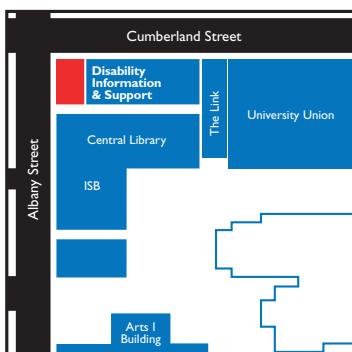


Imagine

“With realisation of one’s own potential and self-confidence in one’s ability, one can build a better world.” Dalai Lama

Disability Information & Support Newsletter

ISSUE 1 2012



Our physical address is:
Disability Information & Support
West Lane
Information Services Building
Cnr Cumberland and Albany Streets
Dunedin

Welcome to 2012! The staff at Disability Information and Support (DI&S) would like to welcome both returning and new students. As we go forward into the year, we also reflect on the previous year and have noted that 665 students contacted our office for advice or support during 2011.

A highlight for us has been seeing students graduate and it has certainly been a privilege to work alongside them during their academic journeys.

In terms of DI&S’s journey, 2012 marks a significant milestone for our service, as we have been providing support services for 20 years! In April 1992, the University hired a part-time Disability Coordinator to work with students with impairments. Today, DI&S has a dedicated team of 10 staff who work actively to reach our vision of working in partnership

to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes comprehensive academic support, and empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential. We cannot let this milestone slip by and we are pleased to announce that to help us celebrate, Dr Tom Shakespeare, a world renowned advocate for disability issues, will be presenting at a public lecture titled “*Our Statures Touch the Skies*”: *High Achievers with Disabilities*. The public lecture will be held on Tuesday 3 April, 5.30pm - 6.20pm at the College of Education Auditorium, Union Street.

The team would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the very best for your studies and we hope you will feel free to drop into the office if and when you are passing.

Donna-Rose
Head of Service



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Introducing The team

At present Disability Information and Support (DI&S) has a dedicated team of seven permanent staff members, all working in a positive and collaborative manner to put in place comprehensive learning support to enable students with impairments to reach their potential.

The team:

Donna-Rose McKay	Head of Service
Eileen O'Regan	Receptionist / Administrator Assistant
Emma Holt	Student Advisor
Helen Ingram	Administrator
Jackie Fox	Acting Learning Support Manager
Jenny Weeks	Student Advisor
Melissa Lethaby	Learning Support Manger – currently on parental leave

We are very excited to announce that Melissa will soon be returning from parental leave and resuming her position as Learning Support Manager; thus allowing Jackie to recommence her role as Student Advisor.

In addition, it is a pleasure to introduce our team of temporary staff, all of whom are providing an exceptional service for DI&S and the students we are working with:

Jacinta Latta	Note-taker Administrator
Terrie Alpress	Note-taker Administrator
Sarah Grant	Tutor Coordinator

Staff are a real asset to any service and we are extremely lucky to have such a great team!

Farewell

It was with much sadness that we farewelled Kim this month. Kim and her partner, Martin, have returned home to Germany to pursue new opportunities and to be closer to family. Kim has been working at Disability Information and Support for 6 years and she has been an integral member of the team. We will certainly miss her positive, friendly and helpful manner. Bon voyage Kim, we all wish you the very best.



Important Dates 2012

- ~ DI&S 20th Anniversary Celebration
3 April 2012
- ~ Tom Shakespeare's Public Lecture
3 April 2012
- ~ Alternative Arrangement Forms for Semester One Exams due on Tuesday
1 May 2012
- ~ Semester One Exams
6-20 June 2012

Alternative Examination Arrangements - Deadline 1 May 2012

Alternative Examination Arrangements are designed to assist students with impairments who may experience difficulty sitting exams under conventional circumstances.

Disability Information and Support can arrange readers, writers, additional time (the standard time extension is 10 minutes per hour of examination), ergonomic equipment, alternative formatting of exam papers, the use of a computer, as well as other arrangements that best meet the individual needs of students.

Please note that documentation from a relevant health professional or specialist (for example a doctor, physiotherapist or psychologist) is required before Alternative Examination Arrangements can be put in place.

If a student is already registered with Disability Information and Support an Alternative Arrangements application form will be sent to them. If you do not receive an application form, please collect one from Disability Information and Support from early April.

The final deadline for applications for Semester One Alternative arrangements is 1 May.

DI&S Support



Fourth year student Heidi Boulter could write you a note – but that’s about it. Muscular problems mean she often simply can’t take notes during a whole lecture or complete a three-hour exam.

When you are working concurrently on two degrees such as a BA in Classics and a Bachelor of Theology there is a lot of writing to do but even before she got to Otago Heidi was confident the help she needed would be available through DI&S.

“I have alternative arrangements for all my exams. I used to have a writer but I am now able to use a computer.”

She has become adept at using voice recognition software such as Dragon and while she could get a note-taker for lectures she prefers to use her own voice recorder and listen to lectures again – an approach that suits her learning style.

Heidi has also had to cope with mental health problems and was, at one stage, able to get special consideration for exams.

She has found DI&S a great source of readily available support and her departments have also been helpful.

“I’m lucky to have nice departments. Both Theology and Classics are small departments and great to work with. They know I work hard and are quite understanding.”

Looking ahead, Heidi hopes to finish her BA by the end of the year and will apply for an Honours year in B.Theol.

Editors Footnote: Students must seek permission to record lectures and if approved they can only record for the purposes of private study or research.

Disability Studies Conference

A great success



In November 2011, Disability Information & Support co-hosted the inaugural *Disability Studies: Every Body In* Conference at the University of Otago. Over 300 delegates attended from as far away as Australia, Asia, the United States and the United Kingdom, offering 90 sessions across five broad themes.

The highlight for many was the Key Note address by Dr Tom Shakespeare which left delegates energised and buzzing. Tom spoke of the need for more disabled and non-disabled researchers working across disciplines and researching disability issues. You can read more about Tom's thoughts later on in this newsletter.

One of the strengths of this conference was the great diversity of people attending, all with an interest in disability and Disability Studies. Throughout the conference the voices of disabled people were heard loud and clear. One disabled researcher attending was Chris Ross who has drawn disability issues into his Master of Planning. An interview with Chris features later in this newsletter.

Delegates were surveyed after the conference and it was clear that in all senses the conference was a great success. The interest and commitment in Disability Studies was declared. New Zealand's knowledge and expertise was showcased and many new alliances were formed and networks built.

Much more research needed

Keynote speaker Tom Shakespeare says there are major gaps in what is known about disability and there is a huge need for both disabled and non-disabled researchers to go out and fill in those gaps.

A social scientist with a broad background of researching, teaching, writing and broadcasting about disability, Shakespeare works at the World Health Organisation where he was one of the editors of the *World report on disability* (www.who.int/disabilities/world_report). That role has left him keenly aware of the lack of well-researched information.

"My message is we need you because we need disabled and non-disabled researchers to work together to find out stuff about the lives of disabled people," he says.

"It doesn't matter what discipline people are in. We need architects to research access standards, we need lawyers to research how law can be made effective and adapted and made inclusive.

"If you are a teacher we need to know the best ways of training teachers, of making schools inclusive, of getting good outcomes for disabled kids. If you're a doctor we need to have inclusive medical research – and so on.

Disability Studies Conference

“Regardless of what discipline or vocational path people are taking, we need more knowledge – there are great opportunities to make a meaningful contribution.”

Tom says there has been a huge growth in disabilities research over the past two years and it is exciting to be working in an area that has so much scope for development.

“I think we need more outcome research about what works and more economic research on the costs of disability.

“If we want to get Government to invest in, say, rehabilitation or education or whatever it is, they will only do that if we can show it will save them money later on. That’s the economic reality.

“Is rehabilitation a good investment? We all think it is but I want to know how much it is, what is the multiplier? So let’s find out.”

Tom points out that there is still a lot we don’t know about the impact of disability.

“What about the most marginalised disabled people – people with intellectual disability, people with mental health conditions, people with communication problems – what problems do they encounter, and how can we ensure their participation? These are the sorts of questions we want to answer so we’ve got a fuller picture of the lives of disabled people and the barriers they face.”

Tom says there are opportunities at WHO for postgraduate interns with disabilities. If you want to get to Geneva and work there with WHO or another international agency such as the International Labour Organization, for between six weeks and three months, the onus is on potential interns to find the funds – Tom says it can cost about 1200 Swiss Francs or £800 a month to live in Geneva.

If you are interested, look at the WHO interns webpage at www.who.int/employment/internships.

If you still have queries, Tom might be able to provide further advice. He can be reached by email at shakespearet@who.int.

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

It has been a long, globe-trotting path that has brought Gloria Gomez from Colombia to now practice and develop her specialised inclusive design skills in Dunedin.

Gloria completed her bachelor’s degree in graphic design in Colombia before being invited to join a US-based research group to work on the visual design of the widely used CmapTools software.

She then moved to Australia to do her PhD in design in 2003 before moving to New Zealand in 2007 with her Otago-born husband, whom she had met in Canada.

Her PhD focused on pre-school education and the prototype she developed attracted the interest of people working with children and adults with disabilities because of its inclusive characteristics.

Gloria says the system enabled children with different developmental skills to perform at their own pace during mapping activities.

“If a child was good at communicating with drawings they could map with that, or if a child was better at communicating verbally they could map with that too. It was a more inclusive system that all the children were able to use according to their mastered skills.”

Gloria says there are many definitions to inclusive design, but it basically means designing products that people with broadly different abilities can access.

A good example is the OXO kitchen utensils which were designed for people with arthritic pain but have become popular for wider use.

“Inclusive design is important because you want products that a group of people can use collaboratively or individually,” explains Gloria.

“Inclusive design looks for the common capabilities of everyone. Say for example in a classroom you have children of different abilities, so you say, ‘okay what are the common activities they can perform - so you look for the common traits of the individuals in the environment’. You then develop things according to those strengths.”

At the moment she is developing a software application for medical staff and postgraduate medical students to use online. The aim is to get staff who are over 50 to use technology they may not have used before to develop an online course as well.

But Gloria feels the crucial thing that is missing is that connection between business entrepreneurship, designers and people in the movement.

There is plenty of goodwill towards the whole idea of inclusive design, while research and anecdotal evidence all points to its value and success in the disabilities area.

But, Gloria says, developing it further often comes down to cost and difficulty in getting industry support.

“This is where I see the disconnect between the act of product development or the philosophy of the people who develop it, and the business world,” she says.

“This idea of designing things for the average person is pervasive because the models for designing those have been there for a long time so we need new models and we need people who are interested in actually doing it differently.”

Disability Studies Conference

“It was good to see them run it with experience, practice and research merged together so you could get a whole range of everything.”



A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Chris Ross, one of five recipients of the student scholarship for the Every Body In conference was left greatly impressed by the conference and the way that it brought so many fields of research together in such a coherent way.

He was amazed by the wide variety of sessions and presenters, and the varied way in which they ran their sessions and communicated their messages.

“It was good to see them run it with experience, practice and research merged together so you could get a whole range of everything.”

One of the standouts for Chris was keynote speaker Tom Shakespeare.

“He was brilliant to talk to, but I also think some of the little sessions like the theory and policy were great and also some of the research they have with young children and with the healthcare system.”

Having just completed his Master of Planning, with a focus on disability strategies within local government, he found sessions on research, theory and policy and another on employment and services of particular interest.

“Both themes were relevant to my research and backed up what I have done,” says Chris. “It is nice to know that your research is similar to other people’s and although there are variations they still have similar results.”

However, he feels the conference showed there are still many political issues, accessibility issues and educational issues that need to be solved.

Personally, Chris hopes to use his Masters to open up a career where he can focus on accessibility and disability issues and strategies - although not exclusively.

“I love urban design as well. I really enjoy creating town spaces and things like that. We can also make it better for people with disabilities and the community as a whole.”

But for the moment he is readying himself to push for a spot in the cycling team for the London Paralympic Games.

You can follow his progress on www.chrisrosscycling.com

Teaching and awareness

The OUSA Teaching Awards were presented at an awards ceremony at the University Staff Club in October, 2011. We were thrilled that Dr Gill Rutherford was awarded the Disability Awareness and Inclusive Teaching Award for the second year in a row. Gill, who teaches at the College of Education, was one of 50 staff nominated for this award. She received almost half of the total nominations. The award recognises excellence in inclusive teaching and a commitment to understanding disability as a human rights issue, thus enriching the Otago experience for students who have a disability, impairment or medical condition. It honours a university staff member whose teaching and actions exemplify the ideals of inclusivity and advances equity and opportunities for all students. Congratulations Gill!

In November, Disability Information and Support (DI&S) acknowledged the work of staff when it presented its newly created Appreciation Awards. DI&S staff wanted to acknowledge and thank individuals who had worked towards our vision of working in partnership to promote an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity, promotes comprehensive academic support, and empowers individuals with impairments to achieve their full potential.

The following Appreciation Awards were presented.

ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBER AWARD

For providing exceptional support for students

John Harraway (Department of Mathematics and Statistics)

Nancy Tayles (Department of Anatomy)

GENERAL STAFF MEMBER AWARD

For providing exceptional support for students and outstanding communication with the DI&S team

Graham Green (The Māori Centre)

GENERAL STAFF MEMBER AWARD

For providing exceptional support for students and guidance to staff

Jubilee Rajiah (Student Health and Counselling)

TUTOR AWARDS

For providing exceptional tutoring support for students

Debbie Jordan (Department of Chemistry)

Florence Stone

SUPERVISOR AWARD

For being an exceptional supervisor for alternative arrangements

Wendy Middlemiss

NOTE TAKER AWARD

For being an exceptional note taker

Sim Kwong Nui (student)

DEPARTMENTAL CONTACT AWARD

For being an exceptional Departmental contact

Linda McNeill (Department of Physiology)

Brenda Tustin (Department of Economics)

DISTANCE/EXTRAMURAL AWARD

For providing exceptional support to students and staff

Jill Winter (Public Health and General Practice, Christchurch)

DISTANCE/EXTRAMURAL AWARD

For providing exceptional student support and outstanding communication with the DI&S team

Radiation Therapy Team, Wellington

APPRECIATION AWARD

For being an exceptional role model for inclusive practices

Gill Rutherford (College of Education)

APPRECIATION AWARD

For being an exceptional advocate for accessibility on campus

Victoria Rondell (Property Services)

APPRECIATION AWARD

For providing exceptional all-round service and support

Pauline Brook (Student Learning Centre)

Victoria Rondell works at Property Services and received an award for being an exceptional advocate for accessibility on campus. We caught up with Victoria to find out more about the works she does.

And the 2011 Appreciation Award goes to ...



Victoria Rondel, a CAD technician with the University of Otago Property Services, has become something of a hands-on advocate for promoting the development of a more accessible campus and is a deserving winner of our 2011 Appreciation Award.

After taking on the role of Accessibility Co-ordinator about two years ago she feels she is really starting to gain some traction because people are now starting to bring their projects to her at the correct stages. This means she can look at them in the design phase, rather than when they start trying to put them through to the consent phase when it is often too late to make key changes.

"People bring plans to me and I review them with the barrier-free checklist, making sure it complies with all the correct codes and standards. If it doesn't I send feedback and make suggestions on how things could be made better," explains Victoria.

"It's been great. I had no knowledge of this area coming into it and I have learnt so much and you are always learning.

"We have people back in the Property Services office who are from the UK and they have very detailed Accessibility standards over there so I am picking up a lot from them."

Victoria says the plan for 2012 is to formulate a University standard.

"Doing little things in the design phase can make such a big difference. We are trying to get a consistency throughout the Campus and would like to do this by creating a checklist to help make the University a more inclusive and accessible environment."

Including the correct standards is easy in new buildings but the University's stock of older buildings, poses challenges when doing re-fits, especially because quite often they are only addressing part of the building.

"Ideally we would like the entire Campus barrier-free as soon as possible, and by integrating these changes when the opportunity arises with these smaller projects, hopefully we are continually striving to gain the ultimate accessible Campus.

"The approach I take is that if they can make the area they are working in as accessible as possible, sooner or later the rest of it will need to be upgraded at some stage as well."

Victoria says individual departments can do simple things to improve accessibility such as being careful about the positioning of tables, chairs, display stands and even pot plants in corridors and reception areas.