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Abilities Expo 2012, Houston

(pictures: TTAP expo booth, Roger Levy, John Morris, Ana Canevaro, and Kelly Chirhart)

This year’s Abilities Expo was a huge success with more than 3,700 adults touring
the exhibit floor and participating in various workshops and sporting events. This is
30% more attendees than last year!

Join TTAP next year at Houston’s Reliant Center, July 25-27, 2014. This fall’s next
Abilities Expos are in Boston, September 20-22, and San Jose, November 22-24.
For more information visit www.abilitiesexpo.com

Latest News from the Device Loan Program

Several new augmentative devices have been added to the TTAP Device Loan
Program. Check out our website at http://techaccess.edb.utexas.edu for a full list of
items for loan.

For more information, contact:

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**Assistive Technology Q&A**

Q: What is the best hand held CCTV for the money?

A: It all depends on the individual’s acuity and preferences. TTAP has several models in the Device Loan Program you can borrow. Check our website and try them out.

**Tech Corner:**

**“Back-To-School 2013: Tablet Buying Guide”**

by Justin Dennis (MakeUseOf.com)

Tablets are an important tool for students; they can be used for carrying your e-textbooks, taking notes during lectures, or doing online research. They are so light that you would hardly even notice one in your backpack. Heck, you can even get a decent education just from Android apps.

Whether you’re looking for a cheap 7-inch tablet or a full-featured 10-inch tablet, this guide can help you out. Do you want a heavier, more expensive tablet with a large screen; or a lighter, less expensive one with a smaller screen? Every student is different. Some may need a stylus for sketching or taking notes while others might need a keyboard. The good news is that there are so many great tablets available right now that your hardest choice isn’t going to be finding one, but deciding on one.

Many tablets come with 4G options, but today we’ll just be looking at the cheaper Wi-Fi-only models, since 4G coverage can be expensive and most universities have Wi-Fi across their entire campus.

If you’re a newbie to the tablet world, don’t forget to check out our Tablet Buying Guide: Summer 2013 before you get started. Right now, we’ll be starting off with the most inexpensive tablet and working our way up the price ladder.

The most affordable option we’ll be discussing is Lenovo’s IdeaTab A1000. For $130, it’s not the most feature-packed tablet out there, but it is still a solid offering. It has a 7-inch, 1024×600 screen, a 1.2 GHz dual-core processor, 1 GB of RAM, 8 GB of memory, front and rear cameras, and dual front-facing speakers. It’s also pretty thick at 0.42 inches (10.7 mm), but it does have a Micro SD card slot for expanded storage.

For those of you on a tight budget, you might want to consider this tablet. Unlike other cheap, no-name tablets, this device can access the Google Play Store, giving you access to all the same apps other Android tablets have. Running Android 4.1, it doesn’t have the absolute newest software, but 4.2 and 4.3 have been incremental updates anyway, and 4.1 will run well on this device.
If $130 is all you can scrounge up, go for it; but if you can get another hundred dollars together, you may want to spring for our next option.

**Google Nexus 7 (2013) $230**

The Nexus 7 boasts the highest pixel density of any tablet, besting even the iPad with Retina Display, and reviewers have loved its pixel-packed screen. It’s thinner and lighter than last year’s model, and it packs a speedy Qualcomm Snapdragon S4 Pro processor and 2 GB of RAM for incredible performance. Its dual stereo speakers offer great sound quality for such a small tablet and, being a Nexus device, it will always have the latest version of Android. It weighs in at only 0.64 lbs (290 g) and reviewers have praised its admirable battery life.

Plus, Google recently opened up a Textbooks section of Google Play, giving you instant access to cheap e-textbooks right on your tablet. Personally, electronic textbooks have changed the way I go to school. No more lugging around heavy books all day, you can easily search through your text for whatever you need, and highlighting and bookmarking features all work seamlessly. If you’re looking for a cheap, small, no fuss tablet, look no further than the Nexus 7.

**Apple iPad Mini $330**

For a hundred dollars more than the Nexus 7, you can get a shiny new iPad Mini, which we reviewed a few months back. The iPad with Retina Display nearly made this list, but at $500 for the base model, the Mini is just much better value. By saving that extra $170, you sacrifice power (the Mini uses an A5 processor compared to the iPad with Retina Display's A6X) and screen size. But you also get slimmer bezels, and a much lighter and thinner device. The Mini weighs in at only 0.68 lbs (309 g), so slightly heavier than the Nexus 7, but it also has an inch more screen space.

The Mini is a great choice if you love iOS, otherwise, the Nexus 7 is a stronger device for $100 less. But iOS remains the simplest OS to use, and if you’re tied into the iOS ecosystem from an iPhone or even an old iPad, the Mini is a superb option. Apple’s App Store has a plethora have apps designed for use on a tablet, and some would argue that Android is still trying to catch up in terms of quality tablet-optimized apps.

Battery life for the Mini is incredible. If you’re looking for something to carry around all day, this device won’t weigh you down and it will easily make it through the whole day. Plus, there are a lot of cases available, many with keyboards, so your accessory options are endless.

**Microsoft Surface RT $350**

We reviewed the Surface RT a few months back and it didn’t look too favorably on it, but that was back when it cost $500. After receiving a $150 price cut down to
$350, I think this device is worth another look, especially for students. This gorgeous device has some of the best hardware out there. It has a unique 10.6-inch screen, slightly bigger than the average 10-inch device, but smaller than 11.6-inch laptops. While most reviewers are disappointed by the lack of apps and the glitchy software, they generally love the hardware. Microsoft clearly put a lot of time into crafting this device and that effort shines through the sturdy VaporMG casing and kickstand. It’s also the only tablet with a full-size USB port for easily transferring files, and it has a great magnetic charger.

The downside, at least as hardware goes, is that the Touch Cover will set you back another $120 unless you buy the bundled Surface RT and Black Touch Cover for $450. The Touch Cover, while thin and light, doesn’t provide any tactile feedback, so if you’re looking for a more solid keyboard, the Type Cover could be more up your alley, but it’ll set you back $130. Still, at $480 for a 32 GB Surface RT with Type Cover, the price still manages to stay below the $500 limit where most 10-inch tablets land without any kind of keyboard. Keep in mind, however, that you only get about 14 GB of free space out of that 32 GB Surface RT.

Software-wise, you get Microsoft Office Home & Student bundled, which is a very welcome addition for students. Unfortunately, since the Surface RT runs Windows RT rather than full-blown Windows 8, you won’t be able to download any legacy Windows 7 apps like Chrome or iTunes. Here, you’re stuck with the Metro or “Modern UI” apps. While these look and behave a lot better on the tablet than any desktop app would, your choices from the Windows Store are incredibly limited. Most notably, Facebook has yet to release a Modern app, and Google refuses to make the Chrome browser available for RT devices.

In the end, though, if all you need is a thin, light device to carry from class to class and type some Word documents, the Surface RT is perfect. It won’t have the full range of apps available for Android or iOS devices, but it makes up for it with a relatively low price tag and innovative keyboard cover.

**Samsung Galaxy Note 8.0 $380**

Here’s a tablet for those stylus-lovers. The Galaxy Note 8.0 is a relatively new device from Samsung that basically looks like a stretched out Galaxy S4. It’s thin, light, fast, and comes with a built-in stylus; so what’s not to love? Two things, really: the screen and the price. Its 1280×800 screen is nice, but it’s nowhere near Nexus 7 status, and at $380, this thing charges a hefty price for the addition of a stylus.

The killer feature for this tablet, I think, is Multi-Window. It allows the user to have two apps open side by side. Combined with the stylus, this could be incredibly useful. You could look up information using the Web browser or watch that documentary for class on the left while taking notes on the right. Not to mention that the stylus is great for taking notes if you have one those grumpy, stuck-in-the-past professors who won’t allow you to type on a keyboard or screen while in class.
Polaris Office also comes preloaded, which is great for working on Microsoft Office documents like Word, and it has an IR blaster if you’re lucky enough to have a TV in your dorm.

So multi-tasking, stylus-using students, this is the tablet for you.

**Sony Xperia Tablet Z $500**

Now I know what you’re thinking: the iPad with Retina Display should be the $500 tablet to buy. But while the iPad with Retina Display is a very capable device, so is the Xperia Z — and the Xperia Z is waterproof. This 10-inch tablet weighs only 1.09 lbs, considerably lighter than the iPad’s 1.44 lbs. The Xperia Z is also a good deal slimmer: 6.9 mm compared to 9.4 mm. Despite this, it has a 1920×1200 display that, while not as good as the iPad’s, is still amazing. It also runs a Qualcomm Snapdragon S4 Pro, has 2GB of RAM, an infrared emitter for controlling your TV, an 8 megapixel camera, and runs Android 4.1. And if you order it from Sony’s website, you get an 8 GB micro SD card to for expanded storage.

On the downside, it does not have the best battery life among the tablets featured in this article. That’s disappointing, but I think the tablet makes it up for it with its waterproofness. Imagine being able to use your tablet in the rain, or even carry it in your backpack in the rain without worrying about getting it wet. If you spill something on it, you’re fine, and if it gets dirty you can just rinse it off with water. This is such a killer feature that I can only expect most other tablets to follow suit very soon.

**Conclusion**

Each of these tablets brings something unique to the table, and any of them would make life as a student much easier. As a college student myself, it’s amazing to have something thin and light that doesn’t weigh down my backpack and can be used to take notes in class and watch Netflix at night. It all depends on what you need, though. Below, I have summed up the main reasons why you would choose one of these devices.

- IdeaTab A1000: Inexpensive, expandable storage.
- Nexus 7: Fast processor, great display.
- iPad Mini: Tied into Apple Ecosystem, great battery life.
- Surface RT: Unique kickstand, runs Microsoft Office.
- Galaxy Note 8.0: Included stylus, multi-window feature.
- Xperia Tablet Z: Waterproof, thin and lightweight.
Spotlight on Demonstration Centers

Ability Connection, Dallas

Our Passion:

At Ability Connection Texas, our passion is providing the very highest quality care and support to children and adults with disabilities. Our organization has been building on this passion for over 60 years while continuing our commitment to level the playing field for those with disabilities. We empower individuals to live the best life possible by removing barriers that inhibit independence and autonomy. At Ability Connection Texas, we focus on each person’s ability and believe in each individual’s potential for success.

Ability Connection Texas has been providing vital care and support to people with disabilities for over 59 years. Today, one in five people have a disability - which is why our services are so important. Whether advocating for the rights of people with disabilities, teaching the letters of the alphabet to a child with autism, or training an adult with a head injury to re-enter the workforce with the use of adaptive technology, ACT is the preeminent organization leading the way for people of all ages with any type of physical or intellectual disability.

Ability Connection is a TTAP Assistive Technology Demonstration site. Contact Leah Gardner at 800-999-1898 to schedule an appointment.

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What’s on TTAP for Fall

September 14, 2013  Breaking Barriers Resource Fair and Conference
Cypress United Methodist Church
13403 Cypress N. Houston Rd
Cypress, TX  77429
281-469-0730 | www.cypress-umc.org
Contact Robin Rettie:
robin@lighthouselearningresource.com

September 26, 2013  Marketing & Communication Strategies for Aging & Accessibility (CAPS I)
Huntington Beach, CA  
Contact: Vince Buler  
Tel: (949) 553-9500  
Email: Marketing & Communication Strategies for Aging & Accessibility (CAPS I)

October 9-11, 2013  
**31st Annual Closing The Gap Conference**  
Minneapolis, MN  
Preconference Workshops: Mo & Tu, Oct. 7-8, 2013  
https://www.closingthegap.com/store/registration

October 19-24, 2013  
**ACM SIG-ACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility (ASSETS-2013)**  
Bellevue, WA  
Contact: Clayton Lewis  
Email ASSETS-2013

**Just for Laughs**

(picture of man handcuffed to torture chamber wall. Guard asks how he would like to be tortured today: Put you on the rack? Boil you in oil? Make you call a technical support line?)

**Contact Us:**

Any suggestions, comments, or article you would like to have included in our newsletter, please contact us:

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Texas Technology Access Program  
Texas Center for Disability Studies  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Commons Learning Center  
10100 Burnet Road  
Austin, Texas 78758-4445  
http://techaccess.edb.utexas.edu
**TTAP Demonstration Centers**

- Ability Connection, Dallas
- Brazoria County Center for Independent Living, Angleton
- Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living, Bryan
- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living, Corpus Christi
- Disability in Action, Abilene
- East Texas Center for Independent Living, Tyler
- Easter Seals of Greater Houston
- Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, Austin
- Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth
- Heart of Central Texas Independent Living Center, Belton
- Helping Hands, Amarillo
- Houston Center for Independent Living, Houston
- Paso Del Norte Children’s Development Center, El Paso
- REACH Center for Independent Living, Plano
- RISE Center for Independent Living, Beaumont
- VAIL – Valley Association for Independent Living, McAllen