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# Editorial

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We should be surprised if any one of our readers anywhere had not read or was not familiar with Wiener, Welsh, and Blasch's *Foundations of Orientation and Mobility*. We join with Dr Bruce Blasch in welcoming you to this, the third volume of *IJOM*. In 2010 we attended a number of O&M-related conferences and continue to be amazed at the ingenuity of novice and veteran O&M specialists in creating ingenious solutions to problems resulting from ever-changing environments. Among these conferences were the impressive AMC2010, held here in Sydney, the 8<sup>th</sup> National DeafBlind Conference in Melbourne, and the AER International Conference in Arkansas. Nearer home, many of us look forward to IMC14 in February 2012.

As our world continues to speed up, and technological developments race ahead, a concomitant is the increasing difficulty for an individual who is blind or vision impaired to travel safely and retain independence in our complex and continuously developing urban and rural settings. As an example, an ongoing O&M environmental challenge in many parts of the world is the replacement of zebra crossings with ambiguous rights-of-way that take the form of hard-to-detect cut-throughs in pedestrian islands. A partial solution presented by an O&M specialist has been to teach a client to use a Sonar-based Electronic Travel Aid as a hand-held device that enabled road and pedestrian island surface detection and differentiation. Together with proactive body language signalling to drivers of the clients' intention to cross, and wearing an item of clothing or carrying a bag in either red, yellow, or orange

to increase visibility to drivers, the client was able to use the ambiguous crossing with a 100% rate of success over 450 trials. Similarly, another O&M conference presenter described a creative solution to a farmers' problem of becoming disorientated in her paddocks. The instructor applied small remote alarm receivers to the tree in each paddock. When disorientated, the farmer pressed a small remote kept in her pocket that triggered a loud sound from the alarm that could be heard up to one kilometre (.62 miles) away. Once hearing the sound, the farmer easily re-orientated herself since she knew the location of fences, the hay barn, the paddock entry, and her house in relation to the trees' location. The 'sheep dog' also appeared on hearing the sound, which in hind-sight was an added benefit.

Remarkably, both O&M presenters did not consider their work worthy of publication. We would estimate that many of us working in the field, have at some time in our career, sat in our car (possibly with our head in our hands) wondering how on earth we were going to solve a particular mobility issue. As in previous editorials we can only reiterate the importance of O&M specialists sharing their expertise and experiences through publication.

As confirmed in the Third Edition of *Foundations of Orientation and Mobility*, O&M professionals continue to adapt and respond to increasingly complex client needs, technological advances, and environmental change. To provide O&M services that exceed clients' expectations, substantial research and honest reflection is required to evaluate the effectiveness of

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current O&M practices. Such an approach is demonstrated in our lead article by O&M (Guide Dog) Specialist McKenzie, who investigated the degree to which dog distraction impacts the working behaviour of guide dogs. McKenzie's study is an important contribution to the guide dog literature, as dog distraction appears to be a common reason for the rejection of dogs during the period of their assessment for guide dog status. McKenzie has also suggested possible intervention methods that might reduce dog distraction.

In this volume, Moxon, Allison, and England have explored dog distraction though specifically in response to devices that emit ultrasound at a frequency audible to dogs. The implications of this study are significant considering that ultrasound devices are increasingly used in outdoor settings and indoors in location and positioning systems.

Over many years there has been considerable effort to develop a tool allowing guide dog schools to enhance selection of puppies for dog training. With the apparent dearth of evidence-based criteria for predicting success, guide dog schools largely rely on the judgment of experienced trainers to determine whether or not a puppy might be suited to guide dog training. In this volume, Dolphin and Black have investigated whether or not experienced judges could predict the success or failure of puppies to complete guide dog training. Their findings have serious implications for those responsible for puppy acceptance/rejection processes and practices.

Providing O&M services to people living in isolated regions is a challenge particularly

in geographically vast countries such as Australia and the USA. Wells discusses the development of a consultancy model of O&M for children living in isolated regions in Tasmania, Australia. Her innovative model emphasises the necessity for quality collaboration and describes the partners and processes essential for delivering continual and effective O&M services.

The importance of client-centred considerations is emphasised by Ward and Peirce. Those authors acknowledge that a person's transition from their first to their second guide dog is often an emotional and challenging process. Based largely on client questionnaire responses and, to a lesser extent, O&M instructor feedback, an audio CD was produced for clients that include guide dog users sharing their transition experiences. The CD's content is described in their article.

Finally, Muldoon describes a camp program designed for young people with vision impairment to learn about skills and responsibilities needed to work with and care for a guide dog. The program is reported to be successful in creating interest and take-up of guide dogs as a mobility aid among younger people.

Our readers will observe that authors present a variety of perspectives and possibly some transformational ideas. These constitute the core of the hard work that catalyses necessary change and evolution in a profession that must keep pace with the needs and expectations of its clients in a progressive world.

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