



Ability Newsletter

AlphaSmart DANA



Product and Service News

- 1 AlphaSmart Dana
- 2 Dictating letters by letters
- 3 Scroll Track Trackball
- 3 Tablet PC coming
- 3 iMicro Mini Mouse
- 4 Three new keyboards
- 5 Compaq and HP Merger
- 5 Whale Mouse
- 6 Database to aid memory
- 6 Adis Door
- 7 Printer/Scanner/Copiers
- 8 Ability News

Every now and then a special product emerges, one that is innovative and conspicuously useful. The AlphaSmart Dana is such a product. It combines two winning technologies – the AlphaSmart 3000, the most reliable of all portable notetakers – and the legendary Palm, still king of the personal organisers. Built around the familiar AlphaSmart shape, with a larger display, the Dana is based on the Palm operating system. This gives it access to over 10,000 existing Palm applications. It also has AlphaWord, a full-featured word processor with spell-checker, thesaurus and Microsoft Word file format. Here are some more details:

- Rechargeable battery pack.
- 0.91 kg weight
- Advanced LCD screen with backlight – 560 x 160 pixels (3.5 times wider than the typical hand-held device).
- Two expansion slots for memory, digital camera, etc.
- Infrared port for sharing data and software with another Dana or Palm-powered device.
- Screen can rotate 90 degrees in either direction, allowing both left and right handed users to handwrite text into the device.
- 8 Mb RAM
- Palm OS 4.1
- Two USB ports, for connecting to printers or PCs.

The Dana requires a PC with Win 98, 2000, ME or XP, or a Mac with OS 8.5.1 to OS X, with available hard disk space, one available USB port and CD-ROM drive.

The Dana has not yet been formally released, but is expected to sell for around A\$1000. Please contact Abilitytech to place yourself on a list for immediate advice regarding its price and availability in Australia.

Dictating letters by letters

There are many people who find the new generation of speech recognition programs to be less helpful and accessible than their "discrete speech" predecessors (such as Dragon Dictate). These users lack the clarity of diction to enable modern speech recognition systems to interpret their speech, yet they can be understood by those around them and by those on the telephone.

There is a helpful trick that may allow such users to get some value from the newer programs. We cannot guarantee success, but our suggestion may be worth a try. You will probably have to "borrow" another user's voice profile to get started (rename it, of course). In Dragon Naturally Speaking enter "Spell Mode". In this mode the program is only listening for the sounds "a", "b", "c" etc, or the Communication Alphabet (Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, etc) and a couple of basic formatting commands. In this mode the program is not trying to interpret the user's speech so much as to identify these specific sounds.

For some users, dictation letter-by-letter in this mode will be more comfortable and productive than trying to enter text by the keyboard or by a scanning system. It may certainly be worth a try.



Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred Edition \$359.

Scroll TRACK

This is a ridiculously cheap trackball. I took it home to use, just to see how flimsy a device at this price would be... now 12 months later, I confess that it has been reliable and comfortable. I refuse to return it to the office!

I know that trackballs are personal items, so I can't guarantee your experience will be the same as mine. But for \$40 – you don't have a lot to lose.



Tablet PC

Microsoft's new Tablet PC operating system will be released on November 7. Data can be entered by stylus or touch screen.

iMicro Mini Mouse

Interesting. Precise optical sensor USB mouse, programmable buttons (3), weight 1.5 oz, 5 year warranty. Mac OS 9.0 or later.

Available for \$50.

Three keyboards...

Logitech Cordless Freedom Optical Keyboard & Mouse

This keyboard supports USB and PS/2 keyboard ports. Multimedia controls allow control of MP3s, DVDs, and CDs. It has a detachable palmrest. Requires Windows ME/2000/98.



Little Fingers Standard

Features lower case key labels, smaller keys with colour codes, palm rest and a 3 year warranty. Has a "dual mode" feature, so that a second keyboard can be plugged into the Little Fingers and used simultaneously. Only \$130.

Belkin ErgoBoard Keyboard

Integrated wrist supports, split-key ergo design, 3D design rises and falls for optimal reach comfort. An inexpensive option at \$80.



Compaq and Hewlett Packard

Impact of the merger on models and availability

These companies have merged and the "Roadmap" for merging is as follows:

- HP Business desktop PCs and notebooks will migrate to the Compaq platform over the next 9-12 months.
- Both Compaq Presario and HP Pavilion lines of consumer desktops and notebooks will continue to be offered.
- Jornada products will be phased out over 2002. The Compaq iPAQ Pocket PC line will be retained, renamed as the HP iPAQ Pocket PC. The best of the HP Jornada technology will be engineered into this platform.

So now you know.

Whale Mouse

Ergonomic design, contoured palm rest, promotes use of larger muscles and minimises use of smaller muscles, easily adjusts up to 1.5" to fit various hand sizes.

Sells for US \$69.



Using a database to assist people with memory problems

A new use for FileMaker Pro

OK – FileMaker is an easy-to-use business database. What has that got to do with brain injury and memory impairments? Quite simply, a well-designed database can help people with memory impairment to retrieve information, whether that be schoolwork, general knowledge or simple jokes to relay at a dinner party. The software takes over the task of retrieving information. The user has only to learn the skill of information retrieval within the structure of the software – one skill, to access knowledge that is stored reliably in another medium. I'm sure we haven't yet tapped the potential of this type of software for people with brain injury.

FileMaker Pro is a good choice for this task. It is easy to customise. And it has a version that operates on the Palm OS.

The Adis Door

Doors can be one of the most expensive parts of home automation (environmental control systems). We have found a system that retro-fits to most existing doors. The result is a system that costs \$1500 instead of three times that amount. Contact Abilitytech for more details.

We have one of the Adis door systems on display at Ability House.



All-in Ones

Printer, scanner and copier in one device

Convenience is an important issue for a person with a disability. So why not have your printer, scanner, photocopier and fax as one device? Happily this is now possible with the new, much-improved range of devices.

Consider for example, the **Hewlett Packard PSC 750**. It is an inkjet printer (600 dpi black and up to 2400 x 1200 dpi for colour) with speeds of 11 ppm (black) and 8.5 ppm (colour). It is also a 600 x 2400 dpi flatbed colour scanner (up to 36 bit colour). It is a flatbed photocopier, with 11 copies per minute (black) and 8 copies per minute (colour), and 25-400% reduce/enlarge.

It comes with OCR software, has USB for Mac and Windows connectivity and weighs in at 8.64 kg. At a cost of around \$500, this is an impressive unit.



Similar is the **HP OfficeJet V40**, with an upright rather than a flatbed format. It has a 600 dpi black and 2400 x 1200 dpi colour printer, a black or colour photocopier, with 20 page automatic document feeder, and 50% - 200% reduction/enlargement, colour scanner (36 bit) and colour fax (with or without a PC). Again, all for around \$500.

News

South Coast Road Trip

Ability staff will be visiting the south coast in September 2002. We will be conducting workshops in Nowra and Batemans Bay on 9-11 September, before attending the VORN Expo to be held at Wollongong TAFE on 12-13 September. Please contact the office if you would like an assessment, training, technical support or if you would like to attend a workshop.

Training Seminars

Training seminars will soon be conducted at Ability House, Seaforth. The Seminars, aimed at therapists, rehabilitation counsellors, special education teachers and others, will cover two topics:

1. Home automation (environmental control) options; and
2. Voice recognition.

Each Seminar will be for a half day (one in the morning and one in the afternoon), so it will be possible for a participant to attend both Seminars on the one day. Lunch will be provided for those participants. Participants will receive hands-on experience with the technology, and will be tutored in the most effective way to make recommendations and give advice for their clients.

Please contact the Abilitytech office for details and bookings.

Cerebral Palsy Conference

Graeme Smith will be presenting a paper at the Australian Cerebral Palsy Association conference in Sydney on 19 September 2002. The paper will examine issues relating to the use of computer technology to enhance employment options for people with cerebral palsy.

ABILITY TECHNOLOGY LIMITED

ABN 26 090 463 997

29 Frenchs Forest Rd Seaforth NSW 2092

Post: Private Box 44, 145 Sydney Rd Fairlight NSW 2094

Ph: (02) 9907-9736 Fax: (02) 9907-9599

Email: info@abilitytech.com.au Web: www.abilitytech.com.au

