

FOREWORD

As the twenty-first century draws ever closer, new applications of scientific information and technology to clinical practice appear to be increasing at a positively accelerating rate, with no asymptote in sight. For example, I am continually amazed at the number of new software programs being designed specifically to assist in the assessment and clinical management of a broad range of speech and language disorders. I am even more amazed, however, at the relatively small percentage of speech-language pathologists who appear to be taking advantage of this new technology and am concerned about the implications this has for the future of this profession. It is not that I do not appreciate the comfort of using familiar clinical tools and well-practiced techniques or have not felt apprehensive and concerned while trying to figure out how to operate new software. Indeed, I am ashamed to admit that I continued to use WordStar as my word processing program years longer than anyone else I know. I suspect that many *Seminars* readers may also be reluctant to venture into any territory that extends beyond a word processing program. It has become increasingly clear to me, nevertheless, that speech-language clinicians who choose not to use these tools are wasting time, losing information, and depriving clients of the benefits of their use, as well. This issue of *Seminars in Speech and Language* is the first of two that will endeavor to explore and demystify, I hope, the expanding cyberspace of speech and language technology.

I could think of no one more capable to undertake this task than Dr. Julie Master

son of Southwest Missouri State University. So I asked her to serve as guest editor of both issues and to help us avoid the junkware and cyber holes that might otherwise be encountered on this expedition. She has selected a team of speech-language pathologists who are experienced software users and developers and willing to download a gigabyte or two of their knowledge and expertise for the articles in this issue. As you will see, they know what programs to use with which disability and how to use them. The software they describe covers a variety of the disorders included in the current scope of practice of clinical speech-language pathologists. Moreover, the ways in which these programs can enhance assessments and diagnostic evaluations, especially with difficult to test clients, is mind boggling at times. Although the descriptions of some of today's software technology may read like science fiction at times, it is not; it just seems that way. Whether or not development of such technology in speech-language pathology is proceeding at the warp-speed I perceive is not important. What is important, and what is a critically important issue in my opinion, is that many more speech-language clinicians have to get on board the "Software Enterprise" if they are to remain competent in the years ahead and if the clinical populations they serve are to receive the quality of services they deserve. I hope this issue will help.

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