From the Director’s Desk

By Roger Levy

Eleven years ago, while working on the Twenty-fourth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, I wrote the following: "A prevalent misconception is that only certain types of people can benefit from assistive technology (AT). Historically, modifications focused on accommodations for those with mobility, hearing, and visual impairments..."

In retrospect, we have seen some expansion of AT for individuals with what may be referred to as having hidden disabilities. This population received little benefit from AT in the early years. In this decade, we have seen AT for people with learning impairments, cognitive aids beyond medication reminders, orientation, and process reminding aids. We hope, as your AT Act Program, we are meeting everyone’s needs. As the Director of your Program, I welcome feedback on how we can improve and expand our services to be of more assistance. Our goal is to be of assistance to all persons with disabilities in our state when it comes to access or acquisition of AT. So, regardless of your age, where you live in our state, or what limitations you might have; if you have comments or suggestions on our services, contact me.

For further information, please contact TTAP at (512) 232-0751 or e-mail rogerlevy@mail.utexas.edu.

Happy 4th of July

Just for Laughs

Overheard in a computer shop...

Customer: "I'd like a mouse mat, please."
Salesperson: "Certainly sir, we've got a large variety."
Customer: "But will they be compatible with my computer?"

News from the Device Loan Library by John Morris, TTAP AT Coordinator

The following items are new to the Device Lending Library:
- iPod touch AC device
- Dynavox M3, Vantage light
- UB Duo, Reading Pen
- ChatBox and the ChatBox40

To try out these new devices, visit our Web site and complete a loan request application.

For further information, please contact the Device Loan Program at (512) 232-0753 or e-mail at jcmmorris1@mail.utexas.edu

Assistive Technology Q&A

Q. What is the latest version of the Window Eyes screen reading program?

A. Straight from "The Ranger Station," word is that Window Eyes 7.1 is now out of Beta testing and ready for shipping. Window-Eyes 7.1 is packed with features, including support for Windows 7, support for 64-bit versions of Windows Vista, Windows Server 2008, and Windows 7, enhanced Braille functionality, new scripting features for end users and script authors, and more.

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Some of the most difficult disabilities to accommodate are hidden disabilities. These hidden disabilities can include autism, asthma, cardiovascular conditions, acquired brain injury, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), sleep disorders, schizophrenia, and many others. Although these disabilities may be overlooked by the casual observer, they can cause major deficits in some, or all, aspects of an individual’s independence and ability to work.

Some of the more common disabilities and assistive strategies were addressed by Tony Gentry, PhD OTR/L, from Virginia Commonwealth University in a recent presentation of the subject. Dr. Gentry offers insights on some of the common limitations these hidden disabilities cause and suggestions for accommodations. Common limitations and accommodations include:

- **Functional Cognition Deficits**
  - Possible accommodations include:
    - Removing clutter and simplifying environment
    - Teach pacing, doing one thing at a time
    - Work environment in a quiet setting if possible
    - Utilize low-tech and high-tech memory/organization aids
    - Teach relaxation skills

- **Decreased Stamina/Chronic Fatigue**
  - Possible accommodations include:
    - Flexible schedule with regular down-times
    - Scheduling a daily nap, if possible
    - Use cooling jacket, if fatigue is related to overheating
    - Work and shop from home (using internet) when possible
    - Delegate responsibilities when possible
    - Keep fatigue diary to better time tasks
    - Consider sleep clinic assessment

- **Emotional Stress**
  - Possible accommodations include:
    - Relaxation and movement therapy
    - Conflict resolution training
    - Behavioral management training
    - Collaborate with co-workers on task delegation
    - Utilize Positive Behavioral Support strategies

- **Reading/Writing/Speaking**
  - Possible accommodations include:
    - Use accommodations software on PC or Mac
    - Text-to-Speech or Speech-to-Text software
    - Identify strengths and work to enhance them
    - Allow extra time for completing tasks
    - Ask a co-worker to proofread written materials

- **Sensory Defensiveness/Sensitivity**
  - Possible accommodations include:
    - Use of Assistive Technology to compensate for problem (glare)

Case study reports may be viewed at: [http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/pda](http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/pda)