



BCS

Disability Group

ICAT 2003 Core Group meeting

The meeting was held on 28th January 2004
at the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists,
39a Bartholomew Close, London EC1A.

1.0 About these notes

These meeting notes have been prepared by Conrad Taylor. They are also being circulated in a large print version, and perhaps in non-print versions too. Therefore, the headings have been numbered to assist discussion; page numbers are not a reliable way to reference these topics.

2.0 Introductions

At the start of the meeting sixteen people were present, and John Ivinson, a former President of the British Computer Society who was chairing the meeting, suggested that we introduce ourselves. This is how people introduced themselves:

Gail Bradbrook of Citizens Online, the national charity promoting universal access to the Internet.

David Banes, Director of Operations for AbilityNet.

Alan Summerside, Development Director of the Thalidomide Trust.

Nicky Grist, who has worked in IT for many years, and is now interested in issues of disability and employment.

Ruth Loebel from Royal National Institute for the Blind, particularly interested in ICT and employment but also representing the interests of other RNIB colleagues.

Rajani Hitesh, Jasvinder Obhi and **Justin Hammond** of Leicester City Council. Justin is the Council's project co-ordinator for the Leicester Disability Information Network.

Steve Abbott, Deputy Director of Essex Disabled People's Association, a medium-sized charity operating in Essex for disabled people; he looks after EDPA's computer research activities. Also **Clare Hammond**, Steve's research assistant.

Geoff Busby, Disability Advisor of the British Computer Society, who has been chair of the BCS Disability Group for about 25 years; together with **Christine Goldsmith**, who has worked with Geoff for many years as his personal assistant; and **Kitty Cullen**, Geoff's carer.

Rebecca Keat, a freelance software developer.

Conrad Taylor, Secretary of the BCS Electronic Publishing Specialist Group, which also has an interest in accessibility issues in electronic publishing.

Later we were also joined by:

David Edwards, Worshipful Company of Information Technologists

John Lamb of *Ability* magazine

John Niven of KeyTools Limited

3.0 Report of the previous meeting

A report of the ICAT event on 2nd December had been written up by Dr. Geoff Busby; John Ivinson found that it could not be assumed that everyone present had read those, and some extra photocopies were made there and then, so we could refer to them during the meeting.

David Banes of AbilityNet asked for a definition of the objective of both that meeting and this current one. Dr. Busby replied that the aim had been to identify issues within the overall topic of ICT and disability, to identify possible alliances, put together a core group, and form a manageable action plan from them. The point of this second day was to pick up where the previous day had left off.

Gail noted that Geoff's report starts with an account of the talk given by Prof. Gunilla Bradley and her own talk at that meeting; this occupies the first ten pages. In the latter part of the day the meeting went through a process of identifying key questions; then a start was made on answering these questions. It would be important for this meeting to identify which of these questions we want to concentrate on as points for action.

4.0 Sifting the suggested issues into more comprehensive headings

Pages 15 and 16 (Appendix A) of the notes from 2 December contains a list of *The major topics, issues, concerns* – a 'dump' of the ideas that were brainstormed onto the flipchart on that day. Geoff pointed out that there is a certain synergy between some of the issues. We numbered those suggestions consecutively from 1 to 31 (they are not so numbered in Geoff's notes); then Gail Bradbrook started a process of writing up some more inclusive headings on the flip chart, and for about an hour we tried putting these topics under them. Some of the topics ended up under more than one heading.

Below, we repeat those suggestions, grouped under headings that evolved in the discussion. Because some suggestions belong to more than one such heading, they are mentioned more than once in the record below; apologies if this is repetitive, but it does make things clearer. The numbers attached to each suggestion are those assigned to them in the consecutive numbering of Geoff Busby's notes; but under each heading, the topics have been grouped to place similar suggestions together,, regardless of that numbering scheme.

4.1 A: Audiences – Central & local government, press and media

- 14 Society in general is the problem – i.e. society marginalises disabled people and thus contributes to social and digital exclusion. [Also assigned to B]
- 23 Education of the media to get them to give a more balanced focus on disability issues (e.g. the BBC programme on Radio Four is mainly about the visually impaired – the balance needs redressing).
- 16 Awareness campaign, including lobbying government – how, when, on what issues, by whom?
- 26 E-government engagement with citizens – especially for the disabled.
- 15 Local authorities' knowledge gap and how to fill it.
- 21 Promotion of good examples of assistive ICT success stories; which products work, and conversely which do not. [Also assigned to C]
- 22 Influencing the ICT manufacturers, retailers and service providers – all initiatives and products to be disability-proofed.
- 5 Usability engineering is important in product design and production, so every technology school should teach usability engineering. [Also assigned to C and F]
- 24 Ethical and professional issues in academic courses. [Also assigned to F]

4.2

B: Partnership/strategy

- 1 We need to make progress in addressing the issues and finding effective solutions.¹
- 14 Society in general is the problem – i.e. society marginalises disabled people and thus contributes to social and digital exclusion. [Also assigned to A]
- 20 A cohesive strategy to be presented to the UK government, the European Union and to industry about where we are, and what is the way forward.
- 3 The importance of working together, and collaborations – partnerships etc. will be more effective than if we all worked independently, and will reduce costs.
- 6 Establishing the effectiveness of digitability for disability.
- 8 [Identifying] gaps in the services that are provided for disabled people, and in initiatives for getting disabled people into work.
- 30 The importance of adopting a multi-disciplinary approach. [Also assigned to C]
- 31 Q: What is ‘best practice’? [Also assigned to C]

4.3

C: Technical and Design issues

- 2 The need to learn from the experience of others to help with one’s own development and in dealing with individual problems.
- 4 Accessibility and usability – the accessibility of information and computing technologies (ICT) in the workplace, in public buildings and at home; and the usability of ICT products and services.
- 17 Basic access issues for the design of Web sites (and for adaptations for Web sites such as ‘Web skinning’ facilities – Leicester has one of 29 such facilities in the world).
- 21 Promotion of good examples of assistive ICT success stories; which products work, and conversely which do not. [Also assigned to A]
- 18 ‘*Design for All* does not work!’
- 29 No one solution fits all.
- 5 Usability engineering is important in product design and production, so every technology school should teach usability engineering. [Also assigned to A and F]
- 7 Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) – a discipline which can contribute insights.
- 30 The importance of adopting a multi-disciplinary approach. [Also assigned to B]
- 31 Q: What is ‘best practice’? [Also assigned to B]

4.4

D: Funding (and affordability) of ICT for disabled people

- 11 Technology needs to be affordably priced.
- 28 Why is the technology so expensive?
- 27 The cost of making ICTs accessible – for example, it took 7.5 million to target 600 people in Leicester.
- 9 The benefit system needs to be reviewed, especially its rules for payments in respect of disability.
- 12 Allowances for students with disabilities.

1. Although this topic was assigned here, most of us felt that it adds nothing concrete to the list of ideas.

4.5 **E: User experiences²**

- 10 Emotional issues ('the frustration factor' as it was called)
- 19 ICTs to facilitate independent living.

4.6 **F: Education and Training**

- 5 Usability engineering is important in product design and production, so every technology school should teach usability engineering. [Also assigned to A and C]
- 13 ICT training – in the workplace, and for home/leisure use.
- 24 Ethical and professional issues in academic courses. [Also assigned to A]
- 25 The situation of students in mainstream education; staff/student ratios.

5.0 **Discussion during the process of evolving the above groupings**

5.1 **Our approach to the design of technology**

It was noted that we don't have a consensus on the best approach towards accessible technology. For example, is there a conflict between asking which technologies work and which ones don't, and saying 'Design for All does not work' (i.e., all solutions must be tailored to the needs of an individual)?

Steve Abbott said that industry (potential employers of people with disabilities) were worried about potentially hundreds of different bits of equipment, made in short production runs and therefore expensive because not benefiting from economies of scale in production, to which they might have to have access in order to accommodate the needs of disabled employees or users. Unless ways can be found of meeting a wider range of needs with a common core of technologies, provision will be patchy, as it is at the moment on the Internet. Steve reckons that he has been able to address about 80% of disabled people's requirements by identifying a core of such technologies (many of them at the operating system level).

Others present felt that we should fight for the right for disabled people to have assistive ICTs tailored for them. Gail said that this discussion identified an emerging issue for the group, something we would need to find a consensus on; because such a consensus will be important for lobbying government and industry.

Justin felt that the whole point of gathering together to consider ICT issues across various kinds of disability was to escape from divisive 'silo thinking' and start to share experiences. In Leicester they have found this valuable; it has helped to identify which bits of software etc are useful which less so, share that experience across user communities and create a common pool of knowledge.

Conrad wanted us to recognise that information also requires to be designed for accessibility, and (e.g. as documentation and interface) information design is also part of product design for accessible ICTs.

5.2 **Digitability?**

Nobody seemed to be able to remember what had been meant by 'the effectiveness of *digitability* for disability' – as mentioned under Group B above. Conrad asked, did it mean the digitisation of information sources such as books so that they could be accessed more multi-modally through ICTs? Gail thought it referred to building a business case for assistive technologies. Someone else thought it meant, how effective was the assistive technology at helping people to use computers...

Steve mentioned that they do still aim in Essex to get the technologies to fit people rather than the other way round, but this involves simplifying the components of the system as well.

2. Some people saw 'user experience' as a whole being subsumed under technical and design issues, because design should be based around usability and the user experience.

They have case studies which can prove the effectiveness of this approach. David Banes said there were many case studies, not all pointing the same way; one of the key questions is still whether the mainstream operating systems and software such as Microsoft Windows and Office are empowering or disabling.

Geoff Busby said that we should be aware that technology can become disabling as well as enabling; a simple example is the way in which we all lose dexterity with age and so found it more difficult to engage with user interfaces that require dexterity.

5.3 **Costs of technology, and how to get at it**

Geoff added – ‘My opinion is: it is extremely good that we can get more computing power year on year, in line with Moore’s Law, and at a cheaper cost. But the problem is, how do you get to it? That’s basically the issue.’

Justin Hammond of Leicester City Council said that he doesn’t believe the computing industry is really interested in disability needs. They are looking for a quick profit, and ways to achieve this easily. Therefore assistive technologies are *not* mainstream and they are expensive, as they have discovered in Leicester. The less able this group is to achieve a consensus about what is needed, the more it dilutes the case to be argued with manufacturers about taking the issue seriously.

Alan Summerside said that surely it is true that affordability is a serious barrier for many disabled people. Some of the technologies are prohibitively expensive both absolutely and relative to people’s incomes, especially for the many disabled people on benefits or other form of money rather than a general income.

Steve Abbott reported that to adapt his office so that he, as a blind person, can work as a computer programmer, it cost the Employment Service £25,000.

Is affordability a matter of the cost of equipment, or how the purchase of it is funded?

5.4 **Making the case for marketability**

Christine said she thought it was vital to get disabled people into employment within the IT industry because this would force the IT industry to take seriously the needs of disabled people and this would change their attitudes to product design. Conrad was sceptical about this – even as it stands, designers in the IT industry don’t set the company agendas in product design; these come from the marketing department.

Geoff Busby raise as a case in point the design of environmental controls (e.g. lighting, heating, curtains, air conditioning for a room or building). If these can be made accessible via a laptop or palmtop computer, they will benefit people with impaired movement, but may also be of use to a more general population.

Someone made the point that when we arrived at the front door of this building we were let in by remote control from the reception desk, and this is an example of how an enabling technology may be of interest to a wider population than just the disabled community, and so build a marketing case.

5.5 **Students in mainstream education**

Steve said that he lost his eyesight at about the point when he was starting to get his Masters qualification, and can attest that certainly five years ago it was difficult for a university student with a disability to gain access to assistive technologies. The effect of this is that it has an impact on the ability of disabled people to gain the qualifications that would place them in positions of influence within industry.

6.0 The government procurement issue

6.1 The topic introduced

Gail Bradbrook said if we could identify assistive technologies which would help a large number of people so a good business case could be made for them, it would be useful if the government could add force to the case by making inclusion of these accessibility features a condition of being able to offer systems for sale to the government and its agencies through its procurement policy.

Geoff Busby pointed out that the American with Disabilities Act had led to major changes in the USA. No federal agency can now purchase anything from a company that does not make its technologies accessible to people with disabilities.

David Banes thought that because the UK government view is that the marketplace is an open one, one would not be able to persuade the UK government to 'lean on' industry, and so the better route to go down was one of making subsidies available.

Perhaps, Gail thought, there could be a middle route whereby subsidies were available but only for a slate of products deemed to be in an acceptable price range. Ruth Loebel from RNIB said that this area of procurement policy is a large part of her work at the moment, but that she was unsure that this group could agree on a joint policy that would make such lobbying possible.

6.2 An explanation of procurement issues, by Ruth Loebel

Ruth Loebel explained some more about UK government procurement issues and the standards which might pertain to them. Government procurement is governed by rules formulated by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), which is a government department. If you are a government purchaser you have to apply those rules; you cannot go to any shop or supplier. The processes involve putting out tenders in government publications, assuring fair competition and so on.

A Directive has just come through from the European Union enabling what they call 'social issues' to be taken into account when considering those bids from suppliers. These issues could include 'green' ones such as recycling, and also accessibility. RNIB is trying to help OGC incorporate that EU directive into UK legislation. The aim is to ensure that at the point of procurement, accessibility is taken into account.

RNIB's approach is similar to the 'Section 580' American legislation, which started some three years ago in the USA. This says that federal purchasing has to comply with those standards. This cannot achieve a foolproof result in ensuring the government purchases are all of equipment that is accessible to the disabled, and given our inability to agree what that means we would be unrealistic in expecting that, but at least to have a purchasing standard for IT equipment that defines some accessibility requirements and urges that they be taken into account would be a step forward.

6.3 ISO 16071

The standard which they are piloting internally within RNIB and using as the basis for the current approach to the OGC is an ISO standard that was published last year – ISO 16071, standards about the accessibility of software and systems. This gives a set of broad ground guidelines e.g. that you should be able to use your choice of input device, that software should expose its controls in such a way that they could be directed by voice command or keyboard input... The Chair of the group which produced the ISO standard was Professor Sue Harker from Loughborough University, and there was input from IBM laboratories in Winchester, and input from Sweden, the USA and elsewhere.

There is also a European standards group which has covered some similar ground, resulting in a standard called Connect 6. That will feed its results into the ISO. ISO 16071 is not technically a 'standard' at the moment, but a technical specification subject to revision, and

RNIB is making input to this discussion because those who drafted the specification are usability specialists but not disability specialists.

Ruth has started a Yahoo group for people interested getting this standard into government procurement policy.

6.4 Discussion of procurement issues

Ruth was asked, if this set of OGC rules applies only to government purchases, what impact this would have on the wider community of disabled IT users. She explained that in the USA where Section 508 regulations likewise apply only to government purchasing, there has been a knock-on effect: why should a manufacturer make two versions of a technology, one for government and one for everyone else? So the effect has been to drive the inclusion of accessibility into products offered to the general public and to business.

The question arose about whether NHS purchasing is affected by the OGC. John Iverson said that his understanding, from Peter Gershon and Bob Aserati who work at the OGC, is that they have no responsibility for NHS purchasing; this is the responsibility of Richard Granger. Yes, said Ruth, but the NHS still has to make its purchasing conform to the rules of the OGC.

John mentioned that the BCS has very good contacts with Gershon and Aserati, and to a lesser extent they also know Granger, and Andrew Pinder from the eGovernment initiative. The bad news is that Gershon is retiring from OGC, and Pinder is on his way out of the e-Envoy's department. However, it seems clear from the passage through to enforcement of the Disability Discrimination Act that the government is at the moment interested in legislation in favour of people with disabilities, and there is an opportunity now to get a case together and put it to Bob Aserati who is in charge of the IT side of procurement.

Alan Summerside thought that talking to civil servants was all very well, but to really get something done one would have to have a minister, a politician, on one's side. But Geoff thought that on the whole ministers do what their civil servants suggest.

Ruth said that there is already an agreement that OGC wants to consult RNIB, so a foundation for such a discussion has been set.

7.0 Prices and appropriateness

David Banes returned to the issue of whether one can really slim down the 'shopping list' of technologies in order to get more favourable prices. At AbilityNet they stock 30–40 kinds of keyboards. If they could slim that down to a choice of two, it would help to drive down the cost, but users would not be well served by the lack of choice. As a result, a Maltron keyboard will cost you hundreds of pounds.

Christine asked about the issue of choice in other areas of assistive technologies, such as wheelchairs. Is it not the case that within that range you can get a subsidy for the cost of the wheelchair that you in particular need? Can we argue an analogy for ICTs? Justin said that you will meet the argument from social workers and similar 'gatekeepers' that there are technologies which you need for a basic standard of living such as a wheelchair, or redesigned living arrangements, and these will be considered as a need; whereas a computer will not normally be considered an essential part of life. Even for those essentials there is a massive waiting list.

Alan Summerside said that you'll find the basic wheelchairs provided are in any case of a very poor standard (Justin pointed out that motorised wheelchairs would not be covered). The equivalent money could be put towards something better, but that would have to be provided by users themselves. Nick Mapstone from the National Audit Office is battling to get central government to realise that such wheelchairs do not meet users' needs.

7.1 **Everyone online by 2008?**

Yet the government also has a conflicting claim – they (esp. Patricia Hewitt) said have also said that they want everyone on the Internet by 2008. Gail suggests that may be a good lobbying point, and Citizens Online is certainly talking to the government about how those aims might be achieved. By 2008, Gail continued, the aim is to switch off analogue TV, and that then everyone would in theory have a digital TV through which they can access the Internet. But Citizens Online are arguing back, that if the digital TV doesn't provide for access for disabled people, that 'advance' gets you nowhere in terms of getting disabled people online. 'We've got something to hang them with.'

Justin raised doubts about Ms Hewitt's sanity, pointing out that it was she who had set the 2005 target for e-Government, a target which probably only 5% of local authorities will meet.

8.0 **Accessibility of public information e-services**

David Banes said that you have to consider UKonline and LearnDirect in the provision that is made available. There is a vast number of those centres, but very few of them currently are fully accessible. There is, he thinks, a determination to *make* them more accessible, and the funding is being put together through the European Social Fund to make that possible; but it still has a long, long way to go.

In reply to a comment from Justin, David said that in order to set up such centres, people did have to make a commitment on paper to accessibility, but there was no mechanism in place to police whether the provision was actually made. Also, a lot of equipment went into those centres without being backed up with training.

Justin also referred to the People's Network (in libraries). In Leicester, they are trying to influence the kind of equipment the libraries buy in respect of disabled access. The libraries are buying anything and everything because they don't have a clue. It's important to stop that kind of 'panic buying', to get them to look realistically at a range of variations on keyboards or whatever. In Leicester they had been intending to buy some very specialist equipment that only a few users would need, and the chance of those users going into a library in the first place would be very low.

David Banes reported that AbilityNet has just done a project for the Scottish Executive to equip some of their centres. The budget offered was £475 per centre *including training*. And 80% of disabled users said their were unable to access those centres. To achieve access in such situations you do have to have multiple streams of access running.

9.0 **How do people know what technologies are available?**

Christine said that while disability specialists might know about Maltron keyboards and the like, how do ordinary people get to know? If you go into PC World, you don't see a Maltron keyboard. Maybe at least one could see a *picture* of a Maltron keyboard. That might excite people's interest, either on their own behalf or people with special needs whom they know.

David said that this is specifically the aim of the Cybrarian project, and this kind of information would be funded by the suppliers. Perhaps at PC World and the like could provide access to the Cybrarian portal (www.dfes.gov.uk/cybrarianproject), from which information about a range of products could be accessed (when the project is up and running).

9.1 **Business realities**

Justin said that in Leicester they have had discussions with PC World, who point out that their business division can get you more or less anything you want, but that the showroom displays for people who walk off the street are stocked with high-volume, fast-turnover goods and that business model cannot accommodate stocks of specialised equipment that they are unlikely to shift. PC World are also frank about the high turnover rate among staff, and in consequence the difficulty of having staff who can communicate about some of these quite complex issues.

Geoff wondered if we could determine what proportion of accessibility features can easily be designed into and built into products, and what cannot.

Someone commented that Microsoft are quite clear that they could build in a full screen reader package within Windows, but that they would then expect to be taken to court on the grounds that this was anti-competition and that they were driving 20–30 companies out of business by so doing.

Geoff suggested a new category to help sift the issues: but he can't think of a word for it... maybe 'Vested Interests' would cover it?

10.0 How to move forward?

John summed up: we have narrowed things down to six areas, though maybe more issues would emerge that should be slotted in under them. Should we form working groups that go off, involve other people with expertise, and come back to down our opinions?

Gail thinks that working out the partnership strategy is what we really need to achieve, but perhaps we need to discuss the other identified issues first to make sure we have a shared set of views to put forward.

Alan suggested that there should be about three major tasks to pick on, and make that into a core and coherent message to lobby government with; also to lobby the manufacturers and the retailers. Then the groups working on the details of the technology etc can produce the messages to be passed through the lobbying process.

The problem is, said John, some people are talking about processes for the group, others are talking about objectives; as yet we don't have consensus on what those objectives are for.

David wondered: what is the nature of this group and what are its terms of reference? Gail says, we aren't yet really a group; at the last meeting there was brainstorming about who should be on such a group, but many of those mentioned are not here.

11.0 Choosing 'the big issues'

John Ivinson suggested that we need to sift the issues, ignoring the structure of the list, to further to determine what we think the big issues are on which we can campaign.

- Ruth Loebel said that the **government purchasing and procurement** issue is the one concrete issue on which she and her colleagues have decided to concentrate.
- Steve Abbott said: **designing equipment and software** for usability.
- David Banes says that at AblityNet, their biggest problem is the issue of **non-disclosure**; people don't accept that they could improve their use of IT through adaptive technology, and as they become infirm and less capable, they are shunning those technologies or even leaving work because of disabilities.
- Justin Hammond said that their experience at Leicester is that the problem is getting Council colleagues to recognise how adaptive technologies can help, and getting prospective users to recognise this also, so the technologies can be got out there. This makes **awareness** the biggest issue; Geoff agreed.

Do we sift down to one issue, and if so, does that mean we are ignoring the other aspects? Would ignoring some issues lead to the undermining of the alliance? Would we select issues to tackle on the basis of things that can be tackled in some concrete short-term way? The general feeling was that we might end up with a list of things we want to tackle quickly, in the medium term

11.1 Access to Work/Life – another 'big issue'

- Nicky Grist mentioned that the government scheme '**Access to work**' that aims to help disabled people gain and keep employment isn't working well. Might this group therefore make an input into this?

How would we make that input? Investigate it? Justin says this is becoming all the more important, because the government aims for disabled young people to go either into work or into education, and not into long-term sheltered care. This means that work has got to 'work'. Some people thought that those who are in work are already in some situation of relative privilege. Geoff proposed the formula 'Access to Work/Access to Life' as covering the needs of both the working and non-working communities of disabled people.

11.2 **A muddled discussion**

There was about fifteen minutes of discussion in which some people pulled towards trying to define what the group and its remit might be, some towards what the methods might be, and some on defining the objectives.

Is one criterion for choosing the issues to work on, whether we have internal expertise about these issues? Conrad thought that the involvement of the British Computer Society in this group argues for tackling the design and technology issues, because within the BCS (and the design communities it can implicate) there is expertise in this field that can be tapped.

Steve mentioned that someone at the December ICAT meeting, from Canterbury University, is running a User Engineering course that goes into the process of how to design things for people. Might we come up with sets of guidelines, or try to encourage such courses being run elsewhere? [Conrad comments: this can be subsumed under the design and technology issue.]

12.0 **Refining objects and methods**

12.1 **How to progress the purchasing and procurement issue**

Justin suggested that as the RNIB is already working on this issue, our best role would be to lend them support this issue, and show that although the RNIB concentrates on issues of concern to the visually impaired, the whole community of disability action is behind them on this one.

12.2 **Awareness about solutions available**

Rebecca Keat said that she didn't want to wait for something that would have an effect in two or five years; would rather promote the solutions that exist at the moment and which are not well enough known. David Banes said that within the Cybrarian Web portal idea there got folded a project which was supposed to provide information about equipment available to callers by telephone; but that the phone service seemed to have become lost. We could press for the phone access to information to be implemented as quickly as possible, and for the provision to be better promoted.

12.3 **The role of the BCS, and how to build the alliance**

John Iverson asked if the group was happy to rely on the BCS for co-ordination. He thought there could be a problem if it appeared the BCS was trying to 'own' the alliance, particularly if that perception led to other organisations not joining it.

Asked whether the BCS was offering to co-ordinate the alliance, John said that neither Geoff nor Brian Layzell nor himself could commit the BCS to this, but could go back to the BCS to ask – and that the group could count on the commitment have the commitment of part of the BCS – the Disability Group – to follow through on this.

Gail said that to talk about coordination was to jump too far ahead too far, too fast. We have to clarify what the group is, and what the process is whereby we clarify what we want to do, and what it takes to do it.

Geoff thought that we need to put pressure on Government to get some sort of policy similar to America's Section 508: that will achieve a lot. A lot of the five issues we have here will be affected positively if we can do that. Who are the people who have the power to influence government? BCS, Employer's Forum on Disability, RNIB... If we are going to get leverage,

we need a heavy lever, so we need the key players in this area. That means we need to draw up a statement of policy, and get the support of those key players for this statement.

13.0 Practical organisation and the way forward

After lunch, John called us to order. He pointed out that this was the second ICAT meeting in this loose format, but that to make further progress we would need to tighten the structure up. He suggested a Steering Group – four to six people – which would be smaller and meet at frequent intervals.

We would also need an electronic group for sharing ideas. This could be large – everyone who has been involved so far, and then some. Also, we could set up some working parties under ‘experts’ so we can delegate topics to them and see the progress being made.

Steering Group and Working Parties: these people need choosing.

13.1 The small group (whatever it’s called)

Gail thinks that the small group to be chosen immediately would be people with a passion to start things off – what Justin calls the Implementation Group. A proper Steering Group would be selected later on, and would represent the organisations with clout who have joined the alliance.

Alan thinks that in this Gail’s model, the to-be-chosen-later Steering Group (or Strategy Thinking Group, as Alan called it) would not be a group that could meet very often, because important and influential people are also busy people – so, the Implementation Group would have to continue as a Secretariat to meet and get things done.

Gail agrees there needs to be a Secretariat, but that could be an individual. Geoff said, fine, but we need money to pay for secretariat purposes.

John thought that it would not be possible to get the real influencers involved in any kind of committee work, but we can realistically hope to have a group that carries our ideas forward, and on a case by case basis approaches organisations for their strategic support.

David suggested this as a methodology: we set up a working group, which will then establish the terms of reference for the group and for the working parties, and see what other networks are already going on to avoid duplication of work. This initial group could have a three month lifespan. There was widespread support around the table for David’s formula.

13.2 Volunteers to develop the Terms of Reference:

Alan Summerside
David Baines
John Niven
Geoff Busby
Gail Bradbrook
John Ivinson

13.3 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference drafted by this group would be circulated by email, followed by a meeting to hammer out the details. John Ivinson said that the registrar of the BCS is looking out a template for Terms of Reference, to make this process easier.

13.4 Immediate objectives

John Niven asks: what are we trying to achieve in six months? David Banes suggested: to draft a series of position papers which we can then put to people.

13.5 What are we called?

No title readily came to mind. Digital Divide and the Disabled, or similar. ICT Inclusion Alliance. To be discussed.

14.0 Taking subject topics forward

- ***On Cyberian*** – David will circulate some notes.
Rebecca offered to contribute here; this is the kind of issue that's most important to her
- ***On procurement/OGC etc*** – Ruth has documents she can circulate.
Geoff declared his intention to work on that issue too.
- ***On Design and Technology*** – Ruth says, RNIB has people interested in usability; Steve Abbott said he'd explore links with the User Engineering course at Canterbury, and Justin mentioned links with De Montford University. Conrad said that he could write a background paper about design methods and usability scoping and testing.

15.0 Electronic communications methods

David Banes suggested that we set up a Microsoft Network (MSN) discussion group. This option allows messages to be retrieved off the Web, or contributors could have the contributions emailed out to them. He volunteered to set this up. Anyone wishing to be part of the group should email him at davidb@abilitynet

Conrad said he aimed to deliver notes of this meeting within about two weeks.