

Special Needs Tech News

A newsletter celebrating enabling technology, the people who use it, and the developers that make it possible.

EDITOR'S CORNER

December is such a busy time of year around my house. Everyone is excited about the start of winter and all the holiday related activities that can make this month a test of one's stamina.

I'm also starting to review this year's nominated special needs products for the Software and Information Industry Association's (SIIA) annual Codie Awards. With just five special needs products nominated in this category for the 2005 award, it's a far more relaxing exercise to review the entries this year than it was last year. Look for information about these five products in the March 2005 newsletter.

Enjoy this holiday season!

Please feel free to make complete copies of this publication to share with others.

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ASSISTIVE TECH EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING

SPECIAL NEEDS
TECHNOLOGY
INFORMATION,
ASSESSMENT, TRAINING
AND WRITING SERVICES

Join the ATCanada Listserv

The ATCanada Listserv was initiated on Dec. 30, 2001. Educators and others can join this free discussion group to learn and exchange information on assistive technology issues. Join at:
<http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/ATCanada> or
<http://ca.geocities.com/janethopkinsbc/>

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Mouse Tracks

Last snowboarding season, I noticed a lot more adapted sports participants on my weekly trips to Sun Peaks Resort

(<http://www.sunpeaksresort.com>).

To give this newsletter a bit of seasonal flavour, I thought it would be interesting to put together a list of adapted ski/snowboarding programs and equipment sites:

Adaptive Winter Sports and Recreation Equipment (ABLEDATA)

http://www.abledata.com/Site_2/winter.htm

Adaptive Winter Sports (Infinitec.org)

<http://www.infinitec.org/play/sports/wintersports.htm>

Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing

<http://www.disabledskiing.ca/>

Directory of Adaptive Ski Programs 2004-2005

http://www.amputee-coalition.org/inmotion/sep_oct_04/skischedule.html

Or

http://www.amputee-coalition.org/inmotion/sep_oct_04/skischedule.pdf

A Few Links About the importance of Helmets

<http://www.safety-council.org/info/sport/snowboard.html>

<http://www.injuryresearch.bc.ca/Publications/Fact%20Sheets/Snowboard%20fact%20sheet.pdf>

<http://safeusa.org/slopes.htm>

Mozilla Accessibility Update

More computer users are looking for alternatives to the frustrations often experienced with the Internet Explorer browser.

Pop ups, adware, and malware are creating an accessibility problem for all Web users. Pop ups interfere with productivity and are generally annoying to deal with.

Pop up blocking products are becoming popular and many people are installing solutions to rid their systems of the dreaded ads.

A growing number of Web surfers are turning to alternative browsers. Mozilla and versions of Mozilla such as the popular Firefox (www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/) and the innovative ManyOne (www.manyone.net)

browsers are helping users to escape Internet Explorer pop up problems.

Accessibility support for Mozilla is expanding as the browser's popularity grows. A couple of low vision/blindness software companies such as Ai

Squared and G W Micro are making moves to have their products support Mozilla users.

For more information on what's happening with Mozilla accessibility, visit the Mozilla accessibility features page on the Mozilla Web site at

<http://www.mozilla.org/access/features>

Product Announcements

Laird Creates Video Production System for People with Disabilities; New Wheelchair Video Camera Mount Delivers Creative Accessibility

MOUNT MARION, N.Y., Oct. 18 /PRNewswire/ -- Laird announced today the launch of a new system for mounting a video camera on a wheelchair. This system, named VGO, gives a wheelchair user full control over their video camera. This new wheelchair video system helps broadcasters, educators, AV and media departments meet ADA and Section 508 compliance in a new creative way.

"Up until now, the use of a video camera for someone in a wheelchair has been difficult if not impossible," said Chase Pierson from DCTV. "Laird has tackled and solved this problem by working with its engineering team, consultants, and from the personal experiences of our own

employees who use assistive devices to access technology," said Laird Director of Operations Paku Misra.

The broadcast video wheelchair system comes equipped with a steel swing-out arm and a camera tripod head mounted on it for safe and steady camera movement. The arm can easily swing out of the way when the user needs to enter or exit their wheelchair. The entire system can be removed simply from the wheelchair by releasing the two locking knobs.

VGO is available with two choices of tripod heads: Either a normal hand- operated version or an electronic head that adds automatic controls of camera start, stop, record, lens focus and zoom as well as full pan and tilt capability. All of these features are controlled from a cabled handheld remote.

There is an optional 5.6-inch color LCD monitor system and clamp available so users can view exactly what the camera is recording without having to be near the camera.

The VGO wheelchair system brings creative accessibility to people with disabilities for shooting broadcast, wedding, and training videos as well as other multimedia productions.

Laird Telemedia products, including the VGO Wheelchair Video System, are available from a worldwide network of professional dealers. For images and more information

about VGO, log on to <http://www.lairdtelemedia.com/>

Pulse Data Debuts myReader(TM), a Revolutionary Reading Device for People With Age-Related Macular Degeneration and Other Degenerative Eye Diseases

CONCORD, Calif., Nov. 16 /PRNewswire/ -- Pulse Data HumanWare today announced the introduction of a new low vision auto-reading device called, myReader(TM) (www.myreader.com). The first significant breakthrough in adaptive reading technology in over 30 years since the Rand Corporation demonstrated its video magnifier prototype in 1968, myReader is a compact, transportable device that turns the difficult and frustrating task of reading into an easy and enjoyable one for millions of people with impaired vision.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20041116/SFTU015>)

People are considered vision impaired if eyeglasses or contact lenses fail to provide enough visual aid to enable them to read normal sized print. Visual impairment currently affects over 20 million people in the United States and the numbers are expected to surge as the population ages, according to a recent study published in the Archives of Ophthalmology [(April 2004)]. The study also reports that the leading cause of vision loss for people over 50 is age-related

macular degeneration (AMD). Other causes of low vision include diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and cataracts.

"The biggest challenge people with ocular disease face is not simply the loss of their vision but the potential loss of their independence," says optometrist and low vision specialist Dr. Louis Lipschultz. "People don't realize how important reading is to being able to perform and enjoy the everyday routines of life, from reading a label to reading their favorite novel. Adaptive reading technology like myReader can make an enormous difference."

Web site: <http://www.pulsedata.com/>

Premier Assistive Technology announces sale of its products through Amazon.com

Premier Assistive Technology Inc. is teaming up with Amazon.com to bring Assistive Technology to the masses. It just makes sense to sell Assistive reading technology with the world's largest online retailer. Starting September 15, 2004, Premier will be offering 9 different software titles through Amazon.com.

(PRWEB) September 17, 2004 -- Premier Assistive Technology Inc. is teaming up with Amazon.com to bring Assistive Technology to the masses. It just makes sense to sell Assistive reading technology with the world's largest online retailer. Starting September 15, 2004, Premier

will be offering 9 different software titles through Amazon.com. Our affordable approach to Assistive software allows us to sell our products through an online venue, unlike many of our competitors.

Research has shown that majority of Assistive Technology is found by family members of those who need it. We are now making it easier than ever before to find Assistive Technology by putting our products where millions of people shop everyday. In our own experience, we have found what many refer to as "one degree of separation" between those who don't need Assistive technology and those who do. In everyday terms, that means almost everyone knows someone else who needs Assistive Technology....a sibling, parent, grandparent, friend, neighbor, etc.

One doesn't have to look very far to see other obvious examples of how assistive technology that was originally targeted to those with special needs ultimately benefits a much larger audience. For example, the curb cuts in sidewalks and handicapped ramps for buildings were designed to help those in wheelchairs, yet many people who aren't in wheelchairs find themselves benefiting from them. Have you ever had your hands full trying to enter a building and realized that the automatic doors were a real blessing? We feel that our Assistive technology has the same potential to benefit so many people who might

otherwise not get the help they need in their everyday life. Why limit Assistive technology to a select few, when it can be affordable to everyone?

The following Premier Assistive Products will be available for direct sale through Amazon.com:

Universal Reader
Universal Reader PLUS
Scan and Read Pro
Ultimate Talking Dictionary
PDF Magic Pro
Text to Audio
Talking Word Processor
Talking Checkbook
Premier CD / DVD Creator

Grants and Freebies

Oracle's Think.com free email, Web sites, and more for schools is now available to education systems in Canada and a number of other countries. Learn more at http://www.think.com/en_ca/

Premier Assistive Technology, Inc. Grant Program

<http://www.premier-programming.com/grant/grantform.htm>

Inspiration Software Inspired Teacher Scholarships

Inspiration has two scholarships available for 2005. The application deadline is Jan. 27, 2005. Find out more at <http://www.inspiration.com/prodev/index.cfm?fuseaction=scholarship>

Special Education News Competitions and funding Opportunities

Check out the links on this page to learn which programs offer funding in your jurisdiction.

<http://www.specialednews.com/funding.html>

National Center for Technology Innovation

There's a lot of good information on this site. One of the most useful resources is NCTI's Reading Matrix. It currently provides comparative information on sixteen different computer-based literacy products. Scan through the navigation arrows to view all product details.

<http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/matrix/>

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Assistive Technology: An Introductory Guide for K-12 Library Media Specialists (ISBN: 1-58683-138-0), written by Janet Hopkins, is now available through Linworth Publishing, Inc. <<http://www.linworth.com>>

This unique book offers valuable information on accessibility and assistive technologies for educators including K-12, public and postsecondary librarians. The content covers: Inclusion and accessibility topics; School reform, legislation, and funding; Operating system and browser accessibility; Add-on assistive technology hardware and software for special needs; Open Source and proprietary software; Captioning technologies; Portable and assistive devices; Internet resources, conferences, and professional development. Expert contributors from the United States and Australia are featured in sidebar and chapter content throughout the book.

As inclusive education partners, librarians are in a strong position to assist information users with special needs. Until now, it has been difficult to find a library-focused resource on enabling technologies, strategies, and products to enhance library accessibility and services for clients with special needs.

Assistive Technology: An Introductory Guide for K-12 Library Media Specialists is a well-organized, fifteen chapter book that introduces assistive technology information to educators unfamiliar with this emerging field and its important applications in libraries and education.

Buy the book online

Amazon.com

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1586831380/assistivete0c-20>

Amazon.ca (Canadian site)

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