Dear ASDtech Members,

Welcome to the nineteenth monthly ASDtech Digest. I hope all of our subscribers are doing well as the March digest reaches you. The newsletter aims to contain information relevant to researchers, but also to parents, practitioners and other members of the autism community. Please forward this email to anyone who you feel would be interested -- there is also a pdf version attached for posting to your website, twitter or blog.

This month's digest contains information about:

1. Upcoming autism and technology special interest group, IMFAR 2015
2. Exciting new research developing technology to support the writing and delivery of Social Stories™
3. Education technology may transform classroom experience for learners with ASD
5. Amazing Free Apps
6. Rethinking autism and technology: A reflective article
9. Quick Questions
10. Open Access Zone
11. Recent publications in Autism & Technology

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1. **Upcoming autism and technology special interest group, IMFAR 2015**

We are delighted to share the good news that our special interest group (SIG) has been invited back for our third consecutive and final SIG at IMFAR 2015. The theme of the 2015 SIG will be *dissemination*. The main part of the meeting will be a chaired expert panel discussion. The multi-disciplinary panel will be asked to respond to questions submitted in advance by members of the ASDtech mailing list, permitting a focused discussion, followed by open comments from the floor. Topics may include:

- Open sourcing: both data and programs, including online versions of autism clinical and research tools
- Technological solutions for the developing world - cultural differences in design and application
- Procedural integrity in technology research and practice
- Learning analytics and implementation science: what lessons are relevant for autism research?
• Expectations of technology: it *could* be free so *should* it be free?
• Time and resources required to make technology accessible and support users
• Challenges of and guidelines for, bringing technologies to the market

Since this will be the closing meeting of the SIG we will also invite specific suggestions from members about how to build on the work of the SIG, drawing on existing tools such as the mailing list and international expertise map, in addition to identifying further opportunities for meetings.

The organizing committee for the SIG will soon meet via conference call to specify plans for the SIG. Further announcements will be circulated to this mailing list and posted at: http://www.dart.ed.ac.uk/asdtech/imfar_sig

*with thanks to Sue Fletcher-Watson*

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2. **Exciting new research developing technology to support the writing and delivery of Social Stories™**

A research team based at the University of Bath (UK), has been funded by the Leverhulme Trust to complete exciting new research developing technology to support the writing and delivery of Social Stories™. As part of this research the team is carrying out a short online survey (15 minutes) to ask parents and practitioners about their experience writing and delivering Social Stories™. This will enhance the team's understanding of how Social Stories™ are currently being used and what might be important to consider as they develop the new computer-based tool. For further information and access to the online questionnaire, please visit their website: http://go.bath.ac.uk/social-stories

*with thanks to Liz Smith*

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3. **Education technology may transform classroom experience for learners with ASD**

As a result of funding from Nesta Impact Investments, high quality live captioning called Ai-Live will soon be utilized within classrooms at school and universities in the UK. Ai-Live was originally developed in Australia to provide access to people with a disability. Live captions transform the educational experience of Deaf and hard of hearing students by enabling their full participation in mainstream classrooms. Originally developed in Australia to support people with deafness in mainstream schools and workplaces, the success of Ai-Live has led to it being developed for children and young people with many different needs. Ai-Live has also adapted their captions for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) whereby captioners listen to the lesson, summarize the
content and deliver these summaries as live captions. The development of Ai-Live for use by children and young adults with many different needs offers the potential to reach many more young people, raising their educational outcomes. Click here to learn more about Ai-Live.

with thanks to Sue Fletcher-Watson


A new study evaluating the effectiveness of the Secret Agent Society (SAS) Computer Game Pack and a variant of the SAS small group program for students with ASCs when delivered in a school setting has recently been published in the Psychology in the Schools Journal. The aforementioned journal article is listed within the Recent publications in Autism & Technology section of this digest.

1-Day SAS Computer Game Workshops are being offered to professionals in Dublin (10th April), Pembrokeshire, Wales (14th April) and throughout Australia. These workshops teach professionals how to get the best results from the SAS Computer Game Pack resource in individual, small group or classroom settings within clinics, community centres and schools. To find out more or to apply, please go to http://www.sst-institute.net/au/professionals/apply-now/ or email sas@sst-institute.net

SAS is now settling into its new home at the not-for-profit Australian Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Autism CRC) http://www.autismcrc.com.au/. The commitment to providing communities with the training, support and resources they need to deliver high quality, evidence-based interventions is stronger than ever, with all profits reinvested into research and further program developments.

with thanks to Renae Beaumont

5. **Amazing Free Apps**

The following free apps provide support for behavior, writing and much more . . . enjoy!

- Toca Hair Salon - [https://appsto.re/i6BQ3zr](https://appsto.re/i6BQ3zr)
- Behavior Buddy - [https://appsto.re/i6BW3bX](https://appsto.re/i6BW3bX)
- WriteReader - Children learn to write and read by authoring books - [https://appsto.re/i6BQ3Wm](https://appsto.re/i6BQ3Wm)
- myKidzDay - [https://appsto.re/i6BW3bJ](https://appsto.re/i6BW3bJ)
- Writing Cats - [https://appsto.re/i6BW3Kp](https://appsto.re/i6BW3Kp)
- Letter Cats - [https://appsto.re/i6BW3Kp](https://appsto.re/i6BW3Kp)
- PhotoMath - [https://appsto.re/i6BQ3zc](https://appsto.re/i6BQ3zc)
5. **Rethinking autism and technology: A reflective article**

"Has our focus on delivering interventions obstructed our view on what could be the real power of interactive technology in the lives of autistic people?" is one of the questions posed by Christopher Frauenberger in his article featured within the March-April, 2015 issue of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Interactions magazine. Frauenberger, a senior researcher at the Institute for Design and Assessment of Technology, Vienna University of Technology, also discusses his previous work, participatory design (PD) and his current research project, **Outside of the Box**.

Frauenberger and his team are working to implement a research agenda that aims to explore how new, meaningful roles for technologies in the lives of children with autism can be identified. In a series of case studies, Outside The Box reinterprets a range of PD methods in which Frauenberger and his research team work with autistic children to co-design their very own smart objects. The design processes are evaluated to assess how well they enable children with autism in leading the exploration and expressing their ideas. Mapping out various methods, the research team aims to provide designers with a concept space offering methodological guidance that is firmly grounded in the case studies. [Click here](#) to learn more about Outside The Box and read the article in its entirety.

*with thanks to Alyssa Alcorn*


A new app called [FriendMaker](https://www.apple.com) is based on Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson's book, *The Science of Making Friends*. FriendMaker breaks down the process of making friends into easy, concrete steps--from choosing friends and improving conversational skills to online etiquette and handling teasing. FriendMaker also provides role-play videos that demonstrate appropriate social skills. It is now available free in the App Store for all Apple devices until April 15th! [Click here](#) for additional information.

*with thanks to Ruth Anan*

In a recent Network Autism blog post, Sue Fletcher-Watson recently advocated for the use of technology to teach specific skills needed for individuals with ASD to function in a predominantly neurotypical world. Fletcher-Watson's basis for this argument was the commonly held, yet often accurate stereotype that people with ASD are normally "whizzes with computers", paired with examples of individuals with autism displaying a strong preference for using technology that can be seen in the extant literature (Bernard-Opitz et al., 2001; Buggey, 2005; Charlop-Christy and Danesvar, 2003; Schriebman et al., 2000). Based on the aforementioned, in addition to using technology to teach various skills to learners with ASD, we may also want to consider an increased focus on teaching computing to individuals with ASD. To that end, consider this upcoming workshop:


Call for Participation (There is not much time to submit [deadline: March 30th, 2015]; however, there is plenty of time to register for the conference):

The current drive in many countries to teach computing to all from an early age has potential to empower and support children in creative and problem-solving tasks. However, there are a number of challenges in ensuring that computing curricula, tools and environments embody appropriate progression and engender motivation for the topic across the school years. This workshop will consider the key research challenges in learning coding throughout childhood.

We seek position papers from designers of programming environments for children, developmental psychologists, educational researchers and practitioners, and others with interests in this area, which address key questions such as:

- What, if any, are the precursors to computer science skills and understanding and how can we foster them?
- Can we draw on knowledge from other subject areas (such as mathematics) where conceptual pathways seem more clearly understood?
- How can we ensure that foundational concepts are refined and deepened over time (e.g. similar to Bruner's spiral curriculum).
- What is the relationship between programming and computational thinking, and are there any trade-offs regarding which should be the primary educational focus?
- How can we design programming tools and curricula that are developmentally appropriate and foster motivation throughout childhood?
Workshop activities:

- Position papers and discussion
- Hands on overview of current tools (during breaks)
- Road map activity: participants work in groups to draw a road map of the developmental stages in computational thinking, based on developmental theory from psychology, mathematics education and empirical work in computer science education.
- Whole group plenary: discussion and identification of gaps in knowledge and research in the field.

Expected outcomes:
After the workshop, the organizers will work with participants to develop the road map, and key areas for further research, into a paper for the International Journal of Child Computer Interaction.

Dates:

- Submission deadline: March 30th 2015
- Notification of Acceptance: April 13th 2015
- Workshop: June 21st 2015

Location:
The workshop will take place at the IDC'15 conference at Tufts University, Boston, MA

Website:
The workshop website is at [http://everychildacoder.org.uk/](http://everychildacoder.org.uk/)

*with thanks to Sue Fletcher-Watson*

8. **Quick Questions**

This is the designated section within the digest where subscribers can post requests to collaborate and ask questions within their areas of interest. Please send any questions/requests for information and/or assistance that you would like posted to me for inclusion next month.

Submitted by Rachel Kopke:

I am a doctoral candidate within the Counseling, Education, Special Education and Psychology (CEPSE) department at Michigan State University, with an interest in the development of evidence-based guidelines for teachers and other service providers, in the use of technology as a component of instruction for Pre-K through 4th grade learners with ASD. If you have an interest or expertise in this area, please contact me at: kopkerac@msu.edu
7. **Open Access Zone**


*with thanks to Sara Parsons*

10. **Recent publications in Autism & Technology**


*with thanks to Renae Beaumont*

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