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50 YEARS

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**How do People with Dementia  
make Assistive Technology work  
for them? Innovation,  
Personalisation and Bricolage**

Dr Grant Gibson  
Lecturer in Dementia Studies  
University of Stirling



@DrGrantGibson  
@Dementiares

#Darg2017

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## Background

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- **Assistive technologies (AT) are increasingly being 'mainstreamed' within UK care services for people with dementia**
- **Based on assumptions that AT can:**  
Reduce caregiver burden, Help sustain cognitive and functional abilities, Encourage 'ageing in place', Delay entry into residential or nursing care, Lead to significant efficiencies and significant cost-effectiveness savings
- **However little is known about how people with dementia and their carers use AT in everyday practice.**

*How do people with dementia and their carers actually use AT in the context of their everyday lives?*



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# People with Dementias' Use of AT

- 39 qualitative interviews exploring everyday use of AT
  - 26 carers (age range: 49-82 years)
  - 13 People with dementia (age range 49-91 years)
- Themes to emerge
  - AT types & experiences of using AT
  - AT use: a form of bricolage
  - Challenges to the bricolage based use of AT



Gibson, G., Dickinson, C., Brittain, K., Robinson, L. (2015) The everyday use of assistive technology by people with dementia and their family carers. *BMC Geriatrics* <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2318/15/89>



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# Bricolage

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“The non conventional use of tools or methods designed and intended for a different use to address local and immediate needs”

(Greenhalgh *et al* 2013)

Or

“making do with what is at hand”

## *Examples of Bricolage*

- Using devices for different purposes than their original designs
- Combining AT with everyday technologies
- Using everyday technologies to complement or replicate AT
- Adapting devices ‘on the fly’; to meet a person’s needs, or as a person’s needs change



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## Examples of Bricolage

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# Challenges to Bricolage

- **Formal AT's rarely enabled 'bricolage'**

- Closed systems – could not be adapted 'on the fly'
- Lack of support to carers to act as 'bricoleurs'
- Lack of wider information about AT to support its use

IV                      The (telecare); have they been helpful at all?

P108                    Oh what, since they put it in? Haven't seen them since. They haven't really, I've had a letter from them to say they're reviewed every year, or something. Haven't seem 'em since. (Person with dementia109)



# Conclusions

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- **Bricolage provides a useful tool to explore the everyday use of AT in practice**
  - Combining AT with other technologies in the home
  - Showing up the arrangements required to put AT into practice
- **Currently AT and AT services for dementia do not enable ‘bricolage’**
  - AT as closed systems not easily adapted to individual circumstance
  - AT ‘dropped in’ with little ongoing support as a person’s needs change
  - Carers not supported in the bricoleur role
- **Future AT services as technology ‘brokers’**
  - Technology services need to focus much more on personalised, individualised technology provision.
  - How can AT services support the bricolage based use of technology
  - How can services help carers to act as bricoleurs – supporting them to find their own solutions?



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@DrGrantGibson [grant.gibson@stir.ac.uk](mailto:grant.gibson@stir.ac.uk)

@Dementiares