It’s Spring and time to welcome in the New and Improved everywhere, starting right here at NARIC. This edition of RehabWire reintroduces NARIC, its new look, and its new location. It also presents some new and some old resources that deserve some attention.

The New NARIC.com

Did you notice? NARIC.com has a whole new look and feel. The blue and green scheme served us well for several years but it was time to introduce some new ideas. The new design was developed with user input and tested with real-world usability testing. It incorporates cascading style sheets (CSS), a pared-down navigation tool, and improved interactivity. The best features of our previous pages are still there: NARIC’s databases, the topic pages and Librarian’s Picks, and the literature awareness service REHABDATA-Connection are readily available. We have added information and document request forms to assist patrons in completing their searches. We have also added NARIC’s award-winning RehabWire in both HTML and PDF formats.

If you have questions or comments about NARIC’s new site, please let us know. Email us at jchaiken@heitechservices.com or dwendling@heitechservices.com.
Here are a few highlights from the NIDRR projects:

Abstract: Study investigating the effect of speech rate on listener comprehension and subjective judgements about the competence of the speaker when listening to synthesized narrative stories using MacInTalk Pro. Analyses revealed significant differences related to speech rates for both comprehension and subjective judgements about the communication competence of the speaker. Seventy words per minute appeared to be the optimal rate for comprehension, with higher speech rates resulting in more favorable ratings of communication competence.

Abstract: Study examining the accessibility of 30 rehabilitation-related websites to blind persons who use JAWS for Windows, a popular screen-reading program, for Internet access. Sites in the .com, .edu, .gov, .org, .net, and .us domains were evaluated using accessibility checklists for frames, links, text representation, and forms. The sites were also assessed using Bobby, an online website evaluation program. Results indicate that 73% of the sampled sites were accessible for individuals who rely on JAWS. All sites in the .gov and .us domains passed both the JAWS and Bobby tests. Sites in the .edu and .com domains were more likely to be accessible than those in the .org domain.

Abstract: Paper on the design, development, and evaluation of two sets of universal design performance measures. One version is useful for product designers developing new products, and the other version for individuals assessing products before purchase.

Abstract: Study examining the views of the public about universal design (UD) in housing, based on a survey of visitors to the 2000 Parade of Homes Fall Showcase presented by the Builders Association of the Twin Cities in Minnesota. A total of 1656 visitors toured a residential house built with UD features and then completed a survey. Results indicate that most participants believed it was important to include UD features in a home, and would consider including UD features in their current homes and retirement homes.

Abstract: Paper on the design and development of TrailWare, computer software to help in the creation of outdoor environments consistent with universal design (UD) principles. TrailWare can be used to analyze and summarize objective measurements of outdoor environmental conditions, and the resulting information can be used to design or modify the environment to maximize accessibility.

Abstract: Paper describing the experiences of the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Communication Enhancement in using virtual collaboration technologies to facilitate communication between partner sites. The paper discusses virtual conferencing, remote computer controls, virtual coordination, and virtual presentations.

Abstract: Paper on remote delivery of rehabilitation services, including wheelchair prescription, using video conferencing via "plain old telephone system" (POTS) lines. The paper summarizes a protocol for mobility assessment using TeleRehab, and describes a project to assess the efficacy of the video conferencing method.

Abstract: Paper describing the Assistive Work Technology Services (AWTS) program, which provides statewide assistive technology (AT) services in support of the vocational efforts of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program.

Abstract: Paper on the development of a form suitable for telerehabilitation assessment of seating and mobility in rural and remote areas.

Abstract: Study using sled impact test data to develop a computer model to simulate the effects of a wheelchair integrated occupant restraint system (WIRS) on wheelchair and occupant kinematics and occupant injury risk when used in a motor vehicle during frontal crash impact.

Find out more at www.resna.org/conferences