

Geleitwort – Technology for today and tomorrow

The history of our speech therapy profession is remarkable for the pace of change. From our origins just over a century ago when the focus was predominantly on articulation of speech and voice production, we moved steadily into the realms of linguistics, psychology, education and medicine; rapidly establishing distinctive roles in specialist assessment and intervention with new patient populations and client groups. It is highly commendable that as a collective professional community we are noted for being so creative, flexible and swift to adopt innovative new ways of working that have the potential to benefit the individuals we work with. But it is not always easy to ascertain the optimal way forwards: Who are the role models? Where are the leading examples of good practice? And how confident can we be that these approaches are evidence-based and effective?

This new book seeks to address these questions by mapping out the landscape of significant technological applications in healthcare and education that are beginning to be adopted and adapted across our speech therapy professional scope of practice. These chapters provide a comprehensive overview of a breadth of technology applications already in widespread use, as well as horizon-scanning for the likely next developments. The editors have shone a spotlight on the exciting potential that technology offers our profession for today and for tomorrow. But this enthusiasm is balanced with a healthy measure of pragmatism for the constraints and considerations relevant to real-world practice.

The book opens with helpful definitions and advice to clarify terminology and orientate readers. The inclusion of commentary on specific technical requirements and resource implications is particularly valuable. There is a very practical “toolkit mentality”: an appropriate reminder that tech-

nologies should not be expected to deliver fool-proof solutions, but need to be used judiciously to complement our existing repertoire of case management approaches. We need an informed debate about how best to navigate the professional issues posed by using some of these technologies. And additionally there are serious considerations for our professional associations about how employing some of these technological advances may impact on future workforce planning.

Quite naturally across our international professional community there is some evident polarity in terms of the relative stages of adoption of some of these new technologies. Recently published exploratory studies with speech therapists have noted reported resistance in some groups towards changing traditional service models to incorporate the use of technology. Understanding these barriers – real and perceived – is crucial. These issues will inevitably encompass organisational readiness for change, as well as the knowledge, skills and confidence of individual practitioners. The chapters of this book will certainly speak to readers across this full spectrum: passionate converts and cautious novices alike. Read on to find exciting illustrative examples of best practice and experiences of using technology; to understand better how technology can enhance service delivery; and for support in identifying common challenges, practical solutions and strategies. Most of all, let us commit to ensure that whatever new technologies we employ, we must always plan ahead to document a systematic evaluation of the impact of our new ways of working: this is evidence-based practice.

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Dr. Hazel Roddam