

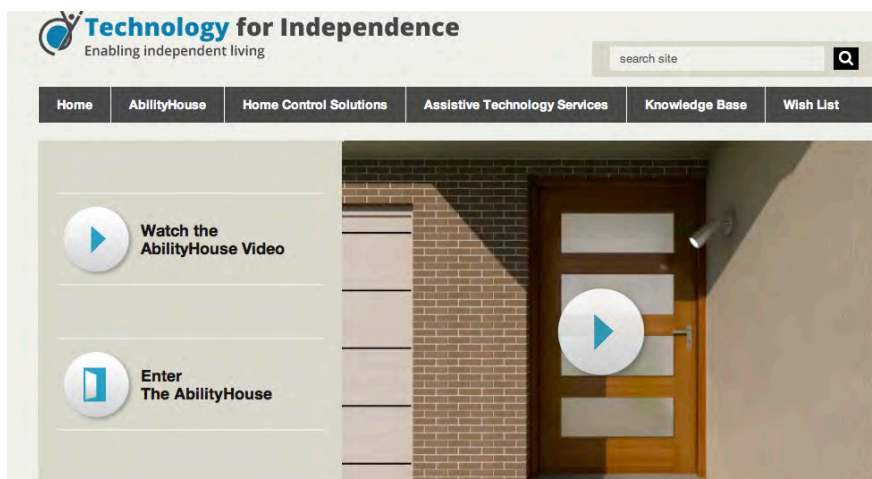
AbilityHouse -

An intuitive way to explore home control technology

After months of hard work, we have been pleased to announce the release of the AbilityHouse web site. The project was funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (through the Practical Design Fund). The response so far in the disability sector has been great and very encouraging.

What is AbilityHouse? Before we address that question, let's look at home control (or environmental control) technology. It can be highly technical and full of jargon - very daunting for those exploring options. Information hitherto has mostly been descriptions of products. While the technology itself makes life easier for people with disabilities, information *about* the technology has not been very accessible!

Enter AbilityHouse. The



person goes initially to a place of familiarity - a home. They will see appliances with which they are familiar. So their journey of exploration begins intuitively. Gradually they can gain information about devices that will enable them to control desired appliances at home. They can see short videos that demonstrate how the device options operate. Pricing and supplier information is also provided. They can download more technical information if they want, in the form of a PDF document. They can also create a "wish list" of products that interest them, for printing or emailing.

They can personalise their search by filtering the information according to their disability. They will then only be shown options relevant to their circumstances.

We have also included a postcode box. By entering their postcode, people will then be

shown their nearest assistive technology service.

We are excited about Ability House. We believe AbilityHouse provides a new, intuitive pathway for people with a disability, therapists and others, to explore assistive technology options to increase their independence at home. It is a tool to expand people's vision of what is possible for them - in keeping with the spirit of DisabilityCare.

To filter and show the Home Control Solutions best suited to you, please tell us what you have difficulty with:

- I have difficulty hearing
- I have difficulty moving and walking
 - Getting out of bed
 - Getting up from my chair
 - Walking
- I have difficulty remembering or learning new things
- I have difficulty seeing
 - I am blind
 - I have low vision
- I have difficulty using my hands and arms
 - Carrying
 - Grasping or holding
 - Pointing
 - Pressing Buttons
 - Reaching

Skip this step: I would like to view all options

Save

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Videoconferencing

Ability has received funding through Perpetual Trustee Company to undertake an extensive pilot study of the viability of videoconferencing as a means of providing assistive technology assessments. The project will involve liaison and trials in six regions of NSW. We aim to determine the possibilities and limitations of videoconferencing as an assessment tool. We have conducted a number of assessments this way already, as well as providing training and technical support over the internet.

The project is scheduled to be completed in September 2014.

ABILITY PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Victoria Roadtrip - A Great Success!

Almost 200 people attended a series of workshops in country Victoria on iPads and More in May. We visited Mildura, Bendigo, Wangaratta, Traralgon, Warrnambool and Ararat and met a host of appreciative people. We have heard from quite a few people from other regions in Victoria who missed out, so we are seeking funding again for another trip in 2014, covering some other towns. A big thankyou to all who attended!



iPADS AND MORE - TAMWORTH WORKSHOP

Our next iPads and More workshop will be held at the Tamworth Community Centre on Friday 13 September, from 2:30 to 4:30 pm. Book by email to info@ability.org.au

iPADS AND MORE - NEWCASTLE WORKSHOP

Another iPads and More workshop will be held at the University of Newcastle Special Education Centre, on Wednesday 20 November, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Book by email to info@ability.org.au

iPADS AND MORE - ALBURY WORKSHOP

By the time you read this, our two workshops in Albury (27 August) will have been completed.

Ability Research Centre

With funding from Trust Company, we are nearing the final stages of our comparative testing of a range of assistive technology devices. These include speech recognition, wheelchair-based environmental control solutions, head and mouth computer access options and mobile phone access.



Memory Aids Project

Our recent research on memory aids (funded by Perpetual Trustees) has been updated and is now available on the Ability web site (<http://www.ability.org.au/research>). This is a great resource for those looking for memory support options!

FonePad

The Asus FonePad is the kind of device we have been waiting for. It is a 7" Android tablet that is also a mobile phone. Given that we can run HouseMate Mobile (environmental control) on the device as well means this is very close to being a complete solution for some people. The picture is completed by the fact that, with the simple addition of a cheap OTG (On the Go) cable, you can plug in any USB pointing device that doesn't require software. That would include, for example, a QuadJoy, Integramouse, trackball, joystick or touchpad. Once one of these devices is plugged in, a cursor appears on the screen, giving you control over selectable functions. At a price of under \$300, this will be an attractive option for many.



Asus FonePad

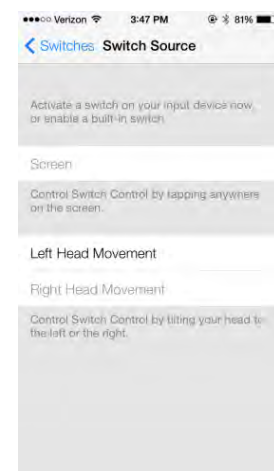
Kindle Paperwhite

The Kindle Paperwhite is an interesting device. It has gentle backlighting but can also be used in full sunlight. It stores up to 1,100 books, weighs 213gms and has battery life of up to 8 weeks. You can set bookmarks and make annotations. It tells how much longer it will take you to finish the book you are reading. You can consult a dictionary instantly from the text. You can email documents (Word and PDF) directly to your Kindle and read them there. You can subscribe to magazines and have them sent to your Kindle automatically. You can lend to and borrow from other users.

What about accessibility? A mixed bag. Text size can be adjusted, but there is no text-to-speech on this model. On the other hand, you simply touch the right side of the page to advance to the next page, or touch the top left to access the menu - much better than the tiny buttons on the earlier models.



Kindle Paperwhite



iOS7 - New features

Rumours abound regarding Apple's iOS7, which at the time of writing, is in its final beta testing phase. What is in store regarding accessibility?

We hope there is plenty, because the lack of accessibility is hurting Apple's position in the disability field. While Android users can plug in USB pointing devices, iPad users must use an awkward and incomplete method that piggy-backs on Apple's VoiceOver facility.

The good news is that switch scanning appears to be built into the Accessibility settings, hopefully by-passing the need to run VoiceOver. From what we have seen, the whole screen can be used as a switch, as options are scanned, or else an external switch can be used via a Bluetooth interface. Further, head movements (left or right) can be used to activate a switch or to perform other functions. We don't know how much head movement will be required or how accurate the system will be, but it looks like a major step forward for Apple and the disability sector.

Flesky

Flesky is a remarkable predictive text input method. You use it as follows:

- Tap once lightly approximately where you think each letter is. You don't have to be accurate!
- Swipe right for space.
- To change a word or punctuation, swipe down.
- You can add punctuation by swiping right again after a space.

Flesky has more functions for entering punctuation marks and typing custom words and names. You can also email, Message, Tweet and post on Facebook directly from Flesky.

Some users describe it as a mind reader. It is being used by those who are blind and also those with dexterity problems. Free from iTunes App Store.



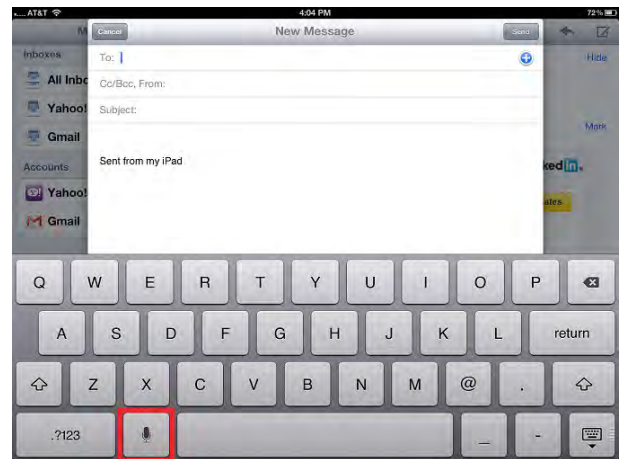
Flesky

iPad Speech Recognition

The latest versions of iPads and iPhones include a speech recognition system. Whenever the built-in keyboard pops up, you will see a small microphone icon to the left of the space key. Tapping on this opens a dictation icon and you begin talking. Press the "Done" button to conclude your dictation. Various punctuation commands are also supported.

The system only works if you have a valid internet connection.

How well does it work? Surprisingly well, considering no training is required. Accuracy is improved with clear pronunciation and some trial and error regarding positioning. But quite good overall. When alternative renderings of a word are possible, they have a blue underline. Pointing to that word then opens up alternatives that can be selected. Another plus is that dictation is always available when text entry is possible, i.e., whenever the keyboard pops up. You don't need to load another app.



CANBERRA WORKSHOP - 16 October 2013

Ability Technology, in conjunction with Hartley Lifecare, will be conducting its next assistive technology workshop in Canberra on **Wednesday 16 October, 2013** from **2-4 pm** at Hartley's assistive technology centre, 6 Hodgson Place, Pearce, ACT. The topic will be announced soon.



The next conference of the Australian Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Association (ARATA) will be held in Canberra, 20-22 August 2014. The 2014 conference "Actively Choosing Technology" is an opportunity for all stakeholders: consumers, clinicians, therapists, educators, rehabilitation engineers, policy makers, inventors, suppliers and students to meet in our national capital. More details available at www.arata.org.au

JAMBOXX

The Jamboxx, a USB-powered, breath-controlled device that mirrors the design of a harmonica and initially developed to accommodate users with disabilities who do not have the use of their hands, offers users the ability to play a digital instrument hands-free. According to MyMusic Machines Inc, the company that markets the device, in addition to allowing professional musicians to create custom presets, the Jamboxx software's visual feedback and karaoke-style software is engineered to provide easy access for individuals with disabilities and children. Get more information from jamboxx.com



Jamboxx

Uniden SS E35 Cordless Phone

This portable phone has a number of features for people with disabilities:

- The cordless handset has large easy to see buttons
- The handset also has a speaker
- Extra loud audio controls are available
- It has an integrated digital answering machine with slow playback function
- It has a Do Not Disturb function
- Up to 6 handset can be connected to the one phone socket
- Text to speech (TTS) will announce the name of the caller
- Highly visual ringer on the base and handset
- An emergency pendant can be used with the phone. The Emergency Pendant allows your call for help to be answered by people of your choice. Once the help button is pressed the pendant will first call the internal home phone system intercom so that someone in the house may be notified that help is required. If unanswered, the pendant will call up to 5 different phone numbers of your choice. Will call one at a time and if not answered, the pendant will move onto the next pre-programmed phone number. Once a called is accepted by the other party on the other line the person required help or assistance can talk through the pendant to the other line. Up to 5 Emergency Alert Pendants can be added, which allows you to have an emergency pendant in the Bathroom, Bedroom or Living Room.



Uniden SS E35

ANZSCOS 2013

Ability Technology was pleased to present two workshops at the Australian and New Zealand Spinal Cord Society conference at Darling Harbour on 21 August. Rowena Clarke and Graeme Smith presented on environmental control options to a meeting of Occupational Therapists and then presented on teleconferencing as an assessment option for assistive technology.

ABILITY News

LOCUMS

In 2014 we are planning to provide services to clients in rural areas in NSW, the ACT and possibly Victoria, through a series of locums. We would visit areas on dates set well in advance, so that people can book assessments and training sessions. Clients would be able to avail themselves of our

expertise without incurring travel costs. The locum visits would coincide with public workshops we would be conducting.

WORKSHOPS

Speaking of workshops, these have become a significant part of our work. We are receiving regular requests to conduct workshops in new country

areas in NSW and Victoria. We can hardly keep up! We enjoy the opportunity to talk about assistive technology!

CASE MANAGEMENT

Guy Rowell is helping develop a new case management system for Ability, using FileMaker Pro software. We hope to have the new system rolled out by the end of the year.

ABILITY Staff - Rowena Clarke



Rowena is an Occupational Therapist who joined Ability in 2009. After graduating in 2001 she specialised in spinal cord injury rehabilitation, and also clients with motor neuron disease. This work was developed in spinal cord injury units within Sydney as well as a Stroke and Spinal Rehabilitation centre in the UK. Her interest in assistive technology developed whilst working with these client populations who clearly benefited and even at times depended on assistive technology, especially when returning home from hospital, in order to attain their own quality of life goals. Her role included facilitating access to computer, wheelchair control and environmental technology.

ABILITY Services - Training

Training is an essential part of our work at Ability. Assistive technology is of no use to a client if they are not given the skills to use it effectively.

In many cases the person's disability will slow down the training process. It will take longer to achieve competence due to physical or cognitive impairments. In addition, the person may have to learn to use assistive devices as well as the primary device (such as a

computer or tablet).

It can be helpful if those who support the person (family members, carers, teachers, work colleagues) share in the training process.

Training requires sensitivity as well as technical knowledge. Our staff are experienced to provide quality training services. Sometimes training can be provided via the internet or through on-line resources.

It is often difficult at the

outset to specify a person's training needs precisely. Usually an initial number of sessions is proposed, with training needs reviewed afterwards. Follow-up training can be required when significant changes occur in the person's equipment, software or operating systems, or when their needs or capabilities change.

Training sometimes overlaps with our other services, such as assessment and support.

Contact Ability for a quote.

Ability Technology

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