On the Road Again

The Texas Technology Access Program supports an assistive technology network currently consisting of 16 demonstration centers across Texas. This network of centers provides general assistive technology, computer access, and portable computer access demonstrations. Demonstrations are available to consumers and their family members, as well as advocates, employers, and educators.

Each of our network’s AT demonstration centers strives to display and present a variety of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services. Center staff members, who are familiar with such devices and services and their applications, assist individuals in making informed choices regarding, and providing experiences with, these devices and services. As AT continues to improve and meet the needs of our network’s consumers, each center’s demonstration equipment must present state-of-the-art technology and be in excellent condition. Also, people providing the demonstrations must be provided hands-on training and kept informed of the latest improvements and newest technology.

TTAP Director Roger Levy is currently traveling to each supported center in the network to insure we maintain these goals. This year, the main emphasis is on computer hardware upgrades and installing the latest AT-related software for consumer demonstrations and evaluation.

For example, this year each center will receive a new Apple iPad2® loaded with at least 25 apps for use in the areas of communication, early childhood, vision, and hearing. Roger also provides hands-on training for each center’s staff.

The network served over 900 individuals last year and continues to grow. Equipment upgrades and training will be complete by the end of April.

Latest News from the Device Loan Program

Check out the newest and latest assistive technology added to our Device Loan Program! You can find the program on our website at http://techaccess.edb.utexas.edu. Click on the “Device Loan” button on the homepage.

The Device Loan Program is similar to the Demonstration Center Program as it features the latest AT equipment, however individuals with disabilities, their families, and qualified professionals are able to borrow specific AT devices through the program and assess them in the
individual's normal environments. They are then able to determine if the devices meet their needs or the needs of individuals with disabilities they are serving. They are then able to make informed choices about what device to purchase - or whether to purchase a device at all.

The program also works with agencies that provide assistive technology device loans to develop a system of mutual referral so consumers can find the agency most appropriate to meet their equipment loan needs.

We have added a lot of new devices to our Hearing and Communication sections. There are a wide variety of assistive listening equipment, as well as two-way communication and wireless amplified speakers with Bluetooth® capabilities. We've added different brands and sizes of communication devices to give individuals a wide variety of choices when making your decision on what works for you. For more information, contact:

John Morris
Assistive Technology Coordinator
(512) 232-0753
Jcmorris1@mail.utexas.edu

Access to Museums and Parks for Patrons who are Blind or Visually Impaired

by Joe Strechay and Tara Annis

People with vision loss want, and increasingly expect, to experience a museum or park as fully as a person with normal vision. Museums and parks have made great strides in accessibility for patrons who are blind or visually impaired. The use of audio descriptions, GPS devices, and other accessible technologies, along with exhibit design improvements and better information sharing among cultural and educational institutions, have made these resources increasingly enjoyable and accessible to visitors with vision loss.

Organizations Dedicated to Improving Access to Cultural Institutions

Art Education for the Blind & Art Beyond Sight

Art Education for the Blind (AEB) and its website, Art Beyond Sight, provide materials specific to accessibility strategies and standards for art museums. AEB has made it its business to work on improving access to the arts in the US and abroad for people who are blind or visually impaired. It promotes national and regional programs through exhibitions, granted projects, and more. AEB worked with the AFB Press division to create the textbook Art Education for the Blind and Art Beyond Sight, a resource for teachers, rehabilitation professionals, and those interested in art education for people with vision loss. The book contains extensive information, techniques, strategies, and approaches.
Consumer Groups

Both the American Council of the Blind (ACB) and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) have interest groups specific to the arts. Both organizations have worked with museums to promote access in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

A variety of devices are used in museums and parks today to increase access for blind and visually impaired patrons. Though no single strategy will answer the accessibility needs for every institution or exhibit, many of these devices provide great improvements to access.

Durateq from Softeq

The Durateq is a top-of-the-line audio description device suitable for use in parks and museums. The Durateq uses GPS for providing access to outdoor points of interest. Indoors, it uses small beacon-type markers to trigger descriptions of exhibits or objects.

guidePORT System from Sennheiser

The guidePORT is a handheld device that offers a variety of programming options to provide more- or less-detailed tours depending on visitor preference. The device can provide a wide variety of language programming for institutions with international or multi-lingual visitorships.

Tourmate System

The Tourmate is an older device still in use in many museums. It uses recorded descriptions associated with specific objects or exhibit identification numbers. To hear a description, the user enters the identification number (found either through braille or the assistance of a sighted helper) into the device via a keypad. The Tourmate is not as flexible or convenient as an automatically triggered device.

Push-Button Audio Boxes

A common and often-preferred method for delivering audio description, the push-button audio box system provides all patrons the same method of access to information about an exhibit. The boxes can be designed to be weatherproof as well, allowing for indoor or outdoor use.

Tactile Representations

When it comes to objects such as sculpture, silver collections, and glass collections, nothing beats making a portion of the exhibit available for tactile exploration with guidance from museum staff. Of course museums can't make priceless or delicate works or objects available to the public for handling, but providing representative pieces or reproductions appropriate for tactile exploration is an incredible improvement to accessibility and vastly enriches the experience of the patron with vision loss or blindness.

Recommended Cultural Institutions for Visitors who are Blind or Visually Impaired:

The Huntington Museum of Art

The Huntington Museum of Art in Huntington, West Virginia, is an example of a smaller museum making strides to provide accessibility to people who are blind or visually impaired. The museum has made a number of efforts to enrich the experience of patrons with vision loss or blindness,
including adapted pottery classes, audio tours, specialized training in audio description for docents, a sensory trail surrounding the museum. The museum embraces the visually impaired community, sets a high accessibility standard for small museums across the nation, and continues to work on additional strategies to provide more accessibility.

Disney Theme Parks

Walt Disney World Hotels and Resorts have made accessibility a priority for a number of years. Well-known for impressive customer service, Disney is committed to serving people with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired. In 2011, AFB presented Disney with an Access Award for instituting the use of the Durateq device at Disneyland in California.

National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) has embraced new technologies to provide more accessibility for exhibits and tours. The African Burial Ground site in Manhattan features an accessible tour with audio description that provides access to multiple forms of media including video and print. The NPS is currently investigating access to images from parks and exhibits via the Web, a strategy that would provide more viewing options to people with low vision.

Additional Highly Recommended Museums

The New Britain Museum of American Art—New Britain, Connecticut
The Ringling Museum of Art—Sarasota, Florida
The Boston Museum of Fine Art—Boston, Massachusetts
The Metropolitan Museum of Art—New York, New York
The Museum of Natural History—New York, New York
The Intrepid (Naval aircraft carrier ship /museum)— New York, New York
Hamilton Grange National Memorial—New York, New York
North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores—Moorhead City, North Carolina
The Dallas Museum of Art—Dallas, Texas
The Smithsonian Institution, the Castle—Washington, DC
The International Spy Museum — Washington, DC
Assistive Technology Q&A

Q: Who should be on a TEAM when assistive technology devices and services need to be considered?

A: Chapter 766 Regulation [[paragraph]]314.0 states that the "Administrator of Special Education shall ensure that the TEAM includes persons knowledgeable about the child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options." In addition, "...specialists who are registered, licensed, or otherwise approved by the Commonwealth may be added to the TEAM." This means that if assistive technology devices or services are being considered, someone on the TEAM must be knowledgeable about assistive technology. In some cases, this will require an additional professional participating in TEAM meetings.

Spotlight on TTAP Demonstration Centers

Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth is proud to partner with The University of Texas’s Texas Center for Disability Studies. Goodwill of Fort Worth main facility located at 4005 Campus Drive is now offering Full demonstrations on the assistive technology. If anyone is interested in scheduling a demonstration please contact Tim Overstreet at email:toverstreet@goodwillfw.org or Phone: (817) 332-7866 X 2069.

Most people think of Goodwill as just a thrift store. But our business is really about changing lives. As a not-for-profit leader, Goodwill offers job training and other services to help people with disabilities and disadvantages achieve their maximum independence. Through Goodwill; job seekers, individuals with special needs, families and other members of our community gain self-esteem and become independent, self-sufficient citizens. Lives are changed through the Power of Work.

Goodwill is perhaps the most creative self-help idea of our time, conceived in 1902 by Edgar J. Helms, a Methodist minister in Boston. He created jobs by collecting unwanted household goods, then employing people to repair and resell them. The income from resold goods paid the worker’s wages. In turn, the reclaimed items became available to anyone at affordable prices.

Founded in 1949, Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth Inc. has built on that heritage to become a dynamic force that empowers those who seek not an open hand, but the open door of opportunity.
Mission Statement: The mission of Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth is to empower people with disabilities, disadvantages, and other barriers to employment so that they may achieve maximum independence.

Tech Corner: Overview of accessibility features in Windows 7®

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ease of Access Center</strong></td>
<td>Provides a centralized location in the Control Panel where you can adjust accessibility settings and programs. You can also get recommendations for settings to make your PC easier to see, hear, and use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magnifier</strong></td>
<td>Magnifies the screen or a portion of the screen to make text, images, and objects easier to see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-Screen Keyboard</strong></td>
<td>A visual, on-screen keyboard with all the standard keys that you can use instead of a physical keyboard. On-Screen Keyboard also lets you type and enter data with a mouse or other pointing device.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrator</strong></td>
<td>Reads aloud on-screen text and describes some events (such as error messages appearing) that happen while you're using the computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speech Recognition</strong></td>
<td>Enables you to interact with your computer using only your voice while maintaining, or even increasing, your productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change text size</strong></td>
<td>Lets you make text and objects larger and easier to see without losing graphics quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personalization</strong></td>
<td>You can add a personal touch to your computer by changing the computer's theme, color, sounds, desktop background, screen saver, font size, and user account picture. You can also select specific gadgets for your desktop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Touch</strong></td>
<td>If you've got a touch-screen monitor, you can just touch your computer screen for a more direct and natural way to work. Use your fingers to scroll, resize windows, play media, and pan and zoom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keyboard shortcuts</strong></td>
<td>Keyboard combinations of two or more keys that, when pressed, can be used to perform a task that would typically require a mouse or other pointing device. Keyboard shortcuts can make it easier to interact with your computer, saving you time and effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sticky Keys</td>
<td>Instead of having to press three keys at once (such as when you must press the CTRL, ALT, and DELETE keys simultaneously to log on to Windows), you can press one key at a time when Sticky Keys is turned on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouse Keys</td>
<td>Instead of using the mouse, you can use the arrow keys on the numeric keypad to move the pointer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filter Keys</td>
<td>Ignore keystrokes that occur in rapid succession and keystrokes that are held down for several seconds unintentionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Notifications</td>
<td>Replace system sounds with visual cues, such as a flash on the screen, so system alerts are announced with visual notifications instead of sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captions</td>
<td>Get information via animations and video that some programs use to indicate that activity is happening on your computer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What’s on TTAP for Spring**

April 30-May 3  
YAI Network 33rd Annual International Conference on Developmental and Learning Disabilities

New York, NY  
Contact: Tina Sobel  
(212) 273-6457  
E-mail: tina.sobel@yai.org  
www.yai.org/conference
June 12-14

**Texas Assistive Technology Network Conference**
Houston, TX
Contact: Kirk Behnke
(713) 744-6559
e-mail: kbehnke@esc4.net

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June 28 - July 3

**RESNA Annual Conference**
Baltimore Marriott Waterfront
700 Aliceanna Street
Baltimore, MD
[web.resna.org/conference](http://web.resna.org/conference)

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June 26-29

**23rd Annual APSE National Conference**
Arlington, VA
Contact: Jenny Levet
P.O. Box 1280
Rockville, MD 20849
(301) 279-0060
[www.apse.org](http://www.apse.org)

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**Just for Laughs**

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Texas Center for Disability Studies
Commons Learning Center
10100 Burnet Road
Austin, Texas 78758-4445
http://techaccess.edb.utexas.edu
Any suggestions, comments, or article you would like to have included in our newsletter, please contact us:

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(512) 232-0753/jcmorris1@mail.utexas.edu
(512) 232-0750/dwest@mail.utexas.edu
(512) 232-0772/jayhawker@mail.utexas.edu

**TTAP Demonstration Centers**

- Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living, Bryan
- Paso Del Norte Children’s Development Center, El Paso
- Ability Connection, Dallas
- Goodwill Industries of Fort Worth
- Easter Seals of Greater Houston
- Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living, Corpus Christi
- RISE Center for Independent Living, Beaumont
- East Texas Center for Independent Living, Tyler
- Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, Austin
- Brazoria County Center for Independent Living, Angleton
- Helping Hands, Amarillo
- Not Without Us, Abilene

**Portable Computer Demonstration Centers**

- REACH Center for Independent Living, Plano
- Houston Center for Independent Living, Houston
- Heart of Central Texas Independent Living Center, Belton
- VAIL – Valley Association for Independent Living, McAllen