Finding the Right Technology and Paying for It

**Source: Technology for Students with Disabilities -
A Decision Maker's Resource Guide**

As decision makers, the process of implementing an effective, efficient technology program begins with an understanding of how assistive, instructional, and assessment technologies can be employed to improve educational results for all students, including those with disabilities. The next task is to put into place a process for finding the right technology and the right applications-and, of course, determining how to pay for it.

A working practical knowledge of the many practical and fiscal considerations directly related to funding technology will enable policy makers and administrators to ensure cost-effectiveness. School board members will want to know about the various funding sources available and considerations related to purchasing equipment, so that they can rest assured that budgets are fiscally responsible.

Shopping for technology can be similar to buying a car in the sense that you must first decide what you really need and want before venturing into the sales room. Otherwise, you risk ending up with a higher-priced item equipped with numerous gauges and gadgets that you neither need nor use. Although most central office administrators will rely on the expertise of other professionals when selecting technology, a working knowledge of the parameters involved in identifying appropriate equipment will strengthen purchasing decisions.

A simple "rule of thumb" may aid you to take the first step when planning: *If you want technology to be used, it must be usable.* This may sound simplistic, but inattention to practical application issues can have far-reaching implications, the least of which is that the technology you invest in ends up as a classroom decoration.

Good decisions about purchasing and adapting technology depend upon a thorough assessment of the student's abilities, needs, and performance in

Inside

Tips for Successful Funding of Assistive Technology

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Assistive Technology Resource Center

<http://weber.u.washington.edu/~atrc/funding_tips.html>

1. Research Funding Sources

The first step in any effort to obtain funding of assistive technology is to research funding options. Identify probable sources of funding and then contact the appropriate agency to find out if you might be eligible for their services. The Assistive Technology Resource Center may also be able to assist you with information about eligibility. Many governmental funding sources use a "last dollar resource" rule - meaning that they will not fund anything until you have established that they are the "last dollar resource." In effect, this means that you will have to consider multiple funding options so you might as well identify and pursue those funding sources as soon as possible.

2. Research Options For Assistive Technology & AT Assessments

A related step will be to generally identify the types of assistive technology that would be helpful to you and to find out where you can obtain a good assistive technology assessment. You will be able to obtain some information from the Assistive Technology Resource Center. You may also want to contact vendors and/or evaluators directly. This step may not be essential if you are working with an agency like the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation which routinely refers clients for assessments. On the other hand, it is always helpful to have enough information about the technology in which you are interested to make a clear and cogent argument for its purchase within the guidelines established by the relevant funding agency. It is also a good idea to establish a personal relationship with someone at the agency doing the assessment. Having an evaluator or other professional to whom the funding agency can be referred for questions can be very helpful.

3. Assistive Technology Assessments

In an AT assessment, an experienced professional evaluates the consumer's functional capabilities and determines which AT options will work best for him or her. The AT assessment is important for two reasons: (1) it will be an immense help in justifying the need for assistive technology and (2) it will increase the likelihood of a good fit between the individual and the assistive technology purchased. That means that it is less likely that the item purchased will be abandoned. An assessment may not be necessary if you are looking for an inexpensive "low tech" piece of equipment and you think you know what you want. However, if you are looking for anything with a price tag of more than $500, you should seriously consider such an assessment. There are a growing number of options available

Web Access

Source: Center for Accessible Technology, *Real Times* #35, Sept - Nov 1997

<http://www.el.net/CAT>

The Internet can be thought of as a huge body of data and programs, all contained on thousands of computers, linked together in a vast network. The World Wide Web, or just Web, is a subset of the Internet, consisting of all of the data on the interconnected computers that is stored in HTML form. HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) allows data to be stored in a way that can be presented in a graphically interesting manner, and more important, allows information in one document to be linked to data in another document on another computer. By activating these links between documents, the user can go from one bit of information to another as though they were all stored sequentially on the same computer, instead of being scattered on different machines around the world.

Information on the Web is accessed by means of software called browsers. These programs interpret the codes embedded in the HTML documents (or Web pages), and display the documents graphically. They also manage the process of following the links contained in the documents to information on other computers.

There is a tremendous amount of information available on the Web. This is especially valuable for people with disabilities because this information can be located and accessed entirely through a computer, rather than by, for example, a trip to the library. Nonetheless, the Web poses some unique access problems.

While a person's home computer can be modified for access, the data on the Web is not under the user's control, and may not be presented in an accessible manner. For example, some Web pages contain text information, while others display a *picture* of text - the former can be read by a blind user's screen reader, the latter cannot. Similarly, some links are designated by underlined text, whereas others may activated by clicking on an area of a graphic image. There is no consistency to the placement of links - they can appear anywhere on a page. These problems can be addressed by good, consistent design of Web pages, but the user can't rely on this. S/he must take whatever is out there, and not much of it is designed with access in mind.

The primary Internet access issue is the Web browsers - how to make them accessible, and through them, gain access to the information on the Web.

Browsers

There are two major commercial browsers for both the Macintosh and Windows 95 platforms: Netscape Navigator (and its newest release, Communicator), and Microsoft's Internet Explorer. There are also a few specialized browsers, such as PwWebSpeak for blind access.

The AOL browser is a version of Internet Explorer, but is very limited due to a lack of menu bar features and a heavy reliance on graphics. Some of the concepts discussed in this article apply to AOL, but this software is generally not a good choice if you are trying to adapt a computer for access to the Web.

As usual, the access issues break down into those affecting the user's ability to input information into the computer, processing aids to simplify or accelerate the operation of the computer, and issues affecting output of information from the computer.

Input

Mouse Access

When browsing the Web most access is dependent on point and click. The need to enter text is infrequent and the quantity usually small. One text item that may need to be entered is the URL (the unique Internet address of each Web page called a "Universal Resource Locator") of a page you want to go to. This is not a lot of text, however, and pages that are visited frequently can be bookmarked. Another occasion for entering text is when using a search engine, a piece of software accessed with a browser, that searches the Web for pages containing certain words or phrases. It also may be necessary at times to enter text, such as your name and address, into a form to download a program. But that's about it. There's little enough text entry that occasional use of an onscreen keyboard provides fairly complete access to a browser for

ATFSCP Notes
The Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project
<http://www.ucpa.org/html/innovative/atfsc_index.html>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT
By: Susan Goodman, Esq.

Question: My child needs a more sophisticated communication device than the one he currently uses. Is the school district responsible for providing my child with a more appropriate device?

Answer: If the device is needed for a student to benefit from his/her educational program as determined by the team developing the student's individual education plan (IEP), it must be provided at no cost to the parent. In addition, the new law says that assistive technology devices and services must be considered when developing an IEP. Since evaluation is considered an assistive technology service, the school district is obligated to consider whether a student needs an AT evaluation or reevaluation.

Question: Is reevaluation of a student still required every three years?

Answer: Yes, reevaluation is required at least once every three years and more often if the parent or teacher requests it. However, under the new law an IEP team or other "qualified professionals" can decide that no additional data is needed to confirm eligibility and therefore, not conduct a reevaluation. The school district must notify the parents of this determination and the parent has the right to request an evaluation. If the school district refuses to conduct the evaluation, the parents may get an independent evaluation at the school district's expense.

Question: My child has been diagnosed with a learning disability. In addition, he has some behavior problems which keep him from learning as well as I think he can. The teacher wants to move my son to another classroom, but I think that if his behavior problems were dealt with properly, this wouldn't be necessary. What can I do?

Answer: You should request that your son be evaluated for any possible social or behavior problems. After such an evaluation is completed, the IEP team should reconvene. According to the new law, IEP teams must consider when behavior impedes learning and others strategies, interventions and supports to address that behavior.

Question: I want to put my child in a private school because the school district refuses to provide the services that his Doctor thinks that he needs. Can I get the school district to pay the private school tuition?

Answer: If your school is refusing to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in a reasonable period, a hearing officer or court may order reimbursement for tuition at a private school. However, there are steps that you should take to increase your chances of tuition reimbursement:

At your child's IEP meeting, request that the appropriate services be provided. Have documentation ready to support your claim for specific services. If the school refuses to provide the appropriate services, explain to the IEP team that you are rejecting the placement and inform them of your intent to place your child in a private school.

If holding an IEP meeting is not practicable, give written notice to the school of your concerns and your intent to make a private school placement.

If the school district notifies you of intent to evaluate your child in writing (with a reasonable statement of purpose for the evaluation), you must make your child available for that evaluation.

Notice does not have to be given if the following circumstances are present: 1) a parent is illiterate and cannot write in English; 2) compliance with the notice requirement would likely result in physical or serious emotional harm to the child; 3) the school prevented the parent(s) from giving the notice; and, 4) parents did not receive notice from the LEA of their obligation to provide notice of intent to make a unilateral private school placement.

Question: How much parent involvement is required?

Answer: The law envisions active parental involvement in all phases of the student's educational program including evaluation, planning and

placement. Parents should be vigilant in monitoring implementation of their child's program and the progress s/he is making.

Question: I have heard that a student can be removed from the classroom if s/he is considered a danger to self or others for a period of three months! Is this correct and what does it mean?

Answer: A student can be removed to an "interim alternative educational" setting by a hearing officer for 45 school days (11 weeks) if the hearing officer determines that the school has proved by substantial evidence that "maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or others." In making this determination, the hearing officer must:

Consider the appropriateness of the student's placement;

Consider whether the public agency has made reasonable efforts to minimize the risk of harm in the child's current placement, including the use of supplementary aids and services; and,

Determines that the interim alternative education setting selected enables the student to continue to participate in the general curriculum; continues to receive the services in the student's IEP that will enable the student to meet the goals set out in the IEP.

In addition, the interim alternative placement should include services and modifications designed to address the behavior . . . so that it does not recur.

Question: What happens if a child is suspended for 10 days?

Answer: Under the current law, a suspension of 10 days is not considered a change in placement. The law states that a student may be suspended or removed to an interim alternative educational or other setting to the same extent that such an alternative would be applied to a child without a disability.

Question: What does "substantial evidence" mean?

Answer: The term substantial evidence means more than a preponderance of evidence. This can be interpreted to mean that it is more likely than not that the maintenance of the placement will result in injury to "self or others."

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of the opinions expressed herein should be inferred. §

Ask RJ
RJ Cooper & Associates
<http://www.rjcooper.com>

My daughter is 15 years old but her thinking skills are 'younger', although she behaves and wants very much to be just like other 15 year olds. She's very physically limited but I want her to interact with her friends and classmates at higher than cause/effect levels. The trouble is that as the content of the software becomes more age appropriate, the method of interaction and demands of the software put it out of her 'reach'. Have you found appropriate software that's also easy to operate? -The Shermans

Unfortunately, you've inquired about a rare breed of software. I'm always looking for age appropriate content, but simple interface. Before a title can make my 'list', it must meet the following criteria:

a) Be fully narrated

b) Have clear graphics, not too cluttered

c) Have plain and easy things to click on, not too close together, with black borders.

d) Contain content that is appropriate for the task

I've found a few, and I'm sure there are more (although I've not found them myself):

1) Rand McNally Children's Atlas of the U.S. by GameTek for Mac

2) Random House Kid's Encyclopedia by Knowledge Adventure for Mac/

Win (don't let the title fool you :)

3) Undersea Adventure by Knowledge Adventure

4) Carmen San Diego Jr. Edition by Broderbund

These all are great just as they are, very simple to operate, lots of speech and sound effects, and non-age specific, in my opinion, even "Carmen."

The following are 'authoring' or 'creation' programs that you can *set up* (create scenes) so that they are very appropriate and simple to operate:

6) Hollywood and Hollywood High by Theatrix

7) The Simpson Cartoon Studio by Fox

Then there are the 'true' authoring tools like HyperCard or SuperCard for the Mac, or HyperStudio (Mac and Win), or for the truly brave, Director or any one of a dozen multimedia programs that allow you to make 'programs'. But the time you will put into making even just one application will be much better spent doing other things.

Now I know you must: a) match the cognitive abilities of the user with the software; b) match the demands of the interface to the limitations of the user; c) make sure that Jupiter

lines up with Mars <g>. But I need a list to at least start with, so that when I'm looking for software for teenagers and adults with limited response capabilities, I can investigate these titles first. I suggest purchasing software from Educorp (1-800-843-9497); they have a very liberal return policy.

The titles above are especially good for having a non-disabled peer move the mouse, and the disabled user do the clicking with their switch (using, guess what? RJ Cooper's SAM switch interface; don't you just love shameless plugs? 1-800-RJCooper). Take the computer output, run it through TVator Remote, or any device that translates the video output of the computer into something you can plug into a large TV or VCR video in. Then have the users 'teach' the class something new. Titles 1, 2, & 3 above are especially good for this, as they are fully narrated and multimedia to the max. Then quiz the rest of the class on the material, or at least have discussion groups based upon the 'lessons'.

Another idea is to use music software, even cause/effect titles, as dance music for a dance or exercise class. Your daughter would be the disc jockey, the person that sets the pace.

An alternative to finding specific titles (software) that do exactly what you'd like, is to use mainstream titles

via macros accessible through buttons. I'm thinking of creating the following program and would LOVE your input:

Restatement of the problem: Many programs that are *content* appropriate, require interaction and understanding that is 'above' my populations. Either there are too many options/buttons/menu choices, etc., or the screens are too busy to navigate, or the method of interaction is just too complicated. The above titles are, however, rich in graphics and sounds and content, because they are designed for mainstream populations. Many times they are age appropriate also. Usually, with these higher 'powered' titles, a team of up to 30 people work on them, so they will almost always have more content than special needs titles.

Possible solution: Place big 'buttons' that float over (on 'top') of the application, that are specific to that application. Clicking on these buttons would perform 'macros', which could consist of keystrokes/mouse movements/clicks/drags, which could span many screens and do things like:

a) gather pictures/text/data from different areas

b) place and arrange the data for presentation

c) put together a song

d) click on a hot spot, wait awhile, and click on another hot spot, possibly in another screen, that relates to the first, eventually telling a whole story

e) create a heading, salutation, ending, and place cursor ready for body of text, in a word processor

f) fire up an Internet browser, go to a web page, and navigate the web for specific purposes

g) the possibilities are unlimited.

These macros would be created and/or edited, easily, by a teacher/parent, right inside the desired application, simply by executing the mouse moves/click and keystrokes. The utility I would create would record and place these events in a button within a toolbar that would 'float' above that application, whenever that specific application is run.

The button creation process would need to be easy and quick. It would also be necessary to be able to 'scan' through the buttons, via single

switch, for those that need this type of access.

I have come across this same situation for blind kids, so much out there but so little of it is accessible. Even with the sophisticated screen readers, which allow text-to-speech output of Mac or Windows screens, things get confusing so fast. It would be much easier to have key combinations that do a bunch of things within the software.

I realize this would require some setup by the parent/teacher, but I can see no way around the problem other than the solution I have outlined. Please contact me at <rj@rjcooper.com> with your thoughts on this topic, along with any other titles you have found that fit my criteria. I will publish your feedback in my next column. §

school, at home, and in other settings. Crucial to this assessment is input from individuals who know the child best-educators and related service providers who work directly with the child, and the child's family. At this stage, the two most crucial questions are: (1) What are the goals for the student? and (2) How can technology assist the student in reaching those goals?

Once there is a clear determination of need, the process of matching technology to the student's skills begins. Educators who provide direct service to the child can help identify his or her abilities and needs, and because family members are often involved in assisting the child with the technology, it is also necessary to understand the supports that accompany the tools, prior to making final decisions.

If your district has technology available, your first line of inquiry may center upon whether what you already have can be used or adapted. For example, the State of Florida suggests that the following questions be answered before considering a purchase of new equipment:

· Is there a way this piece of equipment can be made or fabricated?

· Can it be borrowed from an equipment loan center or library?

· Is the expense reasonable when compared to the therapeutic benefit and to other possible uses of the funds?

· Is the equipment or service more costly than another option or alternative?

· Does the item serve the same purpose as equipment that is already available?

Keep in mind that sometimes the cost of adapting an old piece of equipment can exceed the cost of buying a new item. However, when adapting technology, it is a good idea to check the maintenance agreements to ensure coverage.

Prior to purchasing new technology, it is helpful to try it out with the student and the adults who will be involved in its implementation. Borrowing equipment-either from vendors, lending libraries, or disability organizations-is the optimal way to determine if a particular technology tool will suit the needs of your students and staff.

If the option to do test runs is not available, the following questions can be helpful:

·What technology tools are available to meet this student's needs?

·Are there reliable reviews of these tools?

·What are the costs of the preferred tools?

·Are previews or workshops in which the technology is demonstrated available?

·Are there additional sources of information available?

·Is the preferred tool compatible with other school technology? What human and fiscal resources will it take to integrate the technology into the existing system?

Do not hesitate to ask as many questions as it takes for you to feel confident about your understanding of available options. Take advantage of the many knowledgeable groups and organizations that provide guidance on technology products and services. The goal is to make sure that the decision process reflects a well-thought-out plan of action. Remember, too, that early attention to finding the right technology can actually save you time and money later on.

someone who could use a mouse or mouse emulator.

Because links can appear anywhere on a Web page, they are most conveniently accessed by clicking with a mouse or mouse substitute. Additionally, most browsers have toolbar icons and buttons, and at least menu options, to allow everything to be controlled by mouse. Consequently, people who can use the mouse (or an alternative pointing device, like the Prentke-Romich Headmaster, Madenta's Tracker, or RJ Cooper's CrossScanner) can operate Web browsers very easily.

Of course, there are other online tasks that do require text input, such as e-mail and chat rooms, but these do not pose unique access problems beyond what would be encountered in using a word processor.

Keyboard Access

A tnckier problem is keyboard access. As we know, the trick with a lot of software is figuring how to operate it *without* the mouse. If we can operate it with keyboard commands, we can make an Intellikeys or Discover Board overlay, or make a custom switch scanning matrix, or use Morse Code, or conveniently make speech macros for a voice input system. So the primary physical access focus is on keyboard accessibility of Web browsers, and how we can then make them accessible to switch and alternate keyboard users. The CforAT web site contains a comprehensive list of the keyboard commands necessary to operate the various Web browsers. Armed with this information, overlays or scanning matrices can be designed, and the

appropriate keyboard commands plugged in. Several samples are posted on the Web page to provide starting points.

Voice Input

Most voice input systems are not very good at controlling the mouse because it tends to be a pretty cumbersome process ("mouse up", "stop", "mouse left"). Therefore, keyboard-based Web access methods will be helpful in using voice input as well. If you know the keyboard command to control a browser, you can make a speech macro to do this by voice.

There are also a couple of low cost programs (VoiceType Connection for Windows 95 and SurfTalk for the Macintosh) that provide speech control only in Netscape, but which are specially designed not to require mouse use. These programs allow you to activate links by speaking their names, rather than by pointing and clicking.

Processing Aids

For our purposes, processing aids fall into three categories: word prediction/abbreviation expansion programs, spell checkers, and text-to-speech software. Word prediction and abbreviation expansion programs work with Web browsers the same way they work with other software. They are primarily important for e-mail and online chat rooms, where large amounts of text must be entered. The same is true for spell-checkers; the text that must be entered while actually browsing the

web is usually limited to one or two word search terms.

Text-to-speech programs that speak highlighted text can be helpful to people with learning disabilities or low vision in accessing text on Web pages. Text Assist for Windows and MacYack are two examples.

Output

Output issues mostly involve using screenreaders to access the Web. Screen magnification is no different with a Web browser than with any other program. There are a number of screen readers available, all of which deal differently with the problem of presenting the unpredictable graphic data produced by the Web browsers in audible form. Many of these have a free demo version.

Beginning at the CforAT website (www.el.net/CAT) you will find links to download demo screenreaders, details on keyboard equivalents for designing access via morsecode, Discover Board, Ke:nex, Discover Switch, and IntelliKeys, and other detailed information on increasing access to the web.

The Center for Accessible Technology is a non-profit organization providing computer-based technology support for children and adults with disabilities, and their families, teachers, friends, and professionals. Contact them at: 2547 8th St., 12A, Berkeley, CA 94710, Voice/TTY: (510) 841-3224, FAX: (510) 841-7956, e-mail: CforAT@aol.com, web: www.el.net/CAT. §

and it often takes an experienced professional to know what will work best for you.

You can ask the funding source to pay for the assessment. In requesting funding for an AT assessment, you should follow the guidelines set out below. If you plan to purchase a piece of equipment on your own, you may still want to get an assistive technology assessment. You want to be sure that you are getting the type of equipment that is best for you. Also, the individual who does the assessment may be able to help you order and install the equipment and assist you with training.

4. Identify the "Magic" Words

EVERY funding agency has its own criteria for eligibility and its own criteria for funding assistive technology. You must determine what those criteria are and use them in making your funding request. If the agency has written policies or regulations, get copies. Track the language of the policies and/or regulations in your request. For example, if you are seeking funding for an augmentative communications system from Medicaid or a private insurer, you need to use words which show that the device requested is "medically necessary." To prove "medical necessity," you will need to describe how the individual's condition affects his/her ability to communicate and how, in turn, the inability to communicate affects the consumer's ability to communicate with his doctor and to otherwise participate in medical decisions. You also may want to discuss the impact

on personal safety. If you are seeking funding from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, you would discuss how the inability to communicate affects employability and how the applicant's job prospects would be improved with the use of an augmentative communications system.

5. Substantiate Your Request

Once you have identified the "magic words," locate the proper person or persons to substantiate your request and, if necessary, educate that person as to the relevant funding criteria and the need to refer to those criteria in substantiating a request for assistive technology. For example, it has been our experience that some doctors will just submit an order for a piece of assistive technology or an AT assessment to an insurance company or Medicaid. That is not enough. The doctor needs to explain how assistive technology will ameliorate a particular medical condition in terms that track the consumer's health insurance and/or Medicaid coverage. In addition to a statement from the relevant professional (e.g., doctor, educator, AT assessor), you may want to include photographs or videotapes of the consumer using the device as means of documenting your request.

6. Include Adequate Support And Services

Whenever you purchase a piece of AT, you should think about the other services needed to "support" the use of the device. This could include set-up, support, training, follow-up, repair, maintenance, upgrading, etc. Too often, the assistive device is provided

without adequate support. Support and services should be addressed in any AT assessment. Support and services should also be addressed by vendors. Ask the vendor to indicate how much time it is willing to commit to training. Also ask them to tell you what they will do if there is a problem with the device. They should be willing to repair or replace it within a reasonable period of time or give you your money back.

7. Think About Payment Arrangements

Purchase of an AT device may not always be the best solution. If an individual's condition is not stable, the relevant technology is changing rapidly and/or is very expensive, it may make sense to lease rather than purchase a piece of equipment. It is hard to get governmental agencies to pay for used equipment but that may also be an option if you are seeking out private funding. Perhaps you can also make such an arrangement with your insurance company. If you are purchasing the equipment, make sure that it is on 30, 60, or 90 day approval. Sometimes you won't really know if the equipment will work for you until you have had a chance to try it out.

8. Be Prepared For Delays But Be Persistent

Unfortunately, the process of obtaining assistive technology can be long and tedious. Be prepared for some delays. By the same token, don't hesitate to be the squeaky wheel. Some agencies, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disabilities have large

case loads and may need a nudge. If you are not getting anywhere with your particular counselor, ask for a new one.

9. Be Prepared To Appeal

Don't give up if your request is denied. You may ask the funding agency to reconsider or you can appeal the initial decision. The agency will probably provide you with information about how to appeal the decision. If not, ask for such information. At this point, you may need legal help. Contact the Assistive Technology Resource Center for a list of agencies and attorneys or call the Washington Protection and Advocacy System ((206) 324-1521).

10. Observe All Deadlines

Be very careful about deadlines. If you don't appeal an adverse decision within the time the agency gives you to appeal, you may lose your right to do so.

This information was found on the Washington Assistive Technology Alliance Web page. They are still working on completing this document, and would welcome your suggestions for making this information more complete, accurate and user friendly. Please write to us at uwat@u.washington.edu. We truly appreciate your comments, inquiries, responses, and suggestions. Frances E. Pennell, J.D., Assistive Technology Resource Center, Box 357920, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195-7920, (206) 685-4181, http:// weber.u. washington.edu/~atrc/ funding_tips.html. §

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The Spurlino Foundation
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Conferences & Events

Date: February 24-27, 1998
The Role of Technology in Education XVIII Conference, St. Charles, IL.
Contact: 847-419-5065

Date: March 5-7, 1998
Florida Educational Technology Conference, (FETC), Orlando, FL.
Contact: www.fetc.org

Date: March 5-8, 1998
5th Annual Training Seminar and Conference Society for Cognitive Rehabilitation, Wilkes Barre, PA.
Contact: 717-826-3872; Fax: 717-826-3898; E-mail: KrisCog@aol.com

Date: March 11-14, 1998
Learning Disabilities Association of America, 35th Annual International Conference, Washington, DC.
Contact: 412-341-1515

Date: March 17 -21, 1998
Technology and Persons with Disabilities. California State University, Los Angeles, CA.
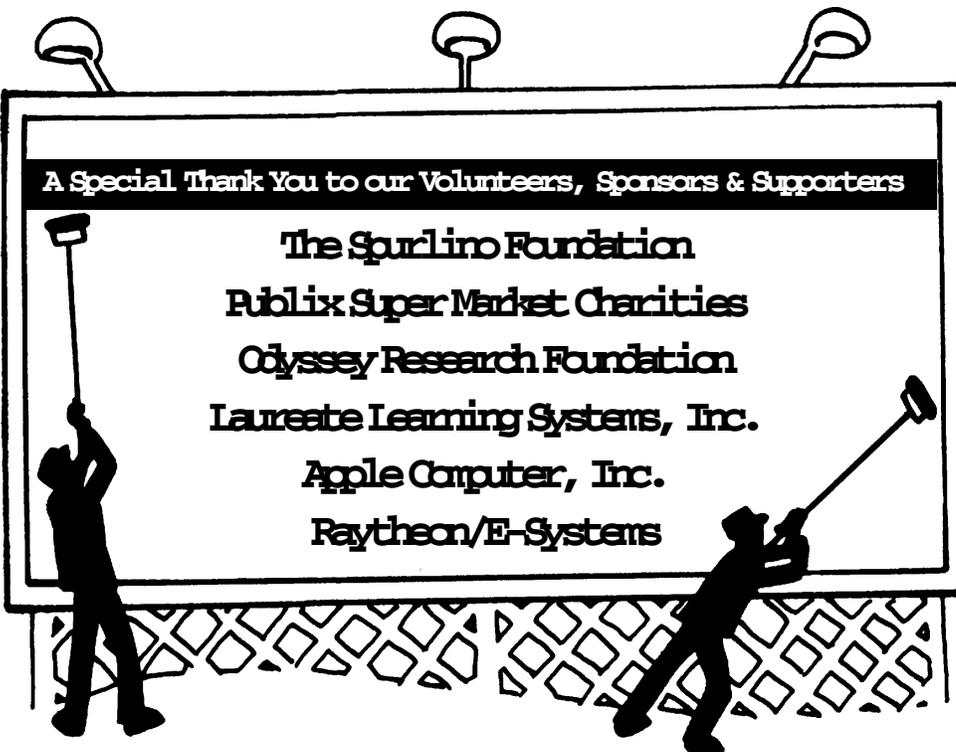Contact: 818-677-2578

Date: May 4-6, 1998
Rehabilitation Technology Associates Training Symposium, Transitions, Salt Lake City, UT.
Contact: 304-766-2680, TDD: 304-766-2697, FAX: 304-766-2689, rta@rtc2.icdi.evu.edu, www.icdi.wvu.edu

Louis Database

Louisville, KY – The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) introduces *Louis,* the Database of Accessible Books and Materials for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (formerly called CARL ET AL). Named *"Louis" as* a celebration and continuation of the work of Louis Braille, who originated the now-standard tactile reading code, this cooperative database provides bibliographic and location information for books and materials in braille, large type, recorded, and computer disk formats. These materials are available from 200 agencies across North America.

Louis is now available on the Internet at the APH web site http://www.aph.org. *Louis* can also be accessed by direct dial-in thanks to a speech accessible interface that uses STAR information management software from Cuadra Associates. Contact Christine Anderson, Resource Services Manager, to receive software for direct dial-in access. These changes to the database, made possible by a grant from the NEC Foundation of America, promise to make *Louis* available to many new users.

Louis is a vital part of APH's mission which is to promote the independence of blind and visually impaired people by providing the special media, tools, and materials needed for education and life.

SPOTLIGHT

Contact APH, 1839 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, KY 40206, 800-223-1839.

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Switch Click

Ajax, Ontario – TASH International introduces *Switch Click*! Switch Click is a mouse click. This is the simplest "Plug & Go" interface for access to most scanning software. Simply plug it in to the computer and press *Switch Click* while having full access to the standard keyboard and mouse. Use it with: Edmark, Laureate, Broderbund, Mayer-Johnson, Gus!, IntelliTools, SimTech and more. You may also plug a switch into *Switch Click* for alternate access. For serial, PS2, and Macintosh. Price: $99.00. Contact TASH International, Inc., 91 Station Street, Unit 1, Ajax, Ontario, Canada L1S 3H2, 800-463-5685, tashcan@aol.com, www.tashint.com

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KeyREP & WiVox New Features

Wooster, Ohio – Prentke Romich Company (PRC) has recently introduced new features to its *KeyREP* and *WiVox* computer access software products. *KeyREP* is a word prediction program that makes writing with a computer keyboard more efficient for those with physical or learning disabilities. Type the first few letters of a word and a list of predicted words appears. Select the word you want and *KeyREP* types the word into whatever application you are using. The new version of *KeyREP* includes auditory prompts of the prediction list, which provides valuable feedback to people with learning disabilities. The word prediction dictionaries have also been updated to be more specific to age and academic levels.

WiVox is a software that lets you hear what you've written in any Windows application. Write a letter, word, or sentence and *WiVox* speaks it as it is typed. Highlight a paragraph in a word processor, e-mail, or on a web page and *WiVox* will read it to you. *WiVox* also reads menus or entire documents. *WiVox* now comes with Lernout & Hauspie speech software for Windows sound cards and is compatible with Text Assist.

KeyREP is available for $250. *WiVox* is available for $200. The two can be purchased as a bundled package for only $290. Photos are available electronically upon request. Just provide your e-mail address and we will send one to you. Prentke Romich Co., 1022 Hey Road, Wooster, OH 44691, 800-262-1984, Fax: 330-263-4829.