

ATA Expo 2013 – A Report



Title: Assistive Technologies and Accessibility Expo – A Way Forward For Inclusion

Venue: Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Date: 19th-21st July 2013



About the Venue:



Bharathiar University is a state university in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, established in February 1982 under the provision of Bharathiar University Act, 1981 (Act 1 of 1982) and was recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1985.

Named after the great national poet **Subramania Bharathi**, the University is enshrined with the motto *“Educate to Elevate”*. In the University, every effort is harnessed to realize his dream of making educational institutions as temple of learning works towards equal opportunities in education for all. It is the aim of the University to participate in the task of inculcating necessary knowledge, skills and creative attitudes and values among the youth of the country includes students with disabilities to contribute more effectively.

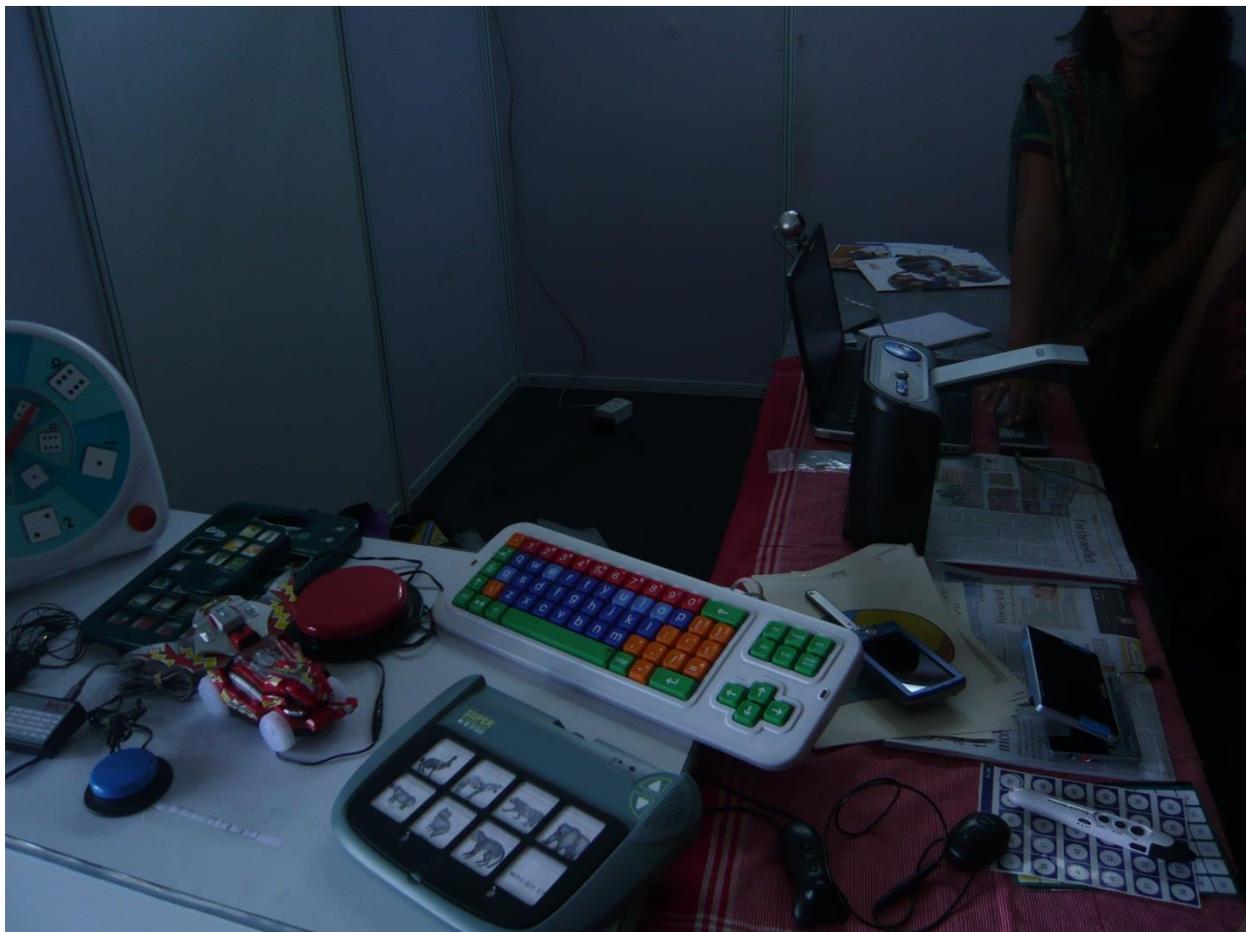
On the 21st of July 2013, the University launched a Multimodal Material Preparation Centre for the differently abled. The ATA Expo was held in conjunction with this occasion and was organized by the Department of Social Work of Bharathiar University in association with the South Asian Regional Office (SARO) of CBM, Bangalore.

About The Expo:

ATA Expo 2013 was an initiative to bring together assistive technology and accessibility expertise products in India under one roof. The expo aimed at creating awareness on technology happenings, accessibility options available for people with disabilities to enhance their education as well as career prospects in par with their peers in society.

Assistive Technology and Accessibility Expo was a collaborative effort designed and organized to provide educators, families, government agencies, disability service organizations and service providers the opportunity to access, feel, and try the latest range of Assistive Technology devices and software. Experts and accessibility consultants also presented the various features of the products during conference sessions.

The exhibits with over 50 stalls included products in the areas of computer access, adaptive keyboards, switches, screen reading software, scanning and reading devices and software, accessible format converters, braille displays, augmentative/alternative communication devices, tactile graphics, sensory improvement equipment, mobility devices, hard-of hearing enablers, language, speech trainers and learning improvement tools.





Further, service organisations with expertise in disability domain exhibited their range of services offered to children as well as adults. Government agencies and institutions had stalls to explain various welfare schemes for people with disabilities. Various educational institutions also demonstrated their successful educational training models, tools and methods.





Consultants from a variety of agencies involved with people having specific needs and accessibility handled interactive well organized sessions to answer questions and provide insight into accessibility, higher education prospects, employment opportunities, government schemes, financial schemes for education of students with disabilities.



The Expo also demonstrated the abilities, academic achievements and acquired talents of children with disabilities as cultural programmes.

Sessions focussing on higher education, accessibility, employment, and equal opportunities for people with disabilities were also being organised simultaneously.

More than 5,000 school and college students, special educators, parents of children with disability and members from Government and non-Governmental organisations working for disability were estimated to have visited the three-day event.

My Experience:

I was fortunate to be a part of the Expo and was present for all 3 days and was able to attend quite a few of the scientific sessions as well. I met Dr. Sara Varughese, Regional Director, CBM SARO, Mr. Darwin Moses who was instrumental in organizing the expo, and Mr. Jesuraj.





I also had an opportunity to interact with and spread awareness about deafness and the importance of proper ear care to the various people who attended the expo, like schoolchildren, college students, families, faculty members from the Departments of Special Education and Social Work, and numerous people involved in services for the differently abled.



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During the three days, I was able to visit the other exhibitors and browse through their products and services for the disabled. I also spread awareness of the upcoming World Congress on Ear and Hearing Care to be held in 2015 in New Delhi.

Overall, it was a very fruitful and enriching experience and I feel grateful to have been allowed to go to Coimbatore to be a part of the ATA Expo.



- Dr. Tapas Sadasivan Nair
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