

News in Brief

Summer School

In July DCAL held a successful summer school to introduce graduates, post-graduates and post-docs to sign language related research. It is hoped that this will encourage well-qualified researchers into the field.

Award for Ruth Campbell

Professor Ruth Campbell received an honorary doctorate from Linköping University in Sweden. The award was made in acknowledgement of her research relating to deafness and deaf people.

London Signs

Frances Elton, UCL's Co-ordinator of Sign Language and Deaf Studies, has co-authored a book called *British Sign Language: London and South East Regional Signs*

Permanent Secretary visits DCAL



Sir Brian Bender (far right), Permanent Secretary at the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform and Professor Ian Diamond (second right), Chief Executive of the Economic & Social Research Council, visited DCAL in June to learn how we are working to improve the daily lives of deaf people.

£1.2m to build sign language collection

DCAL's Dr Adam Schembri will lead a hearing and deaf team from five universities to build the first national, publicly accessible digital collection of British Sign Language (BSL) recordings.

The new three-year project, funded by a £1.2 million grant from the Economic & Social Research Council, will involve gathering video recordings and related information from at least 240 BSL users from eight locations across the UK. To reflect the variety of the deaf community, it will include a balance of men and women, young and old, a range of social backgrounds, ethnic groups, and both those with deaf and with hearing parents.

The resulting 'corpus' will provide a centralised source of data for research into the highly varied and rapidly changing nature of British Sign Language. The researchers will study the relationship between variation and change in aspects of BSL such as vocabulary and grammar, and the users' social backgrounds. They will also investigate which signs are the most common in conversation. All these elements of the project will enhance research already conducted at DCAL, such as comparison of BSL with Australian and American Sign Languages, and will improve sign language teaching resources.



**Dr Adam Schembri
will lead the
'corpus' project**

Exploring how deaf people 'hear' voice-hallucinations

In the July edition of Cognitive Neuropsychiatry DCAL published ground breaking research on how deaf people with schizophrenia 'hear' voice-hallucinations.



The study, lead by Dr. Joanna Atkinson, found that someone's experience of voice hallucinations is dependant on their hearing loss and language background. Earlier research had suggested that people born profoundly deaf might experience true auditory hallucinations. However, the collection and interpretation of data had relied on non-native signers or hearing researchers using sign language interpreters.

The DCAL research breaks new ground by using improved methodologies to confirm that true auditory hallucinations were confined to deaf individuals who at some point in their lives had experienced hearing.

Researchers found participants born profoundly deaf reported non-auditory, clear and easy to understand voices. The practical outcome from this research is that some mental health services may have to be designed differently. The focus will no longer be on an 'auditory voice' but on the way that deaf people use language. This could have a major impact on anyone working with deaf people with schizophrenia.

Signs of Language Impairments in Deaf Children

Up until now no one has considered that a deaf child might have a language learning problem that goes beyond their late exposure to sign language. New research has begun at City University and DCAL focusing on Specific Language Impairment (SLI) in deaf children who use sign language.

This project is the first of its kind in the world and involves deaf and hearing researchers and professionals. The research aims to describe SLI in deaf signing children and to develop tests to identify deaf children with language impairments.

The team will then work with deaf and hearing professionals in order to create interventions for conducting language therapy with this group.

For more information on this project visit www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk/Research/SLI_project.html or email Kate.Rowley.1@city.ac.uk or Kathryn.Mason.1@city.ac.uk

First Results

Professor Ruth Cambell and Dr Fiona Kyle have presented the first results of their study of profoundly deaf children's lip reading (speech reading) to the British Psychological Society's Developmental Section Conference.

The conference was told that early results show speech reading skill is not particularly affected by the type of aid used by children or their school or home language(s). However their vocabulary in English or BSL is related to their speech reading skill.

It's MY future!

A competition to help direct research in deafness

Are you between the ages of 15-19? Have you ideas about deafness research? At DCAL, we want to know what directions research in deafness should take in future.

We are running a competition to find out more about the ideas that are out there, and to build them into our plans.

To enter, submit your ideas in the form of a short essay. There will be a top prize of £200 and an awards ceremony at the House of Commons during Science Week (March 11th) 2008.

If you are interested in finding out more about the competition please email dcalcomms@ucl.ac.uk and we will keep you informed.



Policy in Action

Single Equality Bill

DCAL has recently responded to the Department for Communities and Local Government's Green Paper on the Single Equality Bill.

DCAL called on the Government to include 'auxiliary aids and services' in the pre-16 education provisions of any amended anti-discrimination legislation. This would give deaf children the right to adequately trained and skilled interpreters. Currently a lack of interpreters means that many deaf children don't get anywhere near an equal education compared to their hearing peers.

DCAL also called on the Government to give tribunals the power to award compensation for disability discrimination in pre-16 education for similar reasons

Staff News

- Martine Laverty has replaced Alison Phillips as the DCAL PA / Centre Secretary. Alison has moved on to a new post as Disability Adviser at Roehampton University
- Delroy Nelson has taken over from Steve Lawrence as the DCAL technician.
- Dr Tyron Woolfe has moved to National Deaf Children's Society to become the Deputy Director UK Services.
- And finally congratulations to Dr Joanna Atkinson who gave birth to a baby boy called Kier on the 8th August.

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