News from the Loan Program

ECO2 is PRC’s most advanced augmentative and alternative communication device and Windows® XP-based computer in one – fast processing speed and plenty of computing power for greater communication results. “One touch” transition from computing to speech output. A dedicated version of ECO2 without the computer capabilities is also available to meet Medicare/Medicaid funding requirements. With its large 14.1” XGA TFT display, larger keys make access easier for those with visual or motor challenges. ECO2 comes pre-programmed with a full range of Unity®, the innovative language software featured in PRC devices.

For further information please contact: jcmorris1@mail.utexas.edu

Assistive Technology Q&A

Q: What is WordQ?

A: WordQ is word prediction and text-to-speech software by Quillsoft. It can be used along with any standard writing software such as Microsoft Word, WordPad, Notepad, or Outlook. WordQ enables users with learning disabilities or people with special needs to write independently. WordQ suggests words for users to use and provides spoken feedback to help them find mistakes in the written content. WordQ is available from the TTAP Device Loan Program.
Solutions designed to make education accessible can be grouped into two categories: direct access and compatible access.

A directly accessible product allows a person with a disability to operate all on-screen controls and access all content without relying on assistive technology. For example, to be accessible to users with low vision, directly accessible applications, software or Web sites offer features that enlarge all controls and on-screen text. They are also designed using high-contrast colors or provide features that allow users to choose appropriate colors.

To be accessible to users who are blind, a directly accessible product should have a keyboard interface with audio output. Such a keyboard interface can also provide access for users with physical disabilities. Audio output should announce the presence and status of all on-screen controls and convey the atmosphere of the application, software, or Web site. A built-in method of using a single key to scan through choices in the application or software will provide access for users who can only use a single switch as input. Teachers of students who are visually impaired report that their younger students receive only limited training with assistive technology. For this reason, providing direct access in products targeted at elementary and middle-school students is particularly important.

Direct access brings many benefits. The most important is that the user is able to access educational material without special assistive hardware and software. Thus, direct access helps to reduce costs for schools and individuals, and eliminates the technical difficulties associated with using assistive technology. Direct access also gives students with disabilities the option to use any computer, freeing them from dependence on adapted workstations.

Ideally, the directly accessible interface should be designed by the same people who create the application, software or Web site. These are the content experts; when they apply their understanding of educational goals to designing an accessible interface, the resulting educational experience will certainly be superior to the alternative — assistive technology paired with software not designed with users with disabilities in mind.

Alternatively, the compatibly accessible application, software or Web site is an application designed with assistive technology in mind. This level of access assumes that the user has a preferred assistive-technology package installed and is relatively competent and comfortable with it. A compatibly accessible product is designed with "hooks" built into the software that facilitate the use of a screen reader, screen magnifier or alternative input.
devices. These hooks are provided by developers using tools such as Microsoft Active Accessibility (MSAA) and the Java Accessibility API from Sun Microsystems. Exposing the system cursor, using standard controls and fonts, and following the operating system's human interface guidelines can also help make a product or Web site compatibly accessible.

Compatible access offers some advantages. It provides consistency of operation between applications for users who already know how to navigate with their assistive technology or who can become competent doing so. In some cases it may be less expensive to develop applications, software, and Web sites in this way. Relying on assistive technology for text-to-speech capability rather than adding it into the product itself, for instance, can save on disk space for larger applications. In reality, compatibly accessible products may be the only means of access for some users, such as deaf-blind braille users who depend on screen readers to interact with computers. Developers who are designing applications, software and Web sites to be compatible with assistive technology should use proven programming techniques to create software that works consistently well with the range of screen readers, alternative input devices (e.g., switches, on-screen keyboards, voice recognition), and any other input or output device that is not part of a standard computer.

Spotlight on TTAP Demonstration Centers

Houston Center for Independent Living
6201 Bonhomme, Suite 150 South
Houston, Texas 77038

Our Mission Statement

"HCIL promotes the full inclusion, equal opportunity and participation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of community life. We believe that people with disabilities have the right to make choices affecting their lives, a right to take risks, a right to fail, and a right to succeed."

Our Services

- **Information and referral**: staff will help you learn who to call and what to ask
- **Peer Support**: One of our greatest roles is sharing experiences and offering encouragement from someone who has been there. Support from peers can assist you as you explore integration into the community
- **Individual Systems Advocacy**: It is important to know your rights and advocate for them. HCIL, staff will work with you to make sure you have that knowledge. Self-advocacy is the best advocacy of all.
- **Independent Living Skills**: Information from professionals is one thing, but actually applying it to real life is another. HCIL offers information and workshops on topics such as financial and money management skills, personal attendant management,
using public transportation systems, social security do's and don'ts, adaptations to the home, and much more.

- **Coordination of Services:** While HCIL staff maintains an entire data base of resource information to provide consumers the most choices, we are continuously looking for ways to fill the unmet needs that still exist. These are just a few of the resource tools available to HCIL staff:

  - Rehabilitation Act
  - Technical assistance
  - Americans with Disabilities Act
  - Disability culture and awareness

**Tech Corner**

**Dragon Gaming Speech Pack**

Dragon Naturally Speaking now offers a new add-on program for PC gamers. It is compatible with most Windows-based programs.

According to Nuance Communications Inc., “adding voice control to today’s most popular Computer games brings the gaming experience to a new level of intensity. Just bark out intuitive commands like release target, lay down, get out, up the ante, fly backwards – and hundreds more! Used together with the Dragon NaturallySpeaking Home Software, the Dragon Gaming Speech Pack instantly executes your desired action. Now you can focus more on the strategy for your favorite games like Call of Duty or World of Warcraft. You can also chat more naturally with other game players and communicate more efficiently by voice. “

Dragon Gaming Speech Pack retails for $129.99 and is available at:

**What’s on TTAP for Spring**

March 14-19 26th Annual Technology and People with Disabilities Conference (CSUN)
Manchester Grand Hotel
San Diego, California
(v/t) (704) 947-7779

April 3-5 2011 Statewide Independent Living Conference
Sheraton Austin Hotel (Downtown)
701 E. 11th Street
Austin, Texas
conference@txsilc.org

May 4-5 Intersections: Disability, Employment and Benefits Conference
Green Lake, Wisconsin, USA
(608) 246-3444, fax (608) 246-3445
eri@eri-wi.org
www.eri-wi.org/intersections.htm

**Just for Laughs**

This is a cartoon of a man and woman meeting at a business meeting. He introduces himself as bjsmith@admin.gov and she introduces herself as tjones@admin.ac.med

**Information**

*TTAP* values your input. If you have any suggestions, comments, or would like to have an article included in the newsletter, please let us know at:

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