for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and it gives the instructors and administrators an addition to their portfolio.

And last (but not least):

Remember; an important part of any educational experience is that little piece of paper you receive when the task is complete. This is especially true in an academic setting where degrees are highly esteemed. Whenever you give a workshop, be sure to have certificates to give to the attendees. These can be put in an instructor's portfolio as an incentive for them to attend.

For more information and tips on how to be successful as a DSS Service Coordinator working with faculty, download the booklet from <<http://sunsite.utk.edu/cod/pec/dssprovd.html>>. Scroll down to "Six Habits of Highly Successful Disability Support Service (DSS) Coordinators" and download the pdf. All PEC downloads are free.

Accommodating Students Who Are Deaf-Blind

When serving or instructing students who are Deaf-Blind, it is important to be familiar with a variety of reasonable requests for accommodations, how Deaf-Blindness can impact the classroom experience, and how to best manage a classroom to make it Deaf-Blind accessible and learning-friendly. Knowing what other service providers are offering as a typical accommodation can be very helpful, but we also need to be aware of issues that may arise when these services are provided. Commonly provided accommodations for learners who are Deaf-Blind include:

Sign Language Interpreter - Interpreters convey spoken information *as well as* environmental information. This slows the interpreting process and causes a higher fatigue factor with interpreters. Two interpreters are required for any assignments over 30 minutes. Interpreters working with Deaf-Blind clients need to be familiar with interpreting accommodations such as smaller signing space, including environmental information, and tactile communication.

Speech to Text Transcriber - Transcribers type what is being spoken *as well as* environmental information when time allows. Again, there is a high fatigue factor and two transcribers are recommended for assignments of 30 minutes or more.

FM System - An FM System is a popular choice for students who prefer auditory input. The instructor/speaker wears a transmitter, a small lapel microphone attached to a box by a small wire. The student wears a receiver consisting of a small box with a large wire loop that the student wears around their neck. This system cuts down on environmental noises and helps amplify the speaker's voice. Ensure that the speakers' face is visible (for lip-reading) and that the microphone gets passed around as other students make comments.

Note taker - A note taker is crucial to student success. When students attempt to take notes and watch an interpreter, information is missed. The notes provided need to be in an accessible format for the student.

Alternate (Accessible) Format - When creating handouts or exams, consider the form most accessible for the student. The student might require the information in Braille or simply in large print format. For handouts or exams, consider placing the text on a disc or printing on a light pastel colored paper to reduce glare. Consider soft colors such as beige, yellow, blue, green and pink. Another option is to use e-mail for assignments, handouts, or papers.

Additional Testing Time - When a student is using a large print or Braille version of an exam, it generally takes more time to access the information. Be sure the student has the proper clearance with instructors *before* exam time. The student may also require special accommodations while testing (more lighting, CCTV, reader and scribe, or Braille Note).

1:1 Assistance - Allow students to turn in assignments to instructors *early* for preliminary proofing/feedback.

Tutoring - Allow for a set number of tutoring hours per week. It benefits Deaf-Blind students by connecting the chunks of information from class. Tutors help the student review the material and fill in the gaps from the classroom.

*Article contributed by:
Amanda Covington,
B.A., CI/CT
Lexington School &
Center for the Deaf
Formerly of Helen
Keller National Center*

*Sharon Downs, M.S.,
CT
Arkansas SOTAC
Coordinator
State Outreach and
Technical Assistance
Center
University of Arkansas
at Little Rock*

Basic Communication Considerations

Aside from basic accommodations, here are a few considerations that will make your classroom Deaf-Blind friendly.

Is there too much glare on the paper? For some Deaf-Blind students, white paper might cause too much glare and make it difficult to read the print. Consider using light colored pastel paper (light yellow, blue, green or pink) with a thick, bold, dark marker to make the writing more visible.

Is there too much background noise? If a student is using an FM system or has residual hearing, background noise might interfere with their ability to understand speech. Check with the student and be aware of environmental noises (air conditioning coming on, sirens going by, construction noise, or people in the hall or outside the window).

Is there too much/not enough light? Standing in front of windows or other light sources might be problematic for a student with a vision loss. Try to stand against a dark or neutral background away from a light source. White boards (dry erase boards) sometimes cause glare. Some lecture rooms tend to have very dim lighting, which might prove to be problematic. Talk to the student and the department about potential accommodations if you have a student that will be placed in a classroom where these issues might arise.

Is distance vision a problem? Can the student see the board? Can the student see the interpreter/transcriber/speaker? Can the student see overheads? Can the student see the movie or film clip I plan to show? The solution might be previewing the presentation with student or providing a paper copy of what is being presented in advance.

Teaching Strategies

Professors that tailor teaching styles for students who are Deaf-Blind find that *all* students benefit from these accommodations. Some beneficial methods include: using several methods of teaching (visual, auditory, kinesthetic); encouraging class participation; ‘chunking’ information on handouts and using bullets; show *then* tell or tell *then* show; describe visual information; assess and reassess what is working and modify as needed; and check in to make sure students are understanding. Additional strategies to help ensure the students all have access to the same information are as follows:

Turn Taking - Be sure only one person at a time is speaking. When several people talk at the same time, the student misses information. Interpreters will end up picking and choosing which person to interpret and the consumer is unable to participate. Ask students to raise their hands before speaking. This will help the instructor control the flow of conversation.

Identify Yourself Before Speaking - It is helpful for the Deaf-Blind person if the speaker will identify himself or herself before beginning to speak. For example, “This is Amanda speaking. I agree with your comment that...”

Allow time to read materials - If materials are passed out during class that the student did not receive before class, allow time for reading. The student who is Deaf-Blind can not take in the information from the page AND the lecture simultaneously.

Be aware of the interpreting process - Occasionally check with the interpreters making sure the pace is manageable or that the student is finished reading a hand-out. Realize the student may be a few seconds behind the group in receiving the

information. Hold peoples' questions or responses until the student has a chance to catch up and equally participate.

(continued from
page 6)

Group the student with peers- Allow the student to interact and participate in the same manner as all other students. Interpreters will facilitate the communication process and the consumer can alert you to any problem areas.

Show then Tell or Tell then Show - The visual student will be watching the interpreter and cannot see what is being shown unless the instructor pauses. The tactile student relies on the interpreter to describe what is being shown. The instructor must allow adequate time for the description to occur. Allow the Deaf-Blind student to handle/explore the object during the pause. For students with low vision, place the object in a location where there is good lighting and contrast. Make objects available for students to explore more fully before or after class.

Allow students to record lectures on tape - Laws that entitle people with disabilities equal access entitle students to tape record lectures. If there is concern about copyrighted materials or materials that may be published in the future, the student can sign an agreement not to release the recording or to erase it at the end of the semester.

Make sure handouts are legible - Black print on white paper provides the best contrast for most people. However, softer colors may be appropriate. Be prepared to make large print copies or provide handouts on a computer diskette if requested.

Give specific verbal descriptions - When using the chalkboard or other visual aids, give specific verbal descriptions of what is being shown. Ideally, this information should be provided to the student in an accessible format before the class period.

Use the object name - When pointing to an object of discussion, use the name of the object instead of "this" or "that."

Reference text by chapter and paragraph - If reading from a textbook in class, remember that the page numbers in the teacher's book may not correspond to large print or Braille versions. In addition to giving the page number, it is helpful to provide descriptive information about the sections being read, such as "the fourth paragraph in Chapter 6."

Seating arrangements - Be aware that some students may choose to use note-taking devices that make some noise. Some of these devices may include a Braillewriter, a laptop computer, or a slate and stylus. Discuss seating arrangements to minimize the impact on other students.

Advanced planning for activities - Inform students of field trips or laboratory activities in advance. The student may need to arrange for a sighted guide or to become familiar with the new setting prior to the class visit.

Maintain academic standards - Competency standards apply to all students. Make modifications in the presentation of materials and student evaluations, not academic standards or course content. This ensures that all students receive the same quality of education.

Resources

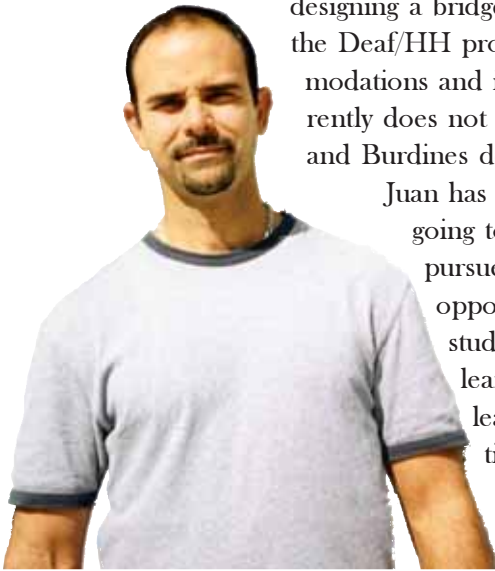
SKI-HI Sensory Perspectives - www.hopepubl.com

Typewell Transcription - www.typewell.com

C-Print Transcription - www.ntid.rit.edu/cprint/

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Juan Lopez

“It is important to study in High School, states Juan Lopez, so that you don’t have a gap in your academic arena that is too broad so you can’t bridge it when you go to college.” Juan was born Hard of Hearing, and he attended an elementary school with a special program for Students who are Deaf. He was not allowed to sign until his speaking was proficient. Once he finished elementary school, he transferred to a middle school where they had special classes for students who are Deaf. He later obtained an A. A. degree from Miami Dade Community College. Currently he is pursuing a degree in Civil Engineering at Florida International University. He attends the University on a part time basis while he works on a special project designing a bridge. The Engineering program is one that he enjoys. Additionally, the Deaf/HH program in the Office of Disability Services provides helpful accommodations and interpreting services. In order to focus on his studies, Juan currently does not have a job. However, he previously held jobs at Eckerds, U.P.S., and Burdines department store.



Juan has some good advice for high school students who are interested in going to college or some postsecondary education. Students who want to pursue college should understand the responsibility involved. As opposed to high school, college students are by themselves. College students must keep up with the work and stay on track. In college, learning will also differ from high school. As Juan states, “You will learn to do more sophisticated writing, reading and spend more time on creative problem solving in college than in High School.”

Juan Lopez was born in Spain and looks forward to being a successful engineer.

Postsecondary Education Consortium

University of Tennessee Center on Deafness
A507 Claxton Complex
Knoxville, TN 37996-3454

| |
|--|
| FIRST CLASS U.S. POSTAGE PAID PERMIT 481 KNOXVILLE, TN |
|--|