WELCOME TO THE LIVING LAB E-NEWSLETTER!

On behalf of CRIR and our Rehabilitation Living Lab project executive team, we welcome you to our quarterly e-Newsletter! The goal of this project is to create an inclusive environment, to optimize social participation of all individuals, across the life span, particularly of those with disabilities. To achieve this goal, we are in the process of creating a Living Lab within the Place Alexis Nihon shopping mall.

This e-Newsletter serves as an additional communication platform, complementary to our website, and contains important project highlights with the goal of keeping our members in the know. For further details on the project, please visit our new website at: www.crir-livinglabvivant.com

LATEST NEWS

Become a Member!
The CRIR-Living Lab Vivant team is pleased to provide access to our “Members Only” site, which is designed to facilitate the sharing of information between researchers, partners, and advisory board members. Sign up here: http://www.crir-livinglabvivant.com/amember/login

FRQ-S Midterm Report Submitted!
Thanks to the support of our executive committee, project leaders, researchers, students and partners, we have successfully submitted our midterm report to the FRQ-S on April 15th. To view the report, please sign in to the member’s only site and visit the home page.

ALTER: A Special Issue on CRIR’s Rehabilitation Living Lab Project
The European Journal of Disability Research, ALTER, will be publishing a special issue on CRIR’s Rehabilitation Living Lab project in early 2014. In March, nine article abstracts were submitted to and approved by ALTER’s editorial board. We would like to thank all authors and co-authors who took the time to submit their abstracts and articles. The guest editors for this special issue are: Isabelle Ville (Inserm-Cermes, Paris) and Michel Desjardins (University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon).

Congratulations to our Year-2 Graduate Student Stipend and Summer Studentship Winners!
Aditi Mullick (McGill), Carole Anglade (UdeM), and Nahid Norouzi Gheidari (McGill) are the three winners of the PhD student stipends. Cassioppée Guay-Gallant (UdeM), Evelina Putich (UdeM), Benoît Lafleur (UQAM), Véronique Provençal (UdeM), and Charlotte Sordes (UdeM) were the 2013 summer studentship winners. We look forward to hearing about their progress!

Save the Date!
Join us at the upcoming “Research and Innovation in Health: A Living Lab Approach” symposium, taking place on May 9-10 2013 during the ACFAS congress at Université Laval in Québec City (www.acfas.ca). CRIR will also hold a World Café Networking Event on May 13th 2013 at Place Alexis Nihon, aiming to foster new and existing partnerships between academic and non-academic members as well as to encourage the development of new innovative research ideas related to the Living Lab and CRIR’s research axis.

Recent Changes …
We would like to welcome Dr. Dahlia Kairy, co-leader of the Community of Practice project with Barbara Mazer, to CRIR’s Living Lab executive team. In other news, we would like to thank and bid farewell to Annie Daniel, General Manager of Operations at Place Alexis Nihon, who played a major role in ensuring our solid partnership with COMINAR REIT. We welcome Laurraine Leblanc as COMINAR’s new Living Lab representative.
Dr. Walter Wittich is the resident researcher at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre. Following his Master’s in Psychology (Concordia U) and a PhD in Visual Neuroscience (McGill), he completed a postdoctoral fellowship in audiology at the Centre de recherche institut universitaire de gériatrie de Montréal. Coming from a background in age-related vision loss, he now conducts research in dual sensory impairment and deaf-blindness. His research domains include basic sensory science, as well as medical, psychosocial, and rehabilitation approaches to sensory loss. He recently became a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and is Quebec’s first Certified Low Vision Therapist.

Through his position at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre in Montreal, he has access to clients with vision-, hearing-, communication disorders, as well as paediatric motor impairments. The goal of rehabilitation services is to maximize the clients’ autonomy and community participation in order to improve their quality of life. This includes usability of and accessibility to complex environments, such as a shopping mall. Dr. Wittich is currently the local project leader on a research program within the Rehabilitation Living Lab project, in collaboration with Dr. Bill Crandall at the Smith-Kettlewell Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center, San Francisco, California. This program investigates the use and development of wayfinding technologies for persons with vision loss and other impairments that jeopardize independent travel and orientation.

Dr. Wittich’s research interests focus around functional aspects of vision and/or hearing loss, their psychosocial consequences, as well as the use and usability of assistive technology. Specifically within the Rehabilitation Living Lab Project, accessibility through technology is of great interest. The pilot study on wayfinding technologies has the potential to expand its use to other areas of structured underground environments, such as shopping areas and public transportation networks in the downtown core of Montreal. In addition, the technology can potentially be of use for persons who experience any type of orientation challenge, may it be due to language or communication impairments, mild cognitive loss or simply fatigue related to aging.

**PILOT PROJECT UPDATES**

**Currently in the Living Lab**

In this first phase of the project “People’s Movements in the Mall,” Dr. Tiitu Poldma and doctoral candidate, Sylvain Bertin (UdeM), are providing metrics on people’s movements as they enter the mall. This project consists of counting and analyzing movements at all major entrances, at different times of the day, during different high and low traffic (flux) movements, and over a full week. The data collection includes counting the numbers of people entering the mall, observing who arrives and also in what direction they travel. The characteristics of people with and without disabilities are documented, as well as those who have encumbrances such as pregnant mothers, parents with children, delivery people and others who are not travelling freely. Furthermore, people with disabilities are documented in terms of stage of life and the relative range of movement (or aids) observed as they use the building to move into the mall (walls, stairs, doors, etc.). Preliminary results revealed the following: a) 6% of people entering the mall are persons with various forms of visible disabilities, and b) many people use the architectural elements of the entrances and corridors to support their movements. Phase II of the study is underway to provide more in-depth data on contextual characteristics, which will provide a more comprehensive portrait of the users of the mall and the issues faced as they move into and through the mall.

**Research In-Progress**

Noémi Dahan, a doctoral candidate at McGill University and year-1 graduate student stipend recipient, has conducted interviews with five adolescents (3
females) aged between 13 and 19 years with a range of disabilities including hearing and visual impairment as well as physical limitations. Four more participants are scheduled for an upcoming interview. Transcription and thematic coding of the data will follow. Using a phenomenological approach, the physical, social and attitudinal barriers for this age group will be identified in the context of a shopping mall.

**Drs. Dahlia Kairy (UdeM) and Barbara Mazer (McGill)** are co-leading the Community of Practice (CoP) project, funded by the Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux. This knowledge translation project will bring together a wide range of participants (researchers, clinicians, individuals living with a disability, leaders of community organizations, members of the mall community, etc) to share their different perspectives to help advance the MALL project. The overall theme of the CoP is: *Learning together to improve rehabilitation, participation and social inclusion for people living with disabilities*. Animator, Andréanne Guindon, and project coordinator, Irene Sebestyen, are currently recruiting participants who will meet in person as well as interact using an electronic platform developed by the Canadian network for Public Health intelligence (CNPHI).

**Franceen Kaizer** and **Anne Marie Spiridigliozzi**, clinicians at the Jewish Rehabilitation Hospital (JRH), along with Professors **Barbara Mazer, Laurie Snider, Dana Anaby, Patricia McKinley, Melissa Park, Cynthia Perlman, and Isabelle Gélinas** and project coordinator Monica Slanik received an Edith Strauss Knowledge Translation Grant to conduct a study entitled: *Implementation of an Intergenerational Wellness Park to Facilitate Reintegration into Leisure Activities for Clients of a Rehabilitation Hospital*. This team is conducting focus groups with clients of the JRH, family members, clinicians, managers and community leaders to select appropriate equipment for an intergenerational inclusive Wellness Park and then conduct training seminars to sensitize clinicians to the importance of leisure participation and present approaches for including leisure in clinical practice. Focus group findings and results of a scoping review of the literature will help create a manual for the Wellness Park that will also help guide the creation of a similar environment within the Living Lab. The overall purpose is to help clients with physical disabilities reinte-egrate into former and new leisure activities within the community.

**At the Finish Line...**

**Dr. Hélène Lefebvre (UdeM)** and her research team are leading the project “Personalized Accompaniment for the Community Integration of Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).” Their results have been analyzed and a first article on the perceptions, facilitators and obstacles encountered by these individuals is currently being translated for submission to both English and French journals. This manuscript demonstrates the importance of using the observations of those living with a TBI when creating secure and comfortable public places to facilitate their experiences in the public setting. A second article is also in preparation focusing on a case-study, which showed that the APIC, i.e. someone who accompanies another individual, reassures a person with a mild TBI during their everyday activities.
and provides them with confidence to frequent public spaces.