

Annual Review 2017-2018

The Trust for Deaf Studies



The Vassall Centre
Gill Avenue
Bristol BS16 2QQ
Charity Number: 289302

www.deafstudiestrust.org

Technology



Total Conversation with captions

In the last year, DST has worked extensively on the issues of presenting speech by hearing people, automatically as text. Although some think the problem is being solved, it is still not possible for deaf people to make phone calls to anyone ... without having to use a relay operator.

and Training for better health



We trained and assessed 75 future doctors this year as part of their Medical degree in the University of Bristol.

Chair Report



My first report as Chair of the Trust. Although I have been involved in teaching and training of deaf and hearing people in sign language and awareness, at all levels through to advanced research, for many years, there always seems to be more to be done. The Trust exists in order to try to keep up with the need but has to rely on external funds to do so. This is not the best time in the UK to be seeking funds for deaf people.

We see all around, services at risk and many closed down altogether. There is pressure on Access to Work funds meaning that it is less easy for deaf perspectives to be recognised because there is less funding for interpreters and employment support. And most significant of all, we see the loss of many deaf clubs right across the UK. The traditional home base of the deaf community has been eroded and younger people are less likely to find easy access to the deaf way.

In research, we submitted eight different proposals for work and only one was funded. The development of the Bristol Deaf Worlds initiative is now held up (we hope temporarily) and we continue to believe that we can preserve the deaf heritage of the Bristol area.

At last year's AGM, we focused on families and made a commitment to support initiatives which would support and enable families with deaf children to interact and to develop. It has taken a little time, but there will be a family conference organised by the Trust in November 2018.

Amy Gibbs joined the Trust this year and Esther Drewe formally took on the role of treasurer.

A huge thanks to Clive Kittel who stepped down from his role as treasurer in the Trust, this year. He has worked with the Trust for 15 years and is now retiring to follow up on less stressful pursuits. He has guided the Trust finances through good times and bad times but leaves us in a very strong financial position.

Finally, our grateful thanks go to Jim Kyle, our secretary and to the other Trustees for their efforts to support the deaf community.

Clark Denmark

Chair, 2018

Secretary's Report

Having worked hard last year (in 2016) on deaf heritage, we tried to follow up with proposals such as 'Silent stories' (publishing the history of deaf people in Bristol). We began to look at a number of new directions for Trust research. As well as a priority for families, which will lead to a conference in 2018, we worked on aspects of deaf health e.g. 'Deaf Yoga' as a way of improving quality of life and encouraging entry into sport.

Other projects we asked for funding included 'Bringing hearing loss home' (adjusting to hearing loss as people grow older); 'Local deaf history' (interviewing older deaf people); 'Palliative care' (considering the issues when deaf people have terminal illness); 'Interactive health' (using wearable devices to help deaf people monitor their health).

Sadly, none of these projects received funding and so they are on the shelf at the moment.

We did however, receive approval for 2 major projects: the first is a European Union project to train deaf students in English and in BSL and the other was for the development of automatic speech recognition. These are explained in the next section of the report.

Next April, the Trust is 35 years old and we are considering how best to celebrate. One idea is to set up the Bristol Deaf Worlds festival 2019 which can show all of the work and involvement of deaf people in Bristol and the impact that Bristol research has had on the deaf community in general. Watch this space.

Special thanks as always to Esther Drewe who manages our finances and to our new Chair, Clark Denmark who has enormous experience in all matters to do with the deaf community.

Jim Kyle, Secretary



Total Conversation – captions for telephone conversations

The telephone (invented by a Scotsman with a deaf wife), is vital for sharing time-critical information and emotion. Everywhere there is a telephone. Even if you want Internet at home, you have to have a telephone line. Up to now, deaf people face barriers to using the phone.

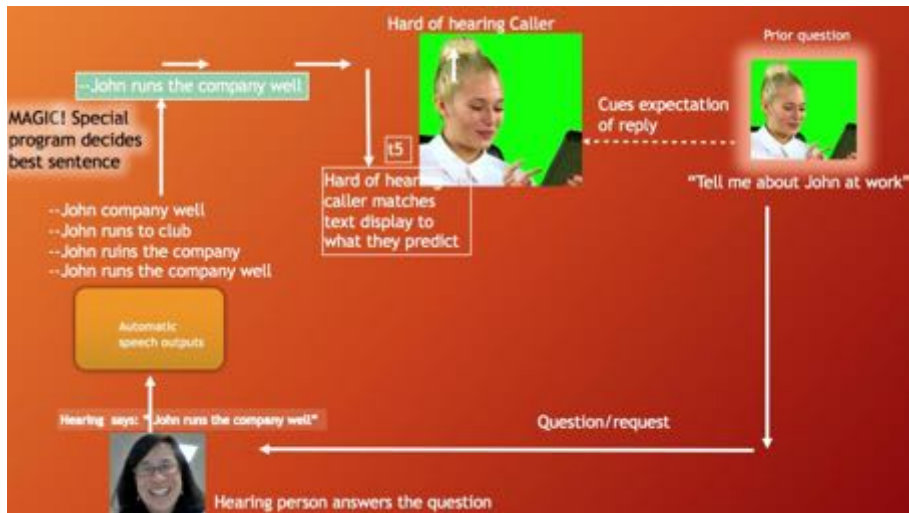
Although we can now make video calls, they are still designed for speech and people talking. Even using BT's text service, requires a link to a telephone land line, even though you can use a smartphone.

We believe that deaf people should be able to make calls and receive calls to and from anyone on any handset and without that person having to install special software.

TC-Cap project was set up to work out exactly how that can be done. At the present time, we can see that there are speech to text programs, but they have not been applied effectively for people using the telephone.

TC-Cap is a project carried out as a collaboration with BBITG in Bristol, a company that specialises in relay services for sign language. The project ran from June 2017 to February 2018. This is what we did (also see the diagram):

1. Made recordings of over 1000 minutes of telephone calls (because there was no database of calls which was available to us)
2. Transcribed the words people said and coded the time of each sentence.
3. Trained people to re-speak the text as if it had to go through a relay operator.
4. Collected other recordings of people talking – several thousand hours
5. Applied automatic speech recognition to the samples of telephone calls.
6. Because this was not completely accurate, we developed new software to predict better matching of the speech.
7. Used more advanced statistical techniques to improve accuracy further.
8. Even so, we needed to reach 98% accurate and so we added a final stage and used Artificial Intelligence programs to make sure that the words displayed were the most likely for English speakers.
9. We were then able to demonstrate the system in action and could show how what the speaker says could be displayed for deaf and hard of hearing people to read.



The hard of hearing person asks a question in speech, or the deaf person types the question and the system translates this to spoken words. The speech of the hearing person goes through our automatic system and several possible options are produced in text. TC-Cap then decide which text is best; and that text appears on the screen of the deaf or hard of hearing person. As long as the deaf person is registered with the system, all calls from hearing people on ordinary phones will be automatically transferred into text.

Unfortunately, although we asked for the next stage of funding to make the project available for people try, we have been turned down (June 2018) and we will need to find a different source of funding in order to allow deaf and hard of hearing people to use what we have developed. (we need to find about £250,000 to make service viable).

Language Skills Project (Erasmus-Plus, 2017 to 2020)

The other project which was successful the year is the Language Skills project which is a cooperation with partners in Czech Republic (coordinators), in Hungary, in Austria and also at UCLan in Preston.

The purpose is to develop online courses in English and in BSL for deaf people and to run summer schools in Bristol in 2019 and 2020.

We began work on the courses towards the end of the year but the main work will take place 2018 and 2019. There will be more information as it becomes available.



Training of Medical Students in University of Bristol

This year we trained 75 second year medical students. We provided a 30-hour course with assessment of their ability to consult deaf patients. This exam is a part of their course (they have to pass) and we hope it will lead to better health access for deaf people in future. Thanks to the tutors: Carolyn Denmark, Emma Trainor, Alison Wherry-Alimo, Liz Potter and John Mancini. Next year we move to a new system where we will have the students in placement at the Vassall Centre for three weeks full time.

Finance Report

The Statement of Financial Activities for the Year to 31st March 2018

The best indicator of the state of financial health of the Trust is the total of the “unrestricted” funds. This stands at £22,541 - which has increased from last year’s figure of £16,058 (without the outstanding payment of £7000 which has now been received and is included in this years "unrestricted" funds. (see Note 9 in finance statement).

There is again an outstanding payment due of over £7,000 of which some will become part of the unrestricted funds so situation is looking very healthy. A business should look to have the equivalent of at least 3 months “unrestricted” spending (currently circa £1200). This is clearly exceeded by a healthy margin.

The Trust is able to make investment in future activities and in work which will generate future projects and thereby, repay any financial investments made.

The Trust is in a good financial position at this time.

Esther Drewe

July 2018

The Deaf Studies Trust continues to move forward in its work. It succeeds with low overhead margins and does not seek to generate large profits on its work.

The Deaf Studies Trust strives continuously to make Deaf people's lives more valued and understood by the society at large.



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Chair: Clark Denmark



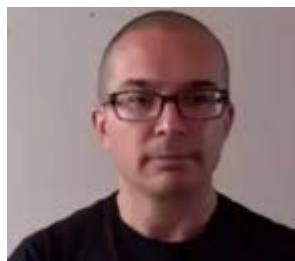
Secretary: Jim Kyle



Treasurer: Esther Drewe



Trustee: Hilary Sutherland



Trustee: Mike Gulliver



Trustee: Amy Gibbs



Trustee: Lesley Pender