

# PRODUCER FEATURE

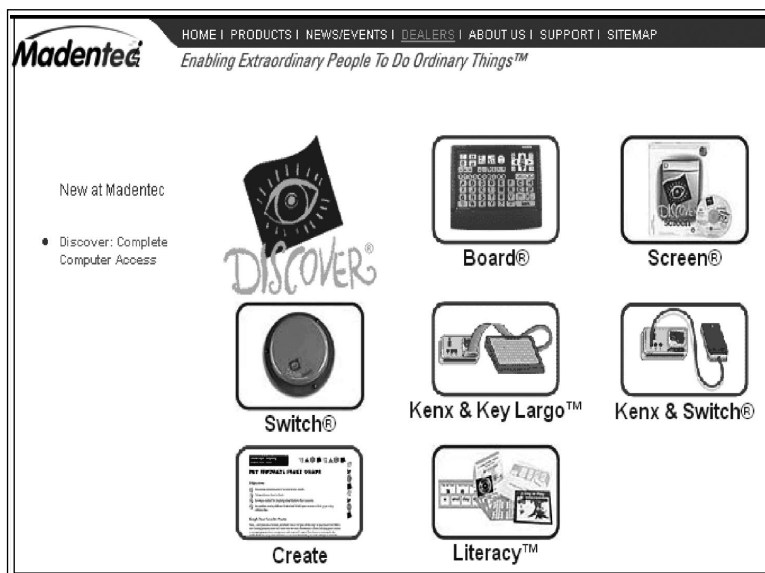
## Madentec new home for Discover

By Janet Hopkins

We're used to hearing about assistive technology (AT) product innovation, which usually focuses our attention on new technology features, upgrades and applications. Sometimes we're less aware of the cooperation that takes place between companies that can lead to other benefits for technology consumers.

In March, Madentec Ltd., an Edmonton, Alberta based company, announced along with Don Johnston Inc. (DJI) of Volo, Illinois that they had been working together to arrange an adoption of sorts.

Madentec, known for its own line of hardware and software accessibility products, has become the new home for Don Johnston's Discover product line. Both Madentec Ltd. and Don Johnston Inc. are confident that this arrangement will help both companies to collaboratively focus on their complementary areas of AT expertise. Madentec's goal is to provide the best technology access solutions in the world for people with physical disabilities. Don Johnston is passionate about developing products that provide literacy solutions. The specialization that both of these companies contribute to this new arrangement will provide ongoing opportunities for accessibility and learning product development.



Madentec

Don Johnston developed and nurtured the Discover product line, which includes a number of different products. Discover: Kenx, Discover: Screen, Discover: Board, Discover: Switch and Discover: Key Largo will now be sold, supported and further developed by Madentec.

Angie LeBoida, Don Johnston's Director of Marketing, shared information on the background of the Discover products and the reasons for transferring them to Madentec.

Q: In what year were Discover product(s) first released by Don Johnston Inc.?

A: "Discover was released in 1990 on the Macintosh platform. It was released as a product called Ke:nx."

Q: Were they always a Don Johnston product, or did they have another origin?

A: "Discover and Ke:nx has always been a Don Johnston, Inc. product. However, Discover's origin comes from the Adaptive Firmware Card. As we produced the Discover product, we worked closely with the authors of the Adaptive Firmware Card" (Adaptive Peripherals).

Q: What were the key reasons for going with Madentec?

A: "Customer Focus - They are the most customer focused organi-

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zation. They have passion for making access to the computer more efficient and more effective. They have some great ideas for innovation.

Technical Expertise - We also felt that they were the most technically capable company. Since they have done a lot of work in this area, they have a great amount of technical expertise and experience."

Q: Will Don Johnston, Inc. have any influence over the future development of Discover? How do the two companies plan to collaborate on development?

A: "It is in both companies best interest for Madentec to be successful with Discover. Don Johnston Inc. still has a lot of passion for this product. We want to see it taken care of and moved into the future. We are openly sharing our ideas with Madentec. Madentec works with our ideas as well as customers ideas to make decisions about the future of Discover."

Q: Why will this arrangement matter to consumers?

A: "For the actual consumers of Discover, we feel that there will be more innovation than has been experienced in the past 2-3 years. Madentec will be able to take Discover to the next level. Madentec is committed to being the premiere supplier of computer access solutions for people with physical disabilities. The addition of the Discover product line to our existing 2000 Series products takes them a long way to meeting that goal.

Don Johnston Incorporated continues to research, develop and provide breakthrough solutions to enable teachers to help all their students learn to read and write. For students with physical disabilities, learning to read and write is especially challenging. Providing these literacy solutions is more than a mission, it is our passion."

Q: What was Don Johnston Inc.'s motivation for doing this? What advantages do both companies expect to gain from this?

A: "Don Johnston's motivation is always based on what will best meet customers' needs. Knowing that Madentec will utilize their technical expertise to provide innovation to Discover will best meet customers' needs. Allowing Don Johnston to focus on reading and writing solutions for students with disabilities will give teachers and students the solutions they need to be successful. The advantage for both companies

is being able to focus and provide the best possible solutions to our customers."

Q: How will schools, educators and product users be better served through this process?

A: "They will be better served since they now have two companies working hard to provide the best possible solutions for access and literacy. Both companies are committed to the success of our customers and providing products and services to help them reach their goals is a mission that both companies share."

Q: What's next for Madentec and Discover?

A: Madentec is now focused on moving the Discover product line to its next stage of development. Randy Marsden, Madentec CEO, explained the approach Madentec plans to take in his responses to April 22nd interview questions.

Q: What plans does the Madentec team have for Discover?

A: "The duty of product development falls squarely on the shoulders of Madentec. It's difficult for me to really say what our plans for the product line are at this point, since I don't want to limit our thinking to a certain path. We are in learn mode, and will gather feedback from the market and then set our design specifications from there. But we're pretty good at being innovative at Madentec, and I can promise that whatever we make will be exciting, will have a touch of revolution in it, will be what the market is asking for, and ultimately will be very beneficial to people with disabilities."

Q: How will Madentec solicit input from Don Johnston Inc., educators and Discover users for future innovation of Discover products?

A: "We are planning a Madentec access event in June where we are bringing together many of the industry leaders and Discover experts to really listen to what they have to say. We will take that feedback and incorporate it into our plans for future releases of Discover.

We're also creating an electronic questionnaire that anyone wanting to provide feedback about Discover can fill out. We're really an open book at this point and are willing to take in all relevant feedback. We will be in learn mode until mid-summer, at which point we'll switch into high gear in design mode. We have a very talented team of engineers who are chomping at the bit

to get going on improvements to Discover. They're just waiting for the specification that the market is going to provide us."

Q: How will the teamwork of Madentec and Don Johnston better serve the needs of assistive technology consumers?

A: "The teamwork seems to be working between the two companies. Our Discover Product Manager is leaving tomorrow for his third visit to DJI's office. We have hosted several DJI people at our office in Edmonton as well. We're sharing and learning from each other, particularly in the areas of product support. The focus is on the customer, and how we can make this transition a win for them.

DJI is now completely focused on learning intervention and really helping students with disabilities in the classroom. Madentec is focused on providing those same students with the best possible access to the computer. That way, the same student has both companies working for them in a focused way."

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