

From the Editor

This is a special issue – a very special issue. The assistive technology community has been working cooperatively for many years, both worldwide and within the European Union, to make progress in this field. Throughout the many years of good and consistent cooperation we have also seen difficult periods, but a steady course has been held thanks to the communication between the AT community and the leadership; the individuals at the European Union. This success is thanks to the perseverance of all those who have remained dedicated to the cause of persons with disabilities.

This issue reports on the recommendations of the HEART project, which ran in the early 1990s, and also on the current status of the AT field; a status with the prospect of improvement through procurement regulations, and one which could not have been achieved without cooperation.

It was a challenge for the guest editors: Christian Bühler (Forschungsinstitut für Technologie und Behinderung) and Jan Engelen (Kath. Univ. Leuven) who accepted the task of creating this issue. Both were working in the field of assistive technology long before the HEART study and the European programmes for AT and accessibility began. Moreover they continued to work in this domain and collaborated in several European projects; thus remaining closely informed about what was happening in the AT community.



Christian Bühler



Jan Engelen

Reviewing was open this time, and the reviewers were also researchers during the HEART project:

- Renzo Andrich, MSc Eng., Research co-coordinator; Assistive Technology area at the Biomedical Technology Department of Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi, Milano, Italy

- Luis Azevedo, M.Sc., Ph.D., Researcher; Augmentative Communication and Assistive Technology at the CAPS/IST – Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal
- Lawrence Normie, CEO and Director of Research; Aging-in-place technologies at GeronTech – The Israeli Center for Assistive Technology and Aging, Israel.
- Claes Tjäder, Head of Technology and method development; Aids in focus – for people with mental disabilities at the Swedish Institute for Assistive Technology (formerly: Handicap Institute), Stockholm, Sweden.



Renzo Andrich



Luis Azevedo



Lawrence Normie



Claes Tjäder

We would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for the effort they put into this special issue. But most of all, we would like to thank the many authors whose in-depth research produced the papers presented here.

We wish them a fruitful future with the important work yet to be done. Keep cooperating and communicating!

Dr. Mathijs Soede
Editor-in-Chief