Special Needs Tech
News

EDITOR'S CORNER

Accessibility matters, especially when it comes to the Internet and development of online education resources. Web-based distance learning alternatives are popping up in K-12, postsecondary, professional and employer education programs.

Electronic content can be a real benefit for individuals with disabilities as long as care is taken to present information in an accessible format. This issue of Special Needs Tech News deals with accessible electronic design and offers a tour of resources on this topic for content developers and Web designers. This is an important issue for educators. However, aging population trends give it even broader significance, as more seniors with special needs join the "silver surfer" wave.

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

Send feedback to:

Janet Hopkins, ATP

at_consulting@canada.com

or

at_consultingbc@yahoo.ca

Phone (250) 828-1444

Fax (250) 828-1452

Mail: 2265 MacIntyre Place

Kamloops, BC V1S 1H7

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/**

INSIDE

Mouse Tracks

Publishing Accessible Materials on the Web and CD-ROM

http://www.dssc.org/frc/pubs/ Access.pdf

This resource is a very helpful seven page document prepared by Brenda Raymond. It reviews the advantages of Web and CD-ROM technology and gives pointers on organization and format issues.

Access E-Learning

http://www.accesselearning.net

Want to learn about developing accessible online learning opportunities? Take a free course. Access E-Learning (AEL) is a ten-module tutorial that is a resource for those learning to make online education accessible for individuals with disabilities.

This is part of the Georgia Tech Research on Accessible Distance Education (GRADE) Project <http://www.catea.org/grade/>

access.adobe.com

http://access.adobe.com

If you want to learn about making accessible portable document format (PDF) documents, visit this link. There are new accessibility features available with the Adobe Acrobat 6.0 family.

Disability Access to Virtual Learning Environments

http://www.techdis.ac.uk /resources/stiles01.html

This online resource is a study done by Staffordshire University to identify problems encountered by disabled students using Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and to identify solutions where possible.

The interesting student profiles review the access difficulties experienced by students with various disabilities.

Dyslexia, technology & e-learning

http://www.techdis.ac.uk/re sources/dysandtech.html

Get helpful information about the access challenges and technology solutions that apply to students with dyslexia and e-learning. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the product hyperlinks in this online document were not linked to the product pages.

A-Prompt Project

http://aprompt.snow.utoronto.ca

A-Prompt is free downloadable software developed and made available by the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre at the University of Toronto.

A-Prompt evaluates Web pages for accessibility. It helps Web authors fix and design pages to be more accessible to computer users with disabilities and who use assistive technologies.

ATutor

http://www.atutor.ca

ATutor is an Open Source Web-based learning content management system. It has been specifically designed to allow access to learning content by anyone with a disability who uses assistive technology.

The use of ATutor as an online learning system provides an adaptive learning environment for all students.

Best of all, ATutor is available for free allowing large and small organizations to deliver accessible online learning opportunities. Download ATutor at http://www.atutor.ca/atutor/do wnload.php

To access the ATutor demos, go to http://www.atutor.ca/atutor/de mo.php

The Web: Access and Inclusion for Disabled People

http://www.drc-gb.org/publicationsandreports/2.pdf

This 2004 report is produced by the Disability Rights Commission in the UK. The report outlines the findings from Web site accessibility

investigations and provides recommendations to improve the state of Web accessibility for people who have disabilities.

Accessibility for the Aging Workforce

Demographic shifts underway worldwide are creating an aging population. Baby boomers are reaching retirement and fewer Gen Xers are available to fill the employment gaps. Governments are now exploring ways of keeping more seniors active in the workforce.

Growing workplace reliance on technology will create an interesting combination of technological change and aging employees in the years ahead.

This is an emerging issue that is already being studied by governments and industry.

Microsoft has launched new online resources:

- Overview of Aging and Accessible Technology http://www.microsoft.com/enable/aging/default.aspx
- Aging Workforce and Accessible Technology http://www.microsoft.com/enable/aging/workforce.aspx

2004 CODIE Awards

Congratulations to all the winners of this year's Software and Information Industry Association's CODIE Awards!

The Education Industry Category Winners are:

Best Educational Special Needs Solution

Kurzweil 3000, Kurzweil Educational Systems

Best Elementary Education Instructional Solution

Kinetic City: Mission to Vearth, American Association for the Advancement of Science

Best Secondary Education Instructional Solution

Blackboard Learning System, Blackboard Inc.

Best Postsecondary Education Instructional Solution

ALEKS, ALEKS Corporation / McGraw-Hill Higher Education

Best Education Administration Solution

e*Assessment, Harcourt Achieve / Wireless Generation

Best Educational Total Comprehensive Solution

Blackboard Learning System, Blackboard Inc.

Best Education Technology Solution for Home/Consumer

Hotmath.com, Hotmath, Inc.

Best Lifelong Learning Product or Service

Starry Night Enthusiast, Space Holding Corp.

Best New Education Solution

Sanako Lounge, Sanako Corporation

To see all of this year's winners in all categories, go to http://www.siia.net/codies/2004/winners.asp

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Contact Information:
Janet Hopkins
Assistive Tech Educational Consulting, 2265 MacIntyre Pl., Kamloops, BC V1S 1H7
AT_Consulting@Canada.com

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"New Assistive Technology Book Published for Librarians and Educators"

KAMLOOPS, BC – A new book, *Assistive Technology: An Introductory Guide for K-12 Library Media Specialists* (ISBN: 1-58683-138-0), written by Janet Hopkins, a Kamloops, BC-based writer, educator, and assistive technology practitioner, has been published by Linworth Publishing, Inc. <http://www.linworth.com> of Worthington, Ohio.

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.

Janet Hopkins is a British Columbia certified secondary school teacher and a RESNA* certified assistive technology practitioner. Assistive Tech Educational Consulting publishes "Special Needs Tech News," a free quarterly e-newsletter. Hopkins has authored book, article, and online projects for education, health, and technology publishers in Canada and the United States.
(*Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America <http://www.resna.org>)

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