New Accessibility Legislation Introduced:

Contributed by:
Megan O'Neil
Austin Community College

Legislation introduced in November in the U.S. House of Representatives would require colleges either to make instructional technology accessible to disabled students or to provide them with equivalent, alternative resources. Rep. Tom Petri, a Wisconsin Republican and senior member of the House education committee, said his bill would ensure that disabled students were given equal treatment as technology plays a larger and larger role in instruction. The bill is called the Technology, Quality, and Accessibility in College and Higher Education (Teach) Act.

The legislation also calls on the government to develop guidelines for electronic instructional materials used in higher education.

The National Federation of the Blind and the Association of American Publishers released a joint statement calling the legislation long overdue.

“Every day, blind college students face devastating setbacks to their education because of inaccessible technology," Marc Maurer, president of the federation, said
in the statement. “The use of e-readers, Web content, mobile applications, and learning-management systems by educators is more prevalent than ever, and disabled students are being needlessly left behind.”

This entry was posted in Software, Teaching. Bookmark the permalink.


**Latest News from the Device Loan Program:**

Now available from the TTAP Loan Program:

- TextSpeak TS-04 Speech Generating Device
- Forte Student Writing Support Device
- Accent 700 Augmentative Communication Device

For more information, contact:

John Morris  
Assistive Technology Coordinator  
(512) 232-0753  
jcmorris@austin.utexas.edu

**Assistive Technology Q&A:**

Q: What accessibility features are on the Surface 2 tablets?

A: The same basics as Windows: Narrator, Magnifier, On-Screen Keyboard, High contrast, Sticky Keys and Filter keys.

**Coming in June:**

Hearing Loss Association of America National Convention will be held in June 2014 in Austin, Texas. Early bird registration deadline is January 31, 2014.

nmacklin@hearingloss.org or (301) 657.2248, Ext. 106.

**Tech Corner: New Wii U**

Author: William Usher, *Gaming Blend*

Reviews for the new generation home entertainment consoles are rolling in from all over the Web. One series of reviews unfolding for Microsoft, Sony, and Nintendo’s latest consoles comes from the DAGER System (DAGERS is an acronym for
Defense, Aerospace and Ground industries with a primary focus on Engineering, Research and Development, and Robotic Integration Systems), a website dedicated to disabled gamers and video game accessibility. Interestingly enough, the Wii U ranked quite high in their review of the system.

Casting aside petty fanboyism and brand allegiance, the review of the Wii U is cut and dried and shows Nintendo is still the king of the home console arena. No arguments, that's just the way it is. You have to take it and deal with it. There's no debating it. It's just the truth. It's undeniable fact... it really is, because the Wii U has sold more units than the Xbox One and PS4.

Anyway, DAGER's review is straight to the point and highlights some of the promising features of the Wii U, such as its ability to complement those with hearing disabilities by having audio options available from the TV and from the Wii U's GamePad.

Author Josh Straub also highlights the GamePad's functionality... being able to easily and conveniently make use of the analog sticks and buttons without any sort of impediments or complications. The setup of the controller allows for those – even with motor skill disabilities – to access the controller, operate menus, and play games with very little encumbrance.

Nintendo is also given props for including both audio and visual cues, so those who can't hear at least get prompts via pop-up menus and bubbles. It's an interesting thing that Nintendo would be so forward and broad thinking in both the hardware and software compatibility design of the Wii U to afford for such features.

Straub – highly impressed with the system's capabilities and functionality – concludes that...

"On the whole, the Wii U is very impressive from the standpoint of accessibility. However, the real test for game accessibility will be how developers choose to implement its various features."

I'm more curious how both the Xbox One and PlayStation 4 will fare in their reviews on DAGER System. I can easily imagine the voice features of the Xbox One coming up short, where-as the PS4's controller might seem like it could be a bit of a stumbling block on the road to easy accessibility. However, we won't know for sure until the reviews go up for the other two consoles.

In the end, if you or someone in your household suffers a debilitating state, but they enjoy gaming nonetheless, you at least have the Wii U as a very viable option to offer you and your household a great gaming alternative, without any worries about getting banned on Skype or worrying about jet fans of doom ruining all the fun of your game time.

You can learn more about the DAGER System review of Nintendo's Wii U by paying a visit to the review page.
**Coming in June:**

Hearing Loss Association of America National Convention will be held in June 2014 in Austin, Texas. Early bird registration deadline is January 31, 2014.

nmacklin@hearingloss.org  (301) 657.2248, Ext. 106.

**Spotlight on Demonstration Centers:**

**Disability in Action, Abilene**

"Building stronger communities through the full inclusion of people with disabilities"

Our agency is part of the American's with Disabilities Act: that there be Centers of Resource all over the U.S. to encourage, assist and empower people with Disabilities.

**Our Services**
Disability in Action provides services in Taylor, Stephens, Jones, Shackelford, Eastland and Callahan Counties. Relocation Services are provided in the Texas Panhandle, South Plains and West Central Texas areas.

**Information and Referral**
Disability in Action Information and Referral (I&R) Services strive to provide consumers and their families with timely, comprehensive information on community resources that will assist them in meeting their independent living goals. The Center provides up-to-date information on services and supports such as adaptive equipment, transportation, accessible housing, and food vouchers. I&R Services are also provided to other agencies and the community at large. This assistance is instrumental in increasing public awareness of disability issues and knowledge of the service options available to people with disabilities from both the Center and the community.

**Advocacy**
Disability in Action provides advocacy by helping individuals with disabilities to navigate an often complex service delivery system of regulations that may impede access to benefits for which one may be eligible. During this process, consumers are encouraged to become their own best advocates by exercising their civil rights against unfair and discriminatory practices. The Center also engages in systems advocacy, which entails educating policy makers and the broader community about the impact that existing policies and proposed legislation may have on the disability community.
Peer Support
Whether one has a newly acquired injury or just dealing with life’s many issues, the Disability in Action Center can provide peer support for individuals and groups wishing to better understand living life with a disability. Disability in Action provides several forums in which consumers can forge new friendships, share experiences and find solutions to common issues. Because Center staff consists primarily of individuals with disabilities themselves, they are in a unique position to serve as peer mentors to consumers seeking a life of independence.

Independent Living Skills Training
A key element of Disability in Action services is Independent Living Skills (ILS) training. The Center provides one-on-one training to assist people with disabilities in acquiring the skills they need in order to live independently. This may include cooking skills, health maintenance, money management, and transportation. The ILS training can be provided in a classroom setting, thereby encouraging peer support. For those who prefer more private or discreet ILS assistance, one-on-one training can be provided in the Center or at the consumer’s home.

Specialized Services
Job Readiness Training
Disability in Action is a firm proponent of employment for people with disabilities. The Agency encourages employment by providing:

- Information regarding work incentives
- Computer classes
- Interviewing skills training
- Resume preparation
- Job seeking skills
- Workplace accommodations

Home By Choice Nursing Home Relocation Services
It is the Center's contention that every Texan, regardless of age or disability, deserves the opportunity to live a life of full inclusion. Through a partnership with the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS), this program has changed the lives of many individuals by transitioning them from long-term care facilities into a community-based setting of their own choosing. Disability in Action helps to facilitate this process by acting as the liaison between the individual and the various agencies and services necessary for a successful relocation. Home By Choice can assist with locating housing, transportation options, and grants to pay moving expenses, deposits, household items, and other related costs.
**Payee Services**
Sometimes, a person’s ability to maintain independence in the community is threatened by their inability to manage their Social Security benefits. Poor choices are made, bills go unpaid, or the person may be preyed upon by family or acquaintances who misuse the funds. For these reasons, the Social Security Administration may require individuals to have a “payee” to manage their benefits. Our parent agency, LIFE/RUN, is an approved Representative Payee of Social Security benefits and, as such, is responsible for receiving and disbursing these funds to ensure that each consumer is able to maintain necessities such as housing, utilities, food, and access to funds for personal needs.

**Social & Recreational**
Socialization, which occurs through recreational programs, offers opportunities for consumers to meet new people, develop interpersonal skills, gain self-confidence and, most of all, have fun. Providing safe, accessible activities, (i.e., crafts, cultural diversity celebrations, bowling, etc.), helps to avoid isolation, depression, and encourages inclusion in the community.

**Braille Services**
Disability in Action provides accurate Braille documents to ensure that individuals who are blind or have low-vision have equal access to printed materials of local businesses, events, and training seminars in the community.

3305 N 3rd St. Suite 320
Abilene, Texas 79603

(325) 672-5460

Leah.beltran@notwithoutus.org

http://www.notwithoutus.org
What’s on TTAP for Winter:

December 3
International Persons with Disabilities Day

January 25-February 1
**Breaking Barriers Resource Fair and Conference**

**ATIA 2014 Orlando**
Orlando, Florida, USA
Contact: Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA)
330 North Wabash Avenue
20th Floor
Chicago, IL 60611-4267 USA
Tel: 877-687-2842 (Toll Free) or 312-321-5172
FAX: 312-673-6659
Email ATIA 2014 Orlando

June 26-29
Hearing Loss Association of America National Convention
Austin, Texas

**Just for Laughs:**

(picture: “accessible” wheelchair ramp leading down to a huge post in the middle of the ramp and a set of steps beyond, with no outlet.

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

(512) 232-0751/rogerlevy@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 232-0753/jcmorris@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 232-0750/dwest@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 232-0772/srthomas@austin.utexas.edu

Texas Technology Access Program
The University of Texas at Austin
Texas Center for Disability Studies
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