

Special Needs Tech News

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

EDITOR'S CORNER

At the start of this new school year, it seems appropriate to highlight some new technologies available to support special needs. This issue will report on selected products that were showcased in June and July at NECC 2003 as well as news from the open source community. I was impressed with so many things during my first visit to NECC. Firstly, the organizers of this conference know how to treat journalists. We had great media facilities and well-organized access to information. Secondly, the range of educational presentations and exhibits was incredible. You'd have to be 8 or 10 different people to see it all at NECC. NECC 2004 will be held in New Orleans. Don't know if I'll be able to get there, but I'll sure try! The 2002-2003 season gave me the opportunity to get involved with some interesting assistive technology writing projects including work for the National School Boards Association, Linworth Publishing, ComputerEdge, and a number of other magazines. I've recently become co-maintainer of the Linux Accessibility Resource Site, hosted by the Trace Research & Development Center, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (<http://trace.wisc.edu/linux>). Please visit this site when you have time!

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
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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

Finding and Building Special Needs Communities

Do you want to find others who share your interest in special needs issues or technology on-line or in your own community? Here are a few sites that provide opportunities to connect:

Meetup

<http://www.meetup.com>

Meetup is a site to help you find or organize local interest groups. This resource is most helpful to people living in or near major cities. The interest groups range from politics to art, but there's certainly the potential to form or find a group in your city devoted to special needs issues.

SmartGroups

<http://www.smartgroups.com>

SmartGroups is a free service for group communication. This site can assist clubs, societies, organizations, or individuals with their communication needs.

Yahoo! Groups

<http://groups.yahoo.com>

<http://ca.groups.yahoo.com>

Yahoo! Groups is a popular free service with an impressive selection of existing on-line discussion groups. You'll find a number of established special needs topics, including the ATCanada Listserv at <http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/ATCanada>

MSN Groups

<http://groups.msn.com>

Another popular place to find or start a discussion group. You'll discover plenty of existing groups related to special needs issues at MSN Groups.

Grants to Get New Projects Off the Ground

Have you got big ideas for purchasing special equipment or launching projects/programs for special needs, but don't have the funds to get where you want to go? These funding resources may help your organization to reach its goals.

Home Depot Foundation

www.homedepotfoundation.org

The Home Depot Foundation supports non-profit organizations in the United States and Canada. One of their four areas of focus is assistance for at-risk youth. Check their site for eligibility criteria.

Fundsnet Services

www.fundsnet.com

You can spend a little time or a lot of time sifting through all the grant information available through Fundsnet Services. It's one of the best resources for global grant seeking.

TechGrants

www.imakenews.com/techfoundation

Subscribe to the TechGrants newsletter to learn about foundations and other opportunities to support your programs and technology needs.

What's Out There?

Special Needs Tech at NECC 2003

I couldn't get around to seeing every display product or session at the National Educational Computing Conference (NECC) for special needs. But, here's a run down on a sample of products that were announced or displayed at the conference in Seattle in June.

S-BIP Online

Curriculum Associates, Inc.

Curriculum Associates, a leading publisher of educational materials in print, video and multimedia, addresses the problem of organizing and tracking behavior incidents with a new Web-based version of its Student Behavior Intervention Planner (S-BIP®) program. S-BIP Online is a subscription-based behavior management system that enables users to track and analyze student behavior to meet the US government's IDEA-mandated Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) development.

For a free demonstration, log on at <http://www.curriculumassociates.com/sbip> For more information and subscription rates, call 1-800-225-0248.

Look, Listen, and Speak Evan-Moor Educational Publishers

Evan-Moor Educational Publishers announced the release of a new five-book

series called Look, Listen, and Speak. Each book in the series includes an interactive CD-ROM, a full-color print poster and 48 four-color picture cards for games and language development activities along with an 80-page reproducible book that models strategies for introducing concepts and vocabulary through student activities and games. Look, Listen, and Speak has been designed to provide a thematic context that introduces students in grades 1-3 to new vocabulary through interactive multimedia scenes. Teacher-directed instruction and interactive computer-based lessons foster language development for students at varying stages of English acquisition. For more information, call toll-free to 800-777-4489 or visit www.evan-moor.com

Clicker Crick Software

Clicker is a powerful writing and creativity tool designed to motivate and support students as they learn to read and write. This unique tool gives students the ability to write with whole words, phrases, and pictures-all with just a "click" of the mouse. Clicker also supports alternative input devices through a technique called scanning. Scanning is extremely meaningful for students with special needs allowing them to use a simple switch to access the computer rather than a mouse. For more information, visit www.cricksoft.com or call toll-

free to 866-33-CRICK (425-467-8260 or 866-332-7425).

Keys to Reading Success Levings & Co.

Keys to Reading Success is a Web-based reading assistant program intended for Pre-Kindergarten – 12+. The program features diagnosis and assessment for reading comprehension, reading level, phonics skills, fluency, learning styles, and includes testing practice. Other features include instruction / lesson plans and reporting capabilities. Phone 877-281-4561 Fax 405-773-0052 www.keys2reading.com

Classroom Jeopardy Educational Insights

Want to have fun while motivating special and general education students to participate and learn? There's a classroom version of the popular TV game show Jeopardy. Classroom Jeopardy has controllers and displays on a TV in your classroom similar to other video games. Game cartridges are available with subject-specific content for language arts, math, social studies, science and geography. It is suggested for grades 3-5 and middle school. However, older students and teachers could enjoy these activities as well. Classroom Jeopardy is suitable for individual or team play and competitions. Visit the company Web site and learn about their other products for classrooms. Phone 800-933-3277 Fax 310-884-2013

www.educationalinsights.com

LeapFrog SchoolHouse

The major product lines of LeapFrog SchoolHouse were on display at NECC. These include: LeapTrack system, a K-5 assessment and instruction system; The Literacy Center (PreK-Grade 2); Language First! Program (PreK-Grade 2); Ready, Set, Leap! Program (PreK reading readiness). Other products from LeapFrog SchoolHouse include Handheld Learning Aids, Leap Pad and Quantum Pad. Visit their Web site for details. Phone 510-42-5100 / 800-883-7430 Fax 510-420-5111 www.LeapFrogSchoolHouse.com

Califone Education Products

Califone offers a variety of educational sound presentation solutions. In addition to many other products in their catalogue, three new wireless audio products for the classroom were announced at NECC. These include: a portable wireless PA system, the PresentationPro PA-300+ UHF; the lightweight and compact PA-100UHF Wireless Handheld Microphone; and the Infrared Cassette Recorder/Player that can be heard up to 15 feet away by any number of listeners using cordless headphones. Phone 800-722-0500 Fax 877-402-2248 www.califone.com

Independent Living Institute

www.independentliving.org

Independence is a key component for maintaining a sense of control over one's life and a healthy level of self-confidence. Consider all the daily activities that can be easily accomplished by an able-bodied person. The majority of people are not constrained by the necessity to plan ahead for routine activities as fewer barriers limit access to resources and activities. For people who live with a disability, it is often important to collect information that will help facilitate smooth transitions.

The Institute on Independent Living, (www.independentliving.org) located in Stockholm, Sweden, offers training materials, information, advocacy and support for disability organizations. This site offers a free global networking service for disability organizations. Through this service, groups can find partner organizations for projects, events, or other cooperative efforts.

If an individual with a disability is looking for a personal assistant, this site provides a means of searching for an assistant. Interested caregivers can also seek employment as assistants. This resource is intended to help disabled

people connect with an assistant in their own community, when moving to a new community, or when foreign language skills are required.

For those who want to see the world, independentliving.org provides an accessible vacation home exchange. To plan a trip, search the worldwide list of available homes to find an appropriate accommodation match.

One of the great things about this site is that it has a very international perspective. The Institute on Independent Living Web site has gathered an extensive collection of informative disability materials in English as well as other languages.

Teachers Helping Teachers

<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/index.html>

Tips for special education teachers have been posted by experienced special educators at the **Teachers Helping Teachers** Web site. The direct link to this useful resource is listed below.

<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/SpecialEducation.html>

Here you will find a collection of lesson ideas, organizational and instructional strategies that will assist both new and longtime special educators. If you've got techniques that have worked successfully

with special needs classes or other groups, you can add these to the existing collection. Go to the **Teachers Helping Teachers** homepage and click on "contributions."

<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/index.html>

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GNOME Assistive Technology News

An Opportunity to Beta Test Open Source Assistive Technologies

The Sun Microsystems and GNOME Accessibility teams have announced that the GNOME 2.4.0 release, planned for mid September 2003, will include the GNOME Onscreen Keyboard (GOK) and Gnopernicus Screen Reader / Magnifier assistive technologies.

GNOME is a popular open source graphical desktop included in many GNU/ Linux distributions such as RedHat, SuSE, Ximian, Mandrake, etc. GNOME will also be the standard user environment for the Sun desktop. One of the key development goals for GNOME has been assistive technology support for people with disabilities.

Information about the GOK project, which is led by the University of Toronto's Adaptive Technology Resource Centre (<http://atrc.utoronto.ca/>), can be found at <http://www.gok.ca> and <http://developer.gnome.org/projects/gap/AT/GOK>. Gnopernicus development is guided by BAUM Retec AG (<http://www.baum.de/>). Information on Gnopernicus is available at <http://www.baum.ro/gnopernicus.html> and <http://developer.gnome.org/projects/gap/AT/Gnopernicus>.

These assistive technologies are now quite stable, but the development teams see a need for further testing. The inclusion of the first editions of GOK and Gnopernicus in GNOME 2.4 will allow these open source technologies to be explored by a wider audience through this large public beta testing opportunity.

More Useful Links:

The GNOME Project <http://www.gnome.org>

GNOME Accessibility Project <http://developer.gnome.org/projects/gap>

GNOME 2.4 development schedule <http://www.gnome.org/start/2.3/>

Sun Microsystems Accessibility Program <http://www.sun.com/access>

Forging Access, (I Don't Do Windows Column), ComputorEdge Online, Sept. 12, 2003 issue

<http://www.computoredge.com/Archive/Editorial%20Archive/2137.pdf>