



Highlands Regional Library Cooperative

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TEL: 973-664-1776 or 800-NET-HRLC (*Members Only*)
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www.hrlc.org

HRLC Technology Committee Open House
Parsippany-Troy Hills Public Library
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What is Assistive Technology? Why use it in your library?

Approximately 19 percent of the U.S. Population over age 5 has some form of disability. People with disabilities are far less likely to have home Internet access or have used a computer. Librarians are dedicated to ensuring access to all users, yet we frequently forget about those who might have visual, hearing or learning disabilities. Using assistive technology, hardware or software that helps users with special needs compensate for a disability, allows us to help this underserved group.

Simple solutions

Although you may not know it there are ways that you can make your computer easier for people with visual disabilities to use without installing anything. By adjusting the screen resolution in the Control Panel you can make images on your screen bigger. Access the Display settings through the Control Panel. Screen Resolution is found on the Settings tab. If you use disk protection software such as Deep Freeze or Windows Steady State you can have this option available to the patrons since restarting the computer will restore the original settings.

You can adjust the text size on Internet Explorer. Click on the Tools tab, then text size. You can then make the text larger or smaller as you desire. Similarly, always remember that you can change the size of the screen on programs such as Word or Excel by clicking on View and then Zoom.

Screen magnification software

Screen magnification software enlarges all or parts of the screen. Windows includes a magnifier program. It can be found under Programs>Accessories>Accessibility. This is a very basic program but it comes with any operating system after Windows 98. There are more effective commercially available programs such as Bigshot sold by Ai Squared. Information about BigShot can be found at their web site www.aisquared.com.

Hardware

Large print keyboards are easily available and affordable. This one is the Visikey Enhanced Visibility keyboard and is available online from www.visikey.net. They offer both wired and wireless versions as well as skins that can be used with laptops. Another consideration is that many people may have difficulty using a standard mouse. Consider having other pointing devices such as trackballs available at your library. USB devices usually don't require complex installation procedures and can be easily swapped out.

*Serving the Counties of
Bergen, Huntendon, Morris, Passaic,
Somerset, Sussex and Warren*



The Highlands Regional Library Cooperative is part of the New Jersey Library Network. The Cooperative and its services are funded in part by the New Jersey State Library, an affiliate of Thomas Edison State College, with State funds appropriated for the New Jersey Library Network.



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Screen Readers and Voice Recognition Software

Screen readers read the screen to the user. They can read all kinds of text either automatically or as directed by the user. These can be used in a library with a headset. Again, a basic screen reader is available through Windows. It can be found at Programs>Accessories>Accessibility>Narrator. More comprehensive programs such as JAWS (www.freedomscientific.com) can also provide Braille display if you have the right hardware.

Voice recognition software allows the user to speak to the computer rather than using a keyboard or mouse to create documents, browse the Internet or use applications. It used to be that voice recognition had to be trained to respond to a user's voice, but the technology has improved and they can be used in the library.

Chat Reference

Providing reference service using instant messaging has been a hot topic in the library. Typically, this has been presented as a way to reach out to teen and young users. It is also an excellent way to work with hearing or speech impaired patrons. Keep in mind that Chat Reference is not a time-saving device. It can take much longer than face-to-face or phone reference. It is still an excellent way to reach out to patrons with hearing or speech difficulties or simply those who are shy.

The importance of outreach

It's no good installing these technologies if no effort is made to publicize them. Just as you would with any other type of library program, let the local press know when you are adding these technologies to your library. Additionally, consider contacting support groups, social services, or other organizations whose members stand to really benefit from these technologies.

Resources for exploring assistive technology

- ⌘ *Computer Resources for People with Disabilities* by The Alliance for Technology Access. The Fourth Edition was published in 2004.
- ⌘ "Access Through Technology" and other articles can be found in the Spring 2004 issue of *Library Journal*
- ⌘ The Disability Resources Monthly Guide to Disability Resources on the Internet (www.disabilityresources.org) is an excellent web resource with a special section for librarians.

Join this committee! Contact committee chair leigh.keller@gmail.com for more info.

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