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SaLT LIK: Speech and Language Therapy – Libraries, Information, Knowledge

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Introduction

The Allied Health Profession (AHP), or PAM (Profession Allied to Medicine), of Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT), has endured many changes of nomenclature since it was first founded in the 19th century. SaLT's professional body, the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists (RCSLT) started out as the College of Speech Therapists and has recently considered another change of name, to that of Communication Therapists. This would reflect the nonverbal aspects of communication now included in their work, as well as spoken, written or signed language. The academic discipline associated with the study of SaLT is variously known in the UK as Human Communication Science, Speech and/or Language Science,

or combinations of these terms. In the U.S. and Australia, the profession is known as Speech Language Pathology; in Europe, they are Logopedists.

One of the reasons for this flavoursome but confusing variety of terminology is that the study and practice of SaLT does not comprise just one subject or discipline. Whereas a doctor studies medicine, a teacher education, and a psychologist psychology, the SaLT must be trained in all of these, not to mention subjects as diverse as linguistics, neurology, otolaryngology, audiology and voice. The multidisciplinary nature of the profession, with its unusual combination of science and social science subjects, presents a considerable challenge to information professionals associated with its study and practice. Access to information services for this hybrid profession has been problematic in the past, with practitioners spread across the health, education and private sectors; yet the need for an evidence base to support clinical practice has never been more vital. This article is intended to introduce some of the information resources which are now available to those studying and practising SaLT in the UK.

Library services

The confusion of names outlined above (not to be confused with anomia, the naming disorder!) explains why the resource centre of which I am Librarian has two names. As UCL's Human Communication Science (HCS) Library, it is a branch of University College London's Library Services, and serves the staff and students

there. The HCS department in which it is sited conducts undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, high-profile research programmes, and clinical training in SaLT. In addition to this academic support role, the library also serves the UK's SaLT profession as the National Information Centre for Speech-language Therapy (NICEST). UCL has an agreement with the RCSLT whereby all members of the latter (which means all practising SaLTs) have free reference use of the library, and can purchase borrowing rights for an annual fee (currently £50). SaLTs who work in certain London NHS Trusts associated with UCL also have free Library membership, which includes borrowing and is applicable to most UCL libraries – see <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/nhs.shtml> for further details.



The NICEST library holds a collection of materials as diverse and as specialised as the subjects and disciplines of SaLT. The stock of over 6000 books includes recent publications on subjects such as pointing and sign language poetry. There are over 90 current subscriptions to

specialist journal titles, ranging from AAC (Augmentative & Alternative Communication) to Voice Matters, and many more titles may be accessed online from a computer in the library (though not remotely). The library also houses a unique collection of practical therapy resources, including almost 500 different clinical assessment tests for speech and language development and disorders. These tests come in all shapes and sizes, from simple vocabulary checklists to briefcases full of toys and other objects, and are indispensable resources for the clinical work and training undertaken at the HCS department.

Another unusual resource in the library is the Historical Collection of over 1500 books and pamphlets documenting the history of the profession over the last 150 years. Many of these were donated or bequeathed by pioneering speech therapists, and some of the older items, such as James Hunt's *Treatise on the Cure of Stammering* from 1857, give a fascinating insight into the early years of SaLT. The Library also holds a copy of every HCS student's final year dissertation since the degrees began in 1984. It is rare to find BSc and MSc research projects in a university library, but the value of keeping them is reflected in the frequency with which they are used, both by current UCL students working on their own projects and by external researchers tracking down that obscure piece of information on Foreign Accent Syndrome. The projects, like all of the library's stock, can be found on the UCL Library Services online catalogue, at <http://library.ucl.ac.uk/>.

Remote services

NICeST Library is located in central London, and is not open at weekends, so the free reference use may be of little benefit to those SaLTs who do not live in the south-east of England. In addition, due to licensing restrictions it is not possible to allow access to the online resources provided at UCL, such as electronic journals and databases, to anyone but current UCL staff and students. For this reason, NICeST also provides some distance services to SaLTs. This includes the provision of photocopied journal articles by post, for a fee of £3 or £6 per article. Literature searches are available on request, carried out on the requester's behalf by the librarian, with results (lists of references with abstracts) sent by post or email. There is currently a charge for this service of £25 per search. The Library also offers a free enquiry service, by telephone (020 7679 4207), or email (hcs.library@ucl.ac.uk).

Further details of the NICeST Library's collections and services can be found on its web pages: <http://library.hcs.ucl.ac.uk>, or <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/hcslib.shtml>.

Information resources on the Web

Web sites

As with any other subject, there is a mine of information on the web relating to SaLT, and it is the information professional's job to crystallise and refine these rocks into grains of knowledge. Thankfully, BIOME is there to help, with its specialist internet

gateways. This free service, aimed at academic researchers and clinicians, selects web sites which have been evaluated according to strict criteria and indexes them using MeSH (the U.S. National Library of Medicine's standardised Medical Subject Headings). **NMAP** <http://nmap.ac.uk/> is BIOME's specialist gateway for Nursing, Midwifery, and Allied Health, which is updated weekly and includes a very useful online tutorial designed to help clinicians get started with navigating the web. **Hardin MD**, of the University of Iowa, provides a similar "meta-directory" service at <http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/hardin/md/speech.html/>. A new feature of this directory is its links to free online images for SaLT.

There are numerous professional and voluntary organisations in the field, most of which have very useful web sites. Many of these are collected together, arranged by subject, on the Links page of the NICEST Library web site <http://library.hcs.ucl.ac.uk/Links/SLT.htm>. A small selection of the more general sites appears below.

Professional and Voluntary organisations

The **Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists (RCSLT)** is the professional body for SaLT in the UK. All SaLTs practising in the UK are required to be members, and any course of study must be RCSLT accredited in order to be a valid SaLT qualification. The organisation's web site, <http://www.rcslt.org>, although primarily aimed at its members, also contains plenty of information for anyone with a query about the profession itself or about a communication disorder. I frequently direct enquirers to this site, ranging from school students

looking for advice about pursuing a career in SaLT to concerned parents whose child has just been diagnosed with a language disorder. Its "Information Office" page contains useful links and FAQs; the virtual "Learning Zone" has information about careers and courses in SaLT; and you can download free publications from the "Reading Room".

SaLTs in private practice can also join **ASLTIP**, the **Association of Speech Language Therapists in Independent Practice**, which has its own web site at <http://www.asltip.co.uk>. Collaboration between SaLTs and other related professions such as teaching is co-ordinated by **NAPLIC**, the **National Association of Professionals Concerned with Language Impairment in Children**, <http://www.naplic.org.uk/>.

I-CAN <http://www.ican.org.uk/> and **Afasic (Association For All Speech Impaired Children)**, <http://www.afasic.org.uk> are the two main UK charities involved with children's communication disorders. I-CAN is primarily concerned with the educational needs of language impaired children, and runs training courses, specialist schools and an information centre. Afasic provides a similar service, with access to helplines and support groups. Both organisations' web sites are invaluable sources of information, especially for enquiries from parents of children with speech and language difficulties.

In 2002, I-CAN, Afasic and the RCSLT launched a new, collaborative web site. **Talking Point** <http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/> is a one-stop internet resource for information about all communication

impairments in children. It has separate sections designed for parents/carers and for professionals, and includes a directory of resources, FAQs pages, and a glossary of SaLT terminology. Frequent visitors can also register to receive a regular email bulletin.

Speech Teach <http://www.speechteach.co.uk> is another web site which is highly recommended for parents & professionals supporting children with speech difficulties. Created by the parent of a communication impaired child, it is full of useful resources such as such as education and therapy tools which can be downloaded free of charge.

There are also several UK charities for communication impaired adults and their carers. **Connect** <http://www.ukconnect.org.uk> is a London-based organisation dedicated to improving quality of life for people with aphasia (the most commonly acquired language disorder, usually caused by stroke or brain injury). Connect provides therapy and support for aphasic people, trains carers and health professionals, and publishes research and self-help guides.

Speakability <http://www.speakability.org.uk>, also based in London, has a similar focus, i.e. supporting adults with aphasia and their carers, co-ordinating support groups, providing training courses, and campaigning. The charity's web site is an excellent source of information in itself, with fact sheets to download for free and a range of other publications available at a very low cost. **Speechmatters** <http://www.speechmatters.org> provides a similar service to aphasic

people in Belfast, while the **British Aphasiology Society** <http://www.bas.org.uk> focuses on promoting research and study in aphasia and related disorders.

The **Speech & Language Therapy Research Unit** at Frenchay Hospital, Bristol <http://www.speech-therapy.org.uk/>, is another excellent resource for academic researchers and clinicians, which is especially useful for its reviews of aphasia therapy software.

Communication Matters <http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/> is the UK branch of ISAAC, the **International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication** – a reliable source of information about communication devices for people with disabilities.

There are, of course, many types of communication disorder, and many conditions which affect the ability to communicate (e.g., autism, deafness, dyslexia, stuttering, and voice disorders, to name a few). All of these have their own organisations and support groups, most of which have web sites which are excellent sources of information for SaLTs. Space does not permit a full list here, but a collection can be found at <http://library.hcs.ucl.ac.uk/Links/SLT.htm>.

Individual SaLT web pages

In addition to web sites produced by professional and voluntary organisations, some excellent personal pages have been compiled by individual speech & language therapists. **Caroline Bowen PhD** is an

Australian SaLT whose comprehensive and user-friendly collection of SaLT-y sources can be found at <http://www.slpsite.com>. Professor **Judith Kuster** is a SaLT at Minnesota State University who provides a similar service with her Net Connections for Communication Disorders and Sciences

<http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster2/welcome.html>.

In the UK, two SaLTs who specialise in bilingualism, **Carol Stow** and **Sean Pert**, manage the longest running UK web site for speech & language therapists at <http://www.speechtherapy.co.uk/>. These pages are an excellent source of current information, including a useful page of links to suppliers of therapy materials and assessment tests. They also have a dedicated Bilingualism site at <http://www.bilingualism.co.uk>.

Bibliographic research databases & online journals

Databases

Specialist databases, which compile and index research, are essential information tools in any field. However, most are restricted to research in one particular field, and the information professional once again faces the challenge of SaLT being scattered far and wide across the academic landscape.

There are two excellent databases which serve the Allied Health professions in general. **CINAHL**, the database version of the Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature, is provided by OVID and covers health sciences librarianship as well as nursing and

allied health (see <http://www.ovid.com/site/index.jsp> for further details). The British Library's Allied and Complementary Medicine Database (**AMED**) has covered SaLT since 1999 and is available by subscription from the BL (see <http://www.bl.uk/collections/health/amed.html>).

Comprehensive research in SaLT, however, requires the use of several specialist databases covering each of its associated disciplines. This was borne out in a recent article in the journal *Speech & Language Therapy in Practice*, in which therapist Annette Kelly says she always uses "the databases that are most relevant to my clinical population and work. I try to avoid relying on only one database (even for a quick search) as I've discovered this often misses out valuable publications" (Kelly, 2005). In my experience at UCL, the following have been the most useful:

For general medicine, **MEDLINE+** is the obvious choice, available to the public (often with full-text links) via the National Library of Medicine at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/>. For information to support evidence-based healthcare, the **Cochrane Library** can be safely relied upon to provide up to date details of systematic reviews and controlled trials (see <http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/cochrane.asp>). The **TRIP** database (Turning Research Into Practice), available on subscription, is also good for evidence-based medicine: see <http://www.tripdatabase.com>.

For psychology, the leader is definitely **PsycINFO**. Produced by the American Psychological Association, its coverage stretches back to 1887 and it is available on subscription (see <http://www.apa.org/psycINFO/>).

All subjects relating to language and linguistics are adequately covered by the **Linguistics and Language Behaviour Abstracts (LLBA)**, produced by Cambridge Scientific Abstracts and available by subscription from CSA Illumina (see <http://www.csa.com>).

The most comprehensive database for research on education and special education is the online **Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)** produced by the U.S. Department of Education. This is available on the web at <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>, and includes free access to many full-text papers, but is inevitably orientated towards the U.S. education system. The British equivalent is the **British Education Index (BEI)** available on subscription from Leeds University (<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/bei/>). The UK's **National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN)** also produces a specialist research database for its members – see <http://www.nasen.org.uk> for details.

Online journals

Most of the databases listed above give citations and abstracts, however it is becoming increasingly common for full-text journal articles to be easily accessible on the web, for a fee. Educational and health institutions in the UK often pay for online subscriptions on behalf of their members, as with print subscriptions (see below for

details of NHS access). A few professional journals are freely available on the web, the most relevant being **Speech & Language Therapy in Practice** at <http://www.speechmag.com/>. **Reading Online** from the U.S.-based International Reading Association <http://www.readingonline.org>, and the UK's **Special Needs Information Press** <http://www.snip-newsletter.co.uk>, are also useful resources.

Library & Information Services in the NHS:

The National electronic Library for Health & National Library for Health

Access for therapists to the types of electronic information services outlined above will be dependent on their place of work. Until relatively recently, the profession was poorly served in terms of access to online journals and databases. However, in recent years, the advent of the **National Electronic Library for Health (NeLH)** initiative has transformed access to information services for those working in the NHS. The NeLH pilot, still in existence at <http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/>, enabled clinicians to access information and evidence for healthcare online, including databases such as Cochrane and MEDLINE. A special SaLT section was originally piloted, which can still be found at <http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/speechtherapist/>, but this has yet to be fully developed.

In 2004, the service expanded when NeLH joined forces with the NHS Library & Knowledge Development Network (LKDN) to create

the new hybrid service, the **National Library for Health**. This virtual library service for NHS employees provides access to most of the medical and health databases listed above (though not the education and linguistics resources), plus hundreds of full-text electronic journals. (In order to access these, clinicians must first register for an Athens account at their local NHS library). A simple search on the NLH home page will retrieve various sources of information, ranging from clinical guidelines to current news items. There are specialist "libraries" in various subjects including ENT & Audiology and Learning Disabilities, which contain information and links relevant to those individual subjects. The National Library for Health (in partnership with many local, specialist NHS healthcare library services) is an indispensable information resource for any therapists working in the NHS sector, and can be found at <http://www.library.nhs.uk/>.

Conclusion

Speech and Language Therapy – or Pathology, or Science, or Communication Science, etc.! – is a fascinating and many-faceted subject. I hope that this article has helped to bring out some of the different flavours of information and library services that are available to the SaLT profession.

References:

- Kelly, A. (2005): Reviewing – finding the evidence. **Speech & Language Therapy in Practice**, Summer 2005, p.24-25.

Further reading:

Gonzalez, E. et al. (2001) Communication sciences and disorders: a list of resources. **College & Research Libraries News**, February 2001.

[This is a useful source of U.S. information, available online at <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2001/february2/communication.htm>.]

Russell, S. (2002): SaLT – a mine of information. **He@lth Information on the Internet**, Number 28, August 2002, p. 8-10.