

Simon Churchill, Assistive Technology Expert

After a Mechanical Engineering-with-French degree followed by an MSc in Biomedical Engineering, Simon Churchill began his career in 1973 designing medical electronic equipment and surgical instruments before moving into positions in sales, marketing, product management, and general management within the healthcare industry.

Over 15 years until February 2008 Simon Churchill was a Director of Toby Churchill Limited, a British assistive technology company and world leader in portable text-based communication aids. In this post he developed text-based communication aids for literate people with speech disorders, symbol-based communication aids for non-literate people with speech disorders, and also a range of environmental control products for people with physical disability.

For four years during this period he chaired the *UK Industry Association of Communication Aid Suppliers* and for seven years was a Trustee of the *UK Chapter of International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication* and was also Treasurer for five years during this period.

Since 1992 Simon Churchill has acquired extensive experience of assessing people with congenital and birth disorders such as cerebral palsy, and also acquired disorders such as stroke, traumatic brain injury, cerebral anoxia, spinal injury, hemiplegia, tetraplegia and quadriplegia, Motor Neurone Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Parkinson's Disease, Progressive Supranuclear Palsy, Multiple Systems Atrophy, etc. and is fully aware of the spectrum of physical, cognitive, sensory, and speech impairments that may co-exist with these conditions.

This work has given him considerable experience across a broad range of assistive technologies including communication aids, environmental control, computer access, eye tracking, and wheelchair control; and he is conversant with all the products available in the market and understand how they can be interfaced with one another to be operated under the control of a single switch by people with severe physical disability.

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Simon Churchill has considerable experience of assessing and interacting with clients with complex needs who have more severe physical disabilities and/or cognitive impairment, and this has included:

- Personal experience after his brother contracted encephalitis at the age of 21 and became quadriplegic and without speech, with eyeblink as his only voluntary movement. He was locked-in for 9 months before regaining some voluntary physical movement and then remained tetraplegic, and has since used a range of assistive technology.
- Assessment of adults and children in their own home, workplace, in schools, hospitals, and hospices. Assessments included physical access, motor skills, cognitive abilities, receptive and expressive language, sensory abilities, and suitability of augmentative communication and/or environmental control equipment.
- Teaching assessment techniques to Product Advisers working within the company.

He now works as a disability consultant specialising in assistive technology and also acts as an expert witness in this area.