



The Computer Monitor



Volume XVIII

Spring 2004

APPLY NOW!

EXITE Camp Connects Math, Science, and Friendship for Girls

By Kristi Skala, Assistive Technology Specialist

PACER Simon Technology Center and IBM are again offering a five-day EXITE camp (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) for girls with disabilities to participate in a week of fun, math, science, and friendship.

IBM - PACER Collaboration

IBM Corporation and PACER Center have created a partnership to provide another enthusiastic and uplifting year of opportunity for girls who are interested in math and science. While most research proves that girls are most likely to become uninterested and detached from these educational areas after the 5th grade, this collaboration strives to change the statistics. The camp will begin July 2004 and cover numerous hands-on opportunities for students to work together to learn challenging and educational math and science techniques, in addition to having fun while creating friendships.

While technology is the theme, friendship is also an outcome, especially when it comes to past participants, Ann Ley and Emily Fischbach. They were delighted to reminisce about last year's EXITE camp, which consisted of 22 area middle-school girls with an array of disabilities. Emily has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and Ann has cerebral palsy. The two found many things in common among the other participants.

"I never thought I would get in this camp. Nor did I guess that my best friend AND I would get in. I'm so glad we did. EXITE Camp was the best thing that happened to me all year. I learned many things like what stars sounded like and how to make goo. I made new friends and had the best time of my life. Each day was better than the last. Laughing was mandatory. I'm sad this was over so quickly, but it was fun while it lasted. Thank you so much, IBM and PACER for allowing me to experience this!"
- Ann Ley, EXITE Camp participant 2003

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EXITE Camp

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All girls wanted to strive for success; all were interested in being a part of the inspiring camp; and each participant found that some of their favorite memories would include being together during the progression of the camp.

Friendships for the Future

Overall, last summer was an opportunity for Ann, Emily and many others to partake in a camp that they'd remember for a lifetime. While enthusiasm levels soared, Emily states, "it was one of the best times I've ever had in like my whole life. There were so many nice people that wanted to help!" But, in the end, the best camp experience was "meeting all my new friends."

"Go! You'll have a great time," Ann tells other girls with disabilities like her. Yet with a bit of disappointment, she adds that she wishes that she could participate again, "but it's a once in a lifetime thing. Now it's other girls' turn to see how much fun it is."

Special Thanks! to Heidi Kraemer of IBM who has made the collaboration possible for PACER and IBM to host the EXITE Camp for girls.

The applications are available on the Web site www.pacer.org/stc or by calling the Simon Technology Center at 952-838-9000. The deadline for application to the 2004 camp is May 25, 2004. The 2004 opening ceremony is on July 21 and the camp is five sessions: July 22, 27, 29 and Aug. 3 and 5.

Register
for
workshops
on-line at
www.pacer.org
or call
800-537-
2237.

Upcoming STC Workshops

Technology Just for Girls

Targeted to middle school girls with disabilities, this free workshop is led by women employed in technical fields at IBM. Information about this summer's EXITE camp is also presented.

- April 22, 6 to 9 p.m.
- June 24, 6 to 9 p.m. (both at PACER Center)

The Process of Choosing Assistive Technology for Your Child

The workshop answers questions about assistive technology and leads parents through the manual that trains IEP teams in selecting assistive technology.

- May 6, 6 to 8:30 p.m. (Duluth)

Young Children with Disabilities Can Write!

This workshop will discuss writing barriers for young children with disabilities. Space is limited and pre-registration is required.

- May 8, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. (PACER Center)

The STC is also co-sponsoring the following workshops:

Dynavox: Introduction to Series 4 and Enkidu Product Overview

Contact Dynavox Systems, 800-344-1778 or www.dynavoxsystems.com to register

- April 12, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- June 9, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (both at PACER Center)

IntelliShare Classroom Suite

Call IntelliTools, 1-800-899-6687 or www.intellitools.com to register.

- May 21-22, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (PACER Center)

IntelliShare Early Childhood-Low Incidence

Call IntelliTools 1-800-899-6687 or www.intellitools.com to register.

- April 8-9, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (PACER Center)

Access to the General Curriculum: Technology's Vital Role

By Janet Peters, Coordinator

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization in 1997 mandated that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum. In the law, access goes beyond simple placement in the classroom or providing the same curricular materials for students with disabilities. Access also means that students with disabilities be involved in the general curriculum and make progress in the general curriculum.



In addition, No Child Left Behind, the 2001 reauthorization of Secondary and Elementary Education Act, aligns student outcomes with standards of learning. Most students with disabilities will be required, as other students are, to perform on standard tests and make educational gains. Many parents and professionals believe access to the general curriculum is key to success for students with disabilities and standards tests.

The intent of these laws is that all students learn and succeed with their peers. Achieving this goal is hard work and takes a cooperative effort among regular education teachers, special education teachers, service providers, and parents. The collaboration involves a wide variety of strategies, sharing of ideas, resources, planning, and on-going follow-up.

Universal Design for Learning

One strategy to ensure students with disabilities have access to the general curriculum is to use "universal design" to

construct the learning environment and curriculum. The central practical premise of universal design for learning is that a

curriculum should include alternatives that make learning accessible and appropriate for individuals with different backgrounds, learning styles, abilities, and disabilities in widely varied learning contexts.

Many people are already familiar with the concept of universal design in architecture. Curb cuts, ramp entrances, or automatic opening doors are examples of universally designed structures, created from the onset to be usable to the greatest number of individuals possible. People with mobility impairments certainly benefit from these examples, but who hasn't found these features useful with an armful of groceries or pushing a stroller? Essentially, universal design widens the circle of potential users, including those with disabilities.

Universal design for learning takes the concepts of universal design, as seen in architecture, and applies them to the general education curriculum. A universally designed curriculum is flexible and includes strategies that take individual differences into account.

The "universal" in universal design does not imply one optimal solution for everyone. Rather, it reflects an awareness

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*Simon
Technology
Center does
technical
assistance
on Educa-
tional
Universal
Design. Call
us at 952-
838-9000.*

Access to the General Curriculum:

Continued from page 3

of the unique nature of each learner and the need to accommodate differences, creating learning experiences that suit the learner and maximize his or her ability to progress. (CAST, 2003)

Universal Design and Technology

While technology is not a “magic bullet” to the complex task of providing students with disabilities access to the general curriculum, it can play a vital role in creating a more universally designed curriculum with options to maximize each student’s learning strengths.

Versatility and flexibility are key features of technology that can help universally designed curriculum. New learning tools can augment and streamline a teacher’s ability to provide students with timely, personalized, balanced and varied attention. Books that talk, a database that dials the phone, a video with an audio and text tracks are example of technology that can make a curriculum more accessible.

Traditional classroom materials, such as books, come in “one size” for all, but they do not fit everyone and can actually create barriers to learning. Many students with disabilities have difficulty with traditional books; either they cannot see the words on a page or cannot hold a book or turn its pages. In contrast, digital text can be more easily printed to Braille, read aloud, the font or color changed to be more readable, or pages turned by a switch. E-reader by

CAST, will speak digitized text and highlight text by word, sentence, or paragraph. If a student is having difficulty with comprehension, digital text can offer reading support, such as a built-in dictionary or built-in note taking.

Graphic organizer software visually displays the relationships between facts, terms, and ideas. Graphic organizers are great for visual learners and can support individual differences in how students recognize patterns and master skills. Inspiration by Inspiration software, for example, can transfer a visual

representation to a written outline, which can be printed or added to for a full report. Because these tools are digital, they can be built into reading and other material, giving students the choice of accessing a whole variety of information when and as is best for them.

Changing the essential representation of information from one medium to another is called cross media transformation. There are inexpensive shareware programs that can give a visual representation to sound or generate sound from an image. The shareware program MidiColors, for example, represents sound by a piano keyboard whose keys light up with different colors as notes are played. Cross media transformation requires interpretive work, but it is never exactly equal. But it does offer valuable access for students with disabilities and enriches the learning for the entire class.

Universal design reflects an awareness of the unique nature of each learner and the need to accommodate differences.

Check out
the Web
site. It is
updated
every
week.

www.pacer.org/

STC

Technology's Vital Role

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology is also extremely important for students with disabilities to access the general curriculum. As defined by the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, assistive technology is "Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities."

Universal design for learning and assistive technology have the same ultimate goal of increased access, participation, and achievement for students with disabilities. By definition, assistive technology focuses on the disability, while universal design for learning looks at the whole.

For students with disabilities to truly make progress in the general curriculum, technology interventions are often unique to the student. Assistive technologies will

always have a role in the education of learners with disabilities. Children with physical or language disabilities need properly designed wheelchairs, adaptive switches to control devices, or augmentative communication.

Assistive technologies will always have a role in the education of learners with disabilities.

The most effective approach for providing access is a combination of assistive technology that will interface well with a universally designed curriculum made flexible and versatile by technology.

Conclusion

Technology that supports students in accessing the curriculum does not need to be expensive or complicated to make a difference in learning. Both low tech and high tech applications have been used successfully to ensure students' success in the general education curriculum. Technology plays a vital role for students with disabilities to access the general curriculum and make academic improvement, both through a universal design for learning approach and ensuring appropriate assistive technology.

What can parents do?

- * Take an active role on the IEP team in helping to determine your child's assistive technology needs. Minnesota has "best practice" guidelines on selecting assistive technology, including ways parents can contribute.
- * Monitor the IEP goals and objectives to ensure that your child is learning the same content as your child's peers. (if appropriate)
- * Advocate with local school boards and the state departments of education for policies that promote principles of universal design in the curriculum. A concrete example is requiring that newly purchased textbooks have a digital text equivalent, offering flexibility to the curriculum.

More
resources
on Universal
Design can
be found at
www.cast.org

Learning Technology to Reenter the

By Perrine Dailey, Assistive Technology Specialist

The Simon
Technology
Center has
a range of
services to
help you.

As an *adult* with a disability, Dave Houfer is not the typical visitor to the Simon Technology Center (STC). However, he has found the STC's services to be very beneficial as he prepares himself to reenter the workforce. Dave is new to computers and assistive technology, even though he worked in the printing business for 25 years at Control Data. He says with a laugh, "I never touched a computer!" Because printing technology has changed so much, Dave is looking for a new career and realized he could use assistive technology to help him achieve his goals.

Dave said he was especially glad to find the Simon Technology Center with its range of free services. Dave has cerebral palsy that affects the right side of his body. To learn more about technology that might help him, Dave made an appointment to come to the STC for a free, informal assistive technology consultation. At the consultation, Dave worked with an assistive technology specialist on the STC staff who demonstrated for Dave what technology tools were available and might be useful for him.

Because computer skills are essential for most people to find and keep jobs these days, Dave will benefit from improving his computer-related skills, such as keyboarding, e-mailing, and using the Internet. Dave has limited use of his right hand, so he experimented with keyboards with different layouts and found that a compact keyboard made it easier for him to type with one hand. He also tried a typing tutorial designed for users who type with one hand. Dave looked at several software programs that could help him overcome his difficulty with spelling and grammar, too. At the end of the consultation, Dave said

he felt more optimistic about his future, and he was happy to find a resource that would "improve his life and help overcome the challenges of my disability."



Since the consultation, Dave has been a regular visitor to the STC during Open Lab Hours, which are Tuesdays noon to 6 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. He practiced his keyboarding skills with a compact keyboard and the keyboarding tutorial he tried during the consultation. He also improved his basic computer skills by using two computer basics programs by Teknimedia.

"I was very impressed with them because it was a step-by-step process where you follow along and practice," Dave said about the interactive computer program.

Dave's regular visits to the STC have helped him steadily improve his computer skills. He hopes the new-found skills, such as using e-mail, will help him as he reenters the workforce, he said.

Workforce

"I'm trying to determine what old skills may be useful in a new field and what new skills I need to learn." "I'm amazed by e-mail, the speed of the technology and how fast you can communicate back and forth!"

To further boost his computer knowledge, Dave investigated the wide range of computer training classes that teach Internet and e-mail skills. He hopes to find classes that offer an appropriate pace and format to meet his needs.

Recently, Dave experimented at the STC with speech recognition technology as an alternative to typing his communications. Dave said he had heard of speech recognition technology but had thought it was expensive and hard to use. When he had the opportunity to experiment with *ScanSoft Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred* program, he compared it to "something out of science fiction!" He said he believes that in the long run, voice recognition would be extremely useful for him because it would allow him to communicate faster but still in a written form. Once he has a home computer, Dave plans to obtain a copy of the program for his home use.

Because Dave does not have a computer of his own, he has applied for a free computer through CompuDonors, a Twin Cities-based computer-recycling program run by volunteers who refurbish donated computers. He hopes to receive a computer for his home that will allow him to communicate better, write better, and receive information from the Internet.

Dave said the assistive technology services available to adults from the Simon Technology Center were worthwhile for him. He commented that the staff has been helpful and generous with their time spent helping others. He said, "I would definitely suggest that other adults look into the services provided by the Simon Technology Center!" he said.

To request a consultation, contact the STC or print an consultation form directly from the STC's web site, www.pacer.org/stc. During open hours, families and individuals are welcome to come to the STC to use the computer lab, ask questions and experiment with assistive technology and software.

*Interested
in Speech
Recognition?
STC
has a
newly
updated
handout.
Call today
to receive
a copy!*

Toy Guide for Children with Disabilities Available

The Alliance for Technology Access (ATA), of which PACER Simon Technology Center is a charter member, has teamed up with the Toy Industry Foundation and American Foundation for the Blind to create a guide to purchasing toys for children with special needs. The guide helps parents identify appropriate toys that children with all abilities can use. Call Wendy Tuominen in the STC at 952-838-9000 or e-mail wendytuominen@pacer.org to receive a free copy.



Talking Across the Wires: Telephone

By Annette Cerreta, OTR, ATP, Assistive Technology Specialist

It is widely accepted that Alexander Graham Bell invented the first telephone. A lesser known fact is that the telephone evolved from Bell's experimentation to amplify speech for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Despite Bell's intent to improve the lives of people with disabilities and the remarkable advances in telecommunication technology over the years, the telephone, itself, still presents many roadblocks to communication for people with a variety of special needs. For example, individuals with speech impairments may find communicating over the telephone frustrating or impossible if their speech is difficult for others to understand. Individuals with motor impairments may lack the strength or coordination to hold a telephone or press the number keys. Those with cognitive disabilities may have difficulty recalling important phone numbers in an emergency situation. Obviously, people who are deaf or hard of hearing will have trouble with telephone communication.

Fortunately, barriers to telephone access are breaking down due to a combination of factors including accessibility laws, the universal design movement, and the recent technology boom. In addition, the aging of America has driven market development for telephones with accessibility features and given rise to an ever-growing number of telecommunication products for people with different needs.

A Cell Phone That Talks

The talking phone has finally arrived with the release of Mobile's Accessibility software. The software is designed to improve cell phone access for people who are blind or visually impaired. Mobile's Accessibility software features a voice synthesizer that allows access to most mobile phone functions. Link to mobileaccessibility.codfact.com for more information about Mobile's Accessibility software.

Telecommunication Products Designed for Better Access

Until recently, the TTY (text telephone) was one of the few technologies available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate by telephone. TTY technology allows users to communicate using the phone lines and by typing text to another person also using a TTY. One limitation with this method is that it requires keyboard input, and therefore may be difficult for a person with a physical disability and a hearing loss to access. It also may require a relay service if the person without hearing limitations does not have a TTY available.

The technology explosion of recent years has taken telecommunication options to a new level for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Text messaging on cell phones and pagers allow users to type short messages using the number or keyboard pad (depending on the style of device) and send the messages over the telephone lines. Text messaging has become an increasingly preferred mode of communication among many people with and without hearing difficulties.

Many of the telephones produced today can be adapted to suit the needs of the user. For example, some phones come with adjustable volume, built-in amplifiers, and amplified ringers. Flashing ringer indicators are also available on some phones. Many telephones are also designed to be compatible with a hearing aid T-coil and neck loop.

Access for People with Disabilities

For people with physical impairments, options include telephone head sets for hands-free conversation, large number overlays, automatic dialing buttons, voice activation, and switch access.

Individuals who are blind or have low vision can purchase telephones with Braille markings, large number and caller ID displays, speech output, automatic dialing, and other access features.

Young children and individuals with cognitive difficulties may benefit from a photo phone. Photo phones feature preset auto-dial buttons that hold photographs or pictures of the person or place the individual wants to call. The user simply selects the picture of the person he or she wants to reach, and the phone automatically calls that person.

The Telephone Equipment Distribution Program

Minnesotans who have a hearing, speech, or mobility impairment may qualify for assistive telephone devices through the Telephone Equipment Distribution Program. The equipment is provided on a long-term basis at no cost. To learn more about the program and how to qualify, contact: Minnesota Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program at 800-657-3663 voice or 800-657-3513 (TTY).

The national resource for telephone distribution programs is the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA). Their Web site www.tedpa.org has a database of state telephone distribution programs throughout the country.

Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS)

A telecommunications relay service links users who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and speech-impaired with other telephone users. To access these services, a person places the call through a communication assistant (CA) that stays on the line to translate the conversation for both parties. CAs are trained to understand and translate for people with speech impairments. They can also relay a call from a TTY-user to a person using a standard phone (without TTY).

Video relay service (VRS) is a new kind of on-line relay service that allows people to converse in sign language, through a computer, with people using standard phones and speech. The person who is deaf or hard of hearing uses a Web-cam and high-speed Internet connection to connect with a video interpreter. The video interpreter translates the signed message into speech for the person on the other end of the call. The person who is deaf or hard of hearing has a video box on the computer that allows him or her to see the video interpreter translating the speech of the other party into sign language.

To learn more about relay services in your part of the country, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/trsphonebk.html

The Universally Designed Telephone

As telephone technology options grow by the minute, consumers' expectations are on the rise as well. People with and without disabilities are beginning to appreciate and expect telephones with customizable features that meet their needs. This trend could translate into a future where universally designed telephones will be the norm, not the exception. Considering the rate at which telecommunications technology is progressing, that future could be just around the corner.

Compatibility Program Extends Software Life

By Brad Buelow, Assistive Technology Specialist

Extend the
life of
your
software
with
Program
Compat-
ibility
Wizard.
Its easy
and free.

When it comes to upgrading or buying a new computer, plenty of questions can arise: What brand should I buy? How will I transfer my files? Will my current software work on my new machine? The compatibility question has been around for a long time, but with rapid changes in technology, it's an even more pressing issue. Windows XP, the latest operating system from Microsoft, has many dramatic changes. As a result, many old programs don't run on the new system.

But there is help. Thanks to the *Program Compatibility Wizard* feature of Windows XP, many old software titles (including those checked out from the Simon Technology Center's Software Lending Library) can be made to run without error on Windows XP.

The *Program Compatibility Wizard* essentially tells your computer to configure itself as though it was an older computer when using an older software program. Computers can run with different settings to emulate previous settings when using older software.

Use the *Program Compatibility Wizard* when a piece of software does not work out-of-the-box or is more than a few years old. A clue of incompatibility is if the program wants a screen resolution of 640 x 480 pixels or a color depth of 256 colors. Using the *Program Compatibility Wizard* will help resolve these problems.

The *Program Compatibility Wizard* is located in the Start bar, under *All Programs/Accessories/Program Compatibility Wizard*. When starting the wizard, you, the user, will be asked to select the program that is

causing difficulty. Next, choose the version of Windows in which the program has previously worked. If you are unsure, try Windows 95 or 98. Think back to your old computer, if it worked on that machine, use that Windows version. The last settings to choose are the display settings. Most educational titles and games require a lower resolution. This explains why some of the Software Lending Library titles available for checkout from PACER Center require compatibility settings to be configured before they will function correctly. Choosing 256 colors, 640 x 480 screen resolution, and disabling visual themes as needed, will often solve the most common problems. Pay special attention to error messages. They will generally make using the *Program Compatibility Wizard* much easier.

Finally, test the software to determine if the new settings are functioning correctly. If the program functions properly, you can check a box to ensure these settings will be used with this program in the future. If the program is still not functioning properly, now is the time to go back and try different settings. It may take several tries to get any particular program to work successfully, but the functioning of any software title is well worth the few minutes spent configuring it in the *Program Compatibility Wizard*.

The *Program Compatibility Wizard* does not necessarily guarantee that all programs will always work with Windows XP and compatibility is not the only issue a computer may have. But it is worth trying the *Program Compatibility Wizard* to extend the life of your current software.

A Review—My Own Bookshelf

By Brad Buelow, Assistive Technology Specialist

My Own Bookshelf is a new program from SoftTouch that encourages reading, as well as creative writing. The software allows users to create and share digital books and multimedia presentations suitable for users at many stages of development.

My Own Bookshelf is structured with three modes and two administrative options. The three modes are: *Book*, *Bookshelf*, and *Read*. They offer users the opportunity to create a digital book, organize their files (books) on their own bookshelves, and read books they and others have created. The administrator options, *Students* and *Publish*, give teachers or parents the opportunity to create student profiles and publish work.

I. Primary Features

Creating Books in *My Own Bookshelf*

The process for creating a book is quite simple in *My Own Bookshelf*. There are some limitations in the design, but the ease of use makes this program one of the most immediately productive authoring tools available. Users are guided through the initial steps of the creation process by choosing a title, author name, and the page color right from the start. These settings apply to the entire book, but can be changed later.

The process of adding content in *My Own Bookshelf* is flexible and straightforward. It's easy to insert images, sounds, text, and even movies onto the pages of each book. *My Own Bookshelf* supports several image formats (GIF, JPEG, BMP), as well as video files (AVI and MOV). Sounds can be placed in the books as sound files, recorded speech, or automatic text-to-speech. Audio can be organized as a page background

sound or a series of timed individual sounds. Content can be positioned on screen with minimal effort, and navigating through the pages is a breeze.

The simplicity of the program has some drawbacks. Though images and other elements are easy to add, formatting to achieve a refined look can be difficult. The resize feature is especially difficult to use. Images and text boxes are resized by percentage, making it challenging to refine the layout. Also, the program does not include the ability

to edit images, paint on pages, or create a transparent background. For example, if an image has a white background on a black page, the white border will

remain visible. These limitations are not crucial to all users; however it may be important to users wishing to make more complex book designs. These limitations aside, creating a book in *My Own Bookshelf* is about as easy as it gets, provided the author has all his or her multimedia content in the same location, ready to import.

My Own Bookshelf comes with a noteworthy library of pre-made examples of what the program can do. These examples showcase the power of *My Own Bookshelf* and can serve as an inspiration for future projects. With some creative thinking users can certainly make great works of their own using the built-in features of *My Own Bookshelf*.



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A Review—My Own Bookshelf

Locating Books in *My Own Bookshelf*

Once someone has created a book, they'll likely want to store it somewhere easy to find. *My Own Bookshelf* solves the problem by creating a "bookshelf" folder where all user projects are stored. These bookshelves can be easily accessed by any user. When it comes to a *My Own Bookshelf* creation, the "lost homework" phenomenon is gone for good. Teachers can create a bookshelf for each student. It helps students to easily find their own projects and ensures that the teacher can find them too. Bookshelves can be customized by changing layout, color, and name to make the bookshelves unique for each student.



Reading Books in *My Own Bookshelf*

To read books created in *My Own Bookshelf*, the act of turning pages is very straightforward. Users choose from forward, backward, and refresh options to view each page in order until the book is finished. Navigation buttons can be added and deleted for each user depending on teacher preferences. With this flexibility,

teachers can give struggling students a more guided experience. Most multimedia applications can do this, but the accessibility features of *My Own Bookshelf* set it above the rest. Whether using a mouse, touch screen, *IntelliKeys Keyboard*, or switch, all users can access projects created in *My Own Bookshelf*.

There are, however, several aspects of the *Read* mode that can seem somewhat confusing when using the program. When entering *Read* mode, users are given the chance to choose and edit a user profile before reading a book. This feature illustrates the open access nature of *My Own Bookshelf*. But it also means student profiles can be changed by other students before reading books in this program, which may cause problems.

I. Administrative Features

Student Profiles and Teacher Options in *My Own Bookshelf*

Individual settings and access options are chosen in the "Students" section of *My Own Bookshelf*. Teachers can create a profile for each student in their classroom including name, access options, and even a digital picture of the student. In the Student mode, teachers are also given the opportunity include student mail and e-mail addresses, parents' names, available navigation buttons, and a variety of access methods.

The program has some built-in profiles for different access modes that make individual accounts unnecessary if the program will be used by one person. For classroom use, however, the opportunity for students to choose their own names and faces from a list of users is a great way to personalize their experience. There are a

Encourages Children to Write

wealth of accessibility options including enlarging the cursor size, delay rate, and the ability for a mouse to act like a switch. *My Own Bookshelf* also offers a data collection feature (in the Student mode), allowing teachers to track progress by creating a printable report of which books have been read, reading time, average page time, number of mouse or switch clicks, and total sessions.

The "Publish" mode of *My Own Bookshelf* offers several options for sharing books with others. Books can be printed out with one, two, or four pages per sheet. Books can also be shared digitally among other computer users. Importing *My Own Bookshelf* books is a breeze and these new books can be edited and incorporated right into existing bookshelves. Lastly, books can even be shared with others who do not own the *My Own Bookshelf* software. There is an "Export" feature, that exports books to any desired location. Exported files are packaged with a free viewer application. The viewer allows any user to view, but not edit, books created in *My Own Bookshelf*. Free player software is a wonderful feature to share book creations with parents and others.

Accessibility in My Own Bookshelf

Accessibility is a hallmark of the SoftTouch product line and *My Own Bookshelf* is no exception. Switch access can be used when reading books in *My Own Bookshelf*. Users can create overlays of pages for use with *IntelliKeys Keyboards* during *Read* mode. Touch screens and mouse access can be used throughout the entire program including the creation of books and bookshelves. These accessibility features ensure that all users will be able to view projects created in *My Own Bookshelf*, regardless of specific access needs.

My Own Bookshelf provides a simple, child-friendly way to create and share digital books. This ease of use, effective teacher tools, and superb accessibility features makes *My Own Bookshelf* a great tool for schools to promote literacy and learning.

For more information on this product contact SoftTouch at 661-396-8676 or softtouch@funsoftware.com

You can try *My Own Bookshelf* at the STC during Open Lab Hours.

What's New in the Simon Technology Center?

There are several ways to keep posted on the happenings of the STC. First the STC Web site www.pacer.org/stc has a *What's New* section that has new listings of used equipment for sale, new items in the library, and upcoming STC workshops. The *What's New* section is updated weekly. The STC also publishes *STC Tech Notes* e-newsletter monthly. To receive the *STC Tech Notes* visit the Web site, send an e-mail to stc@pacer.org or call 952-838-9000. Stop by PACER during Open Lab Hours on Tuesdays noon to 6 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Q: *I would like to purchase a “touch window” for my son. How do I choose which touch window to buy? Do I have to buy a new computer?*

A: Touch windows work just like a mouse—when touched they can be used to select, click, and drag items on the screen. Touch windows are great tools for children and adults to use as an alternative way to access a computer.

Generally there are three things to consider when purchasing a touch window: type (add-on or built-in), how it attaches to the monitor, and connectivity.

The first thing you may want to consider is what type of touch window to purchase. Touch windows come in two different models: built-in or add-on. There is a significant difference in cost between the two models, which may greatly influence which type to purchase. Built-in touch windows are similar to what you may use at an ATM machine—the screen or monitor is touch-sensitive and will immediately respond when touched. The touch window is installed directly into the monitor of your computer and looks no different from a typical monitor. Built-in touch windows are expensive, ranging in price from \$400 for smaller versions to \$1,200 for larger monitors.

The add-on touch windows are thin, plastic, external devices that are mounted over the screen of any monitor. Add-on

touch windows come in a variety of sizes and pricing increases along with the size of the touch window. Add-on touch windows start around \$135 for 13" to 15" monitors and go up to \$500 for 19" to 21" monitors.

When considering an add-on touch window it is important to think about how it attaches to your monitor. Some models use Velcro to adhere while others have hooks that rest on top of the monitor to hold it in place. Velcro may be adequate for smaller touch windows, but not as stable for the larger sizes. The hooks tend to be more stable and less likely to fall during use.

The last thing to consider for both models is how it connects to the computer. Like any piece of hardware, there are cables that connect the monitor or touch window to the back of your computer. It is important that you are familiar with the type of ports needed to connect the touch window. There are basically two types of ports: ADB (the small round plug) or USB (a rectangle type port either in the front or back of your computer). Most newer computers have USB ports while older models will more likely have ADB ports. USB, or universal serial bus, can work on either a Macintosh or Windows-based computer while ADB ports need to be purchased specifically for the type of computer with which you are working. Most companies can assist you in deciding which type of connection will work best for your computer.

New Staff Spotlight: Kristi Skala



Kristi Skala joined the Simon Technology Center staff in November 2003. She is an assistive technology specialist who will coordinate the EXITE (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Camp for middle school girls with disabilities next summer. She will also conduct technology consultations and help manage the Software Lending Library and STC web page.

Kristi said she was attracted to working at PACER because she has “always enjoyed working with children, and PACER was an opportunity for me to make a difference in their lives. When I interviewed here, I felt a strong vibe of the devotion and pride that the employees held for their position and the

people they worked with. I saw it as a great chance to be a part of that approach.” Kristi said her favorite part of her job is the hands-on opportunities.

*Past
Computer
Monitors
are on the
Web site.
Check it
out at
www.pacer.org/stc*

Q. *My daughter has autism. She is in kindergarten and is just beginning to talk. Are there computer programs that I can use at home to encourage her to communicate?*

A. Yes. Many children who are just beginning to communicate and vocalize are very motivated to hear their own voices. There are two programs that will “interact” with sounds that children produce: *Tiger’s Tales* and *Talk Time with Tucker* both by Laureate Learning Systems, Inc.

Tiger’s Tale is a program that stimulates language production by encouraging children to “talk” for a tiger that has lost its voice. Students are able to record their own voice to create short movies that can be played back. *Tiger’s Tale* encourages students to vocalize, allowing them to hear their own voice and correct sounds or errors as they advance their communication skills.

Talk Time with Tucker is a voice-activated program that encourages children to talk. When the student talks or makes sounds into the microphone, Tucker moves and talks in response to the voice. Unlike voice recognition programs that require precise and accurate speech input, this program accepts a broad range of sounds and/or speech. Five activities are available to give students a variety of activities and provide various communication goals such as imitating sounds/words, increasing lengths of utterance, practice turn-taking, increase volume, and answering open ended questions.

Both *Tiger’s Tale* and *Talk Time with Tucker* are available through Laureate Learning Inc. (www.laureatelearning.com, 800-562-6801) and are available to preview at the PACER Simon Technology Center 952-838-9000.

How to Contact Us



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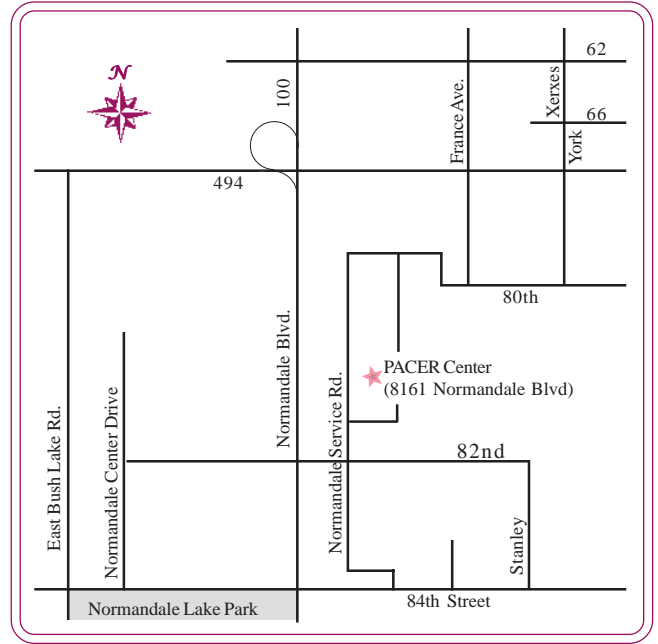


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