

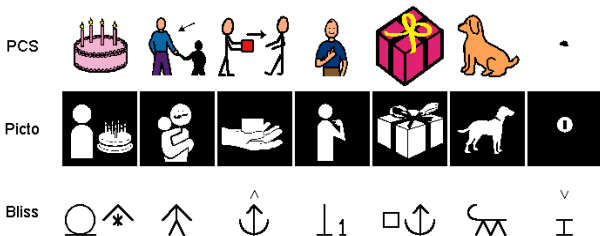
AAC & symbol systems

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) enables many people to communicate using a symbol language, such as PCS, Pictogram or Bliss. The symbols are linked to a *concept* or *meaning*. This makes them suitable for people with a wide range of language disorders.

Example:

Three languages, three symbol systems ...
... One message!

Swedish	födelsedag	pappa	ge	jag	gåva	hund	liten
Dutch	verjaardag	vader	geven	mij	kado	hond	klein
English	birthday	father	give	me	present	dog	small



People Who Use AAC and the Internet

It is estimated that about 5.6 million people in the EU have some form of language impairment. At this moment it is usually very difficult for them to browse the Internet, to use e-mail, or to take advantage of other Internet-based facilities. It is this situation that WWAAC wants to change.

WWAAC Consortium

Commercial organisations

Handicom (the Netherlands)
Modemo (Finland)
MITC (Denmark)
Femtio Procent Data AB (Sweden)

Service providers

DART (Sweden)
ACE Centre (UK)

Research institutes

KTH (Sweden)
ESRI (UK)
Dundee University (UK)

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www.wwaac.org



WWAAC

World Wide Augmentative & Alternative Communication

Making the Internet accessible
for people with complex
communication needs



This project, running from 2001 - May 2004, is partly funded by the European Commission, within the framework of the Information Society Technologies (IST) programme.

Imagine.....

People who use AAC browsing the World Wide Web independently

Imagine a personalised and supportive web browser, where web pages can be read aloud, and where favourite links to other web sites are integrated in the user's homepage. Links to related pages can be represented with an image, and key functions for browsing are accessible to people using switch scan access.

People who use AAC sending and receiving e-mails written in their own symbols

Imagine your e-mails being translated between different symbol sets (Bliss, PCS or Pictogram for example) and between different European languages (Swedish, English, Dutch or Spanish for example). Imagine communicating with people from different cultures and backgrounds all around the world.

Organisations designing accessible web-pages for specific target groups

Imagine your organisation providing information via the local and world-wide web according to the specific needs of the readers. With straightforward and low-cost guidelines & tools for Web Masters, information can be made more accessible to people with a range of communication disabilities.

The WWAAC project aims to make these ideas a possibility!

Brief project description

Four **key components** make up the work of the WWAAC project partners.

Language support R&D

Symbol-to-symbol conversion and symbol-to-text conversion are both essential for inclusive Internet services. To enable both, a concept coding framework and a universal concept set (a language and culture independent lexicon) are being developed. These will be open-sourced. In addition, the project has built linguistic mechanisms that support symbol users to produce better syntax in their writing.

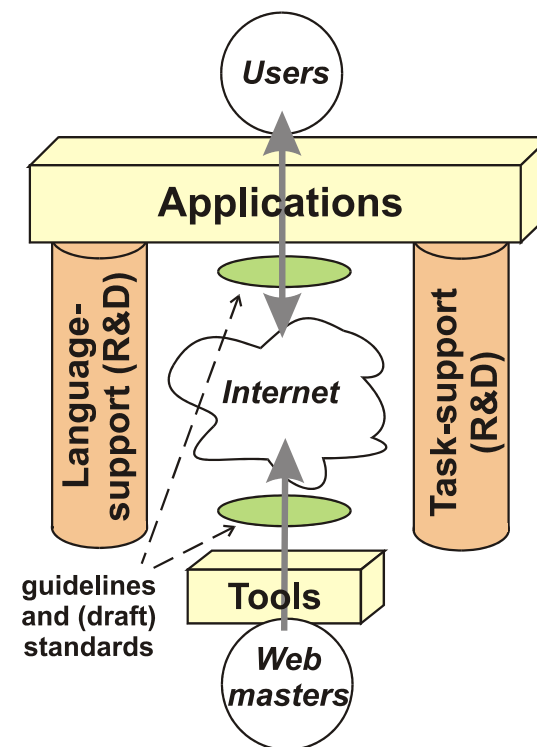
Task support R&D

Overall ease of use of Internet services is a central and guiding theme in the WWAAC project. In supporting the introduction of Internet services to people with a range of disabilities, considerable work has been done and will continue to be done in delivering simple solutions for complex problems.

An important outcome of these R&D activities will be the publication and dissemination of guidelines and open-sourced utilities to promote closer communication between manufacturers and compatibility between products.

Internet applications

A few special Internet applications (a web browser, an email program, and a Dreamweaver AAC extension) have been built to evaluate and validate the design and will be developed further into fully adaptable interfaces between the end user and mainstream Internet.



Web tools and guidelines

A web-authoring tool and guidelines are developed to assist web masters in ensuring Web Sites are accessible for a maximum number of people.