

The Fremantle Collaboration

documented by Natasha Layton (2006)

Contents:

1. Fremantle Principles
2. Fremantle Outcomes
3. Background to the Fremantle Collaboration
4. References

1. Fremantle Principles

The ARATA⁽¹⁾ Conference in Fremantle, 2006, saw a unique collaboration form between Australian and international institutions and practitioners. Participants held a series of meetings that formalised six months of preparatory work regarding the economic impact of assistive technology (AT). These open discussions explored the potential of assistive technology systems to enhance the lives of people with disabilities, and explored research approaches for quantifying these benefits.

Disciplines represented included economics, sociology, occupational therapy, physics, psychology and rehabilitation engineering, with participants from Canada, the UK and the US, and from Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria in Australia. Unsurprisingly, this broad range of disciplines and nationalities contributed highly diverse perspectives. Worthy of note, however, were a number of common beliefs and principles which will underpin the collaboration:

Underpinning Beliefs:

1. Respect for the individuals with whom we work: their individuality, their own expertise and knowledge, and their right to self-determination and decision-making.
2. A sense of privilege around our participation in the lives of individuals with disabilities.
3. Commitment to empowering those individuals who require our expertise.
4. Deep concern regarding current service delivery, and the implications of demographic trends and policy upon the future for users of AT services.
5. Commitment to use of the ICF⁽²⁾ framework, which has been adopted as a common tool amongst Australian disability/rehabilitation organisations and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
6. A common view as to the potential for systematic research to articulate evidence as a lever for governmental and policy change.

Methodological Principles:

1. Taking a person-centered approach guided by both clinical client-centered practice models and feminist standpoint theory, in order to include civil and human rights perspectives.
2. Embracing the complexity of factors related to AT selection and service provision to individuals through systematic evaluation.
3. A focus on the economic actors and their implicit and explicit incentives in AT service delivery and the AT marketplace.
4. Incorporate a psychosocial perspective regarding paid and unpaid care work partially substituting, supporting and augmenting AT use.
5. Careful consideration of the related and discrete issues in both disability and ageing sectors.

2. Fremantle Outcomes

2a. Successful application for University of Western Sydney (UWS) Research Partnership Program Grant *Assistive Technology in Australia: Economic analyses from a user standpoint – methodological implications*. The approach taken in this project has been presented at two conferences⁽³⁾, and raised considerable interest.

2b. Formation of research group:

| Member | Institution | Location | Email |
|--|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Jane Bringolf <i>Sociologist</i> | Independent Living Centres Australia and Executive Director, ILC NSW | NSW, Australia | jane@ilcnsw.asn.au |
| Rob Garrett <i>Rehabilitation Engineer</i> | NovitaTech | SA, Australia | Rob.Garrett@novita.org.au |
| David Hobbs <i>Rehabilitation Engineer</i> | NovitaTech | SA, Australia | David.Hobbs@novita.org.au |
| Desleigh de Jonge <i>Occupational Therapist</i> | School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Queensland | Queensland, Australia | d.dejonge@uq.edu.au |
| Natasha Layton <i>Occupational Therapist</i> | Occupational Therapy Consultancy | Victoria, Australia | natasha@footy.com.au |
| Agata Molenda <i>Economics Honours student</i> | School of Economics and Finance, University of Western Sydney | NSW, Australia | agata_molenda@yahoo.com.au |
| Dr Ingrid Schraner <i>Economist</i> | School of Economics and Finance and Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre, University of Western Sydney | NSW, Australia | i.schraner@uws.edu.au |
| Dr Lloyd Walker <i>Rehabilitation Engineer</i> | Director, NovitaTech | SA, Australia | Lloyd.Walker@novita.org.au |

2c. Formation of Reference Group

| Member | Institution | Location | Email |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|
| Professor Martin Ferguson-Pell <i>Physicist and Rehabilitation Engineer</i> | Head Professor: Quality of Life Research Centre; ASPIRE Chair in Disability and Technology | University College, London, England | M.Ferguson-Pell@ucl.ac.uk |
| Professor Al Cook <i>Rehabilitation Engineer</i> | Dean, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine | University of Alberta, Canada | al.cook@ualberta.ca |
| Dr Marcia Scherer <i>Psychologist</i> | Assoc Prof Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and Director, Institute for Matching Person and Technology | Rochester University, New York, USA | impt97@aol.com |
| Professor Marilyn Waring <i>Economist</i> | Professor of Public Policy and Member of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand's Board of Directors | Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand | marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz |

3. Background of the Fremantle Collaboration



Figure 1 – Members of the Cooperative Winter Research Project at the 2006 Awards Ceremony (from left to right: Agata Molenda, Ingrid Schraner and Jane Bringolf)

Acknowledgement must be made of the role of the Independent Living Centres Australia⁽⁴⁾ (ILCA) in seeding the collaboration. In their 2006 strategic plan, ILCA identified the need to articulate an evidence base for the cost-effectiveness of assistive technology. This piece of work is seen as crucial to operate effectively within the political and policy context of Australia, in order to ensure optimal service delivery for both people with disabilities and elders in the next decades.

- a. Jane Bringolf (Executive Director, ILC NSW) initiated a Cooperative Winter Research project with a student from the University of Western Sydney's School of Economics and Finance. This was conducted by a third year economics student, Agata Molenda, and provided an initial literature review concerning the cost effectiveness of AT. The resulting *Equipped For Living Literature Review*⁽⁵⁾ led the student's academic supervisor, Dr Ingrid Schraner and her industry supervisor, Jane Bringolf, to identify the requirement for a substantial interdisciplinary body of work in this area.
- b. Natasha Layton (a Melbourne-based occupational therapist), has a collegiate relationship with ILCs and was involved in scoping the literature review, based on work she is conducting around competencies in AT provision, and the role of AT practitioners in optimising outcomes.
- c. At this stage, three-way communication commenced between ILCA, UWS and Natasha Layton to explore synergies, and the possibility of a project involving PhD studies was mooted.
- d. This group made approaches to other key people in the field: Lloyd Walker, David Hobbs, Rob Garrett (NovitaTech SA); Desleigh de Jonge (ARATA President, UQ)
- e. A successful application was made for a UWS Research Partnership Program Grant in September 2006 entitled *Assistive Technology in Australia: Economic analyses from a user standpoint – methodological implications*, for which ILCA, NovitaTech and Engineers Australia's National Committee for Rehabilitation Engineering (NCRE) committed the necessary industry funds.

- f. Commitment was made for the key players, who had not met face to face as a group, to attend the ARATA Conference (Fremantle 2006) to move the project forward and consult with other key individuals. Invitations were issued to a number of the international ARATA keynote speakers prior to the conference:
Professor Al Cook (University of Alberta, Canada)
Dr Marcia Scherer (Institute for Matching Person and Technology USA)
Professor Martin Ferguson-Pell (University College London, UK)
- g. A dialogue across these participants was held through the ARATA week, culminating in a breakfast meeting on Saturday 21 October 2006 and agreement on the project mission (see Page 1 and Figure 2).
- h. In November 2006, Dr Ingrid Schraner invites Professor Marilyn Waring (NZ) to join the collaboration.



Figure 2 – Members of the Research and Reference Group share breakfast on Saturday 21st October 2006 (from left to right: David Hobbs, Jane Bringolf, Dr Ingrid Schraner (standing), Dr Marcia Scherer (sitting), Natasha Layton, Desleigh de Jonge, Dr Lloyd Walker and Professor Martin Ferguson-Pell)

4. References

1. Australian Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Association (ARATA) (www.arata.org.au)
2. World Health Organisation (2001) *ICF: International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* Geneva:WHO
3. Schraner, I. 2006. Economic Evaluation of Assistive Technology: Challenges for the Discipline, Resources from Feminist Economics. *Essays in Heterodox Economics: Proceedings of the Fifth Australian Society of Heterodox Economists Conference*. Edited by P. Kriesler, M. Johnson and J. Lodewijks. Sydney 11-12 December
4. Independent Living Centres Australia (ILCA) <http://www.ilcaustralia.org>
5. Molenda, A. 2006. Equipped for living: A literature review. *Independent Living*. Vol 22 (3), 21-23