**ABILITY** Technology

# Ability Newsletter

# Livescribe
## A smart pen

As the web site states: "The Pulse smartpen revolutionizes the act of writing by recording and linking audio to what you put on paper. Tap on words or drawings in your notes, and the smartpen replays recorded audio from the time you were writing. Transfer notes to your PC to backup, replay, and share them online".

The special Pulse Pen includes an audio jack, speaker, infrared camera, microphone, LED display, USB connector and ink!  The Livescribe Desktop software (Windows and Mac) allows you to transfer your notes and recordings to your computer to play them back.  It also permits a search function.

The Livescribe system does require special dot paper. Microdots printed on Livescribe dot paper enable the infrared camera at the tip of the Pulse smartpen to track everything you write down. Special Controls at the bottom of each page help you navigate pen applications and features.  The good news is that you can now print out your own dot paper, on your own printer.



The cost?  The 2 GB version costs $329 while the smaller 1 GB version costs $249. Available from (http://www.smartpen.com.au)

## Notetaking

# Evernote - Replacement for a paper notebook

This useful utility is a free program. It is available for Windows and Macintosh, and can synchronise to mobile devices such as the iPhone and Windows Mobile devices.

What does it do? It allows you to organize all kinds of information - text, pictures and even screen clippings from web sites (VERY useful). Entries can be labelled, tagged and categorised. It has a very powerful search facility, even searching for text within pictures!

I use Evernote as a replacement for my paper notebook. Any jottings that I would normally put into a notebook I put into Evernote instead. I enter them once and within moments they appear on my home computer, work computer and iPhone. How to get stuff into Evernote? Here's what they say:

"Memorable stuff is always happening, so we've created lots of ways for you to get that stuff into Evernote:

**Create**  Create new notes using desktop, web, and mobile versions of Evernote

**Snap**  Take a snapshot using your camera phone or webcam. We'll even recognize the text in the image.

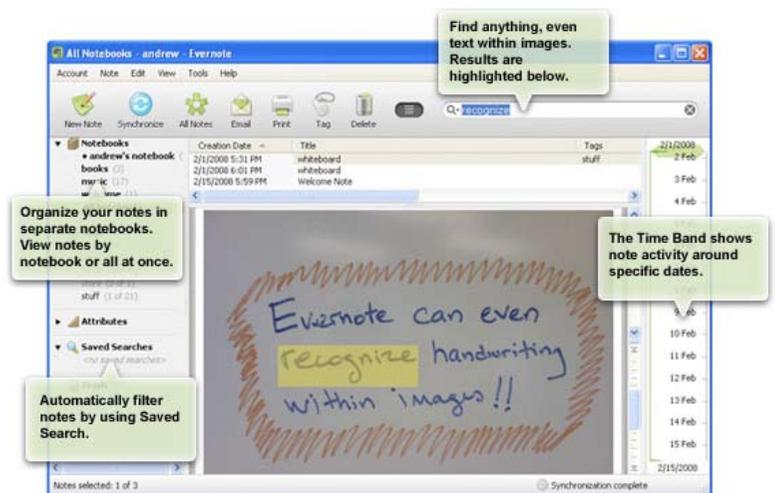**Clip**  Clip entire webpages, screenshots, and just about anything else you can copy

**Drag-n-drop**  Drag and drop content into the desktop clients for Mac and Windows

**Email**  Email notes directly into your account using your personalized email address

**Scan**  Scan receipts, recipes, tags, brochures, and anything else into Evernote

**Record**  Record audio wherever you are and listen to it whenever you want"

Get Evernote at: http://evernote.com/

VABILITY Technology

# Notetaking

## **Fusion Notetaker** with text to speech option

The Fusion Keyboard is a portable notetaker that features a large LCD screen and a choice of font sizes, word prediction, keyboarding tuition and optional text to speech. It's Windows and Mac compatible. Fusion includes a word processer (with optional word prediction) and keyboard tuition. Students log in to access their own documents (password protection is optional). Documents are named, and can be saved in folders if desired. Fusion has a full sized keyboard, similar to a laptop computer.

The text is displayed on an LCD screen with optional backlight. Five font sizes are available. Word prediction is included in the system - this provides a suggested list of words as you type. Save text in Fusion's memory, then transfer it to your computer or printer by pointing it at an infrared receiver (included), and pressing send. The text will be sent into any text based application on your computer - such as a word processor or email program. Text documents can also be uploaded from a computer to the Fusion via a CF card. An internal rechargeable battery included. Fully charged battery will provide approximately 30 hours of use.

Fusion Text to Speech package provides synthesised (computer generated) speech output of letters, words, sentences or an entire document. Speech output available through and external speaker (can be heard by plugging in either a headset or speaker) or internal speaker.

The Fusion is 29.5 x 24 x 5 cm, and weighs 1.06 kg. A Visiflex keyguard and keyskin are available.

Three packages are available, starting from $628 for the basic model (no speech) to $945 for the model with an internal speaker.

**ABILITY** **Technology**

# Notetaking

# Pegatech Mobile Notetaker

The Mobile Notetaker enables users to write on plain paper with a cordless, standard-size pen and simultaneously create a digital copy of anything they write - without using a digitizing surface. This effectively turns every PC into a Tablet-PC compatible.  It enables use of digital ink applications and utilities available with Windows Vista™ and Microsoft Office® 2007 applications, including Vista Journal and OneNote, as well as providing full mouse capabilities.

Mac users are also catered for. Mac Users can now take handwritten notes on any paper using Pegasus digital Pen that have the look & feel of any other regular pen during meetings, classrooms or at home away from their Mac.  Mouse functionalities enable to write notes into Mac iWork'08 applications and convert them to text, using built in conversion to text feature.

The Digital Pen can also be used for drawings inside applications such as Adobe® Illustrator®, Photoshop® Etc.

50+ handwritten pages (A4) can be stored in the Digital Pen flash memory. The rechargeable battery enables 10 hours continues writing.

It sells in the US for US$100.



ABILITY **Technology**
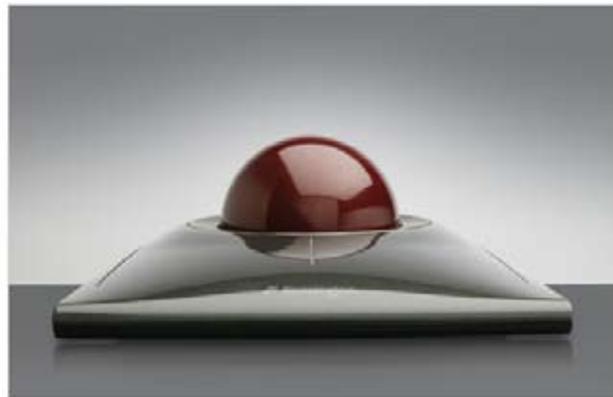
**Computer Bits**

# SlimBlade Trackball
## New offering from Kensington

A new trackball from Kensington. The unique user interface shows users - right on the computer screen itself - which mode or function is enabled. This means that a user's hand never needs to leave the ball and their eyes never need to leave the computer screen. This revolutionary design allows users to focus on enjoying their digital content - not on the interface - and is "especially valuable for providing instant feedback for immersive experiences".

Navigation mode controls the cursor and scrolling; Media mode controls volume, play/pause, stop and next, while View mode zooms in/out and pans for accurate and efficient photo editing.

The low-profile shape and sleek stationary design keeps users comfortable while eliminating the need for a wrist pad and saving desktop space

The new trackball is Mac & PC compatible - Including Mac OS® 10.5X, Windows Vista® and Windows® XP.  Australian pricing has yet to be finalised.

**ABILITY Technology**

# Computer Bits

**ABILITY Technology**

# Wireless USB Docking Station

Plugging and unplugging your USB peripherals each time you want to use them is an impossible task for many of our clients. It is also a risky task for inexperienced carers. The Kensington Wireless USB Docking Station may provide a solution to this problem. It may also enable a notebook user to access a range of peripherals, including a large monitor, wirelessly, thus avoiding having two networked computers, as some people do.

It enables the user to:

* Access an external monitor wirelessly. It has a DVI port but includes a DVI to VGA adapter. It works with widescreen monitors up to 1680x1050 and standard size monitors up to 1600x1200

* Print

* Use a keyboard and mouse

* Access an external hard drive wirelessly

Five USB ports let you connect a range of peripherals. The wireless connection is reported to give the user access within a 15 foot range of the docking station. It has an Audio out port for external speakers.

The Kensington Wireless USB Docking Station requires a Certified Wireless USB adapter (sold separately), or Certified Wireless USB-enabled notebook computer.

Australian pricing has not yet been finalised. In the US it sells for around US$230.

ECU

# Possum Primo!

Possum have a long history of involvement in environmental control systems in the UK.  Now they are becoming available in Australia.  The Primo! has been released here and other Possum products may follow.

The key features of the Primo! are:

  * High definition dynamic screen, clear graphic display - 104 generic icons with text labels
    * Touch screen for direct access or use as a large switch for scanning
    * Two input sockets providing single or 2 switch scanning control
    * User adjustable, volume, brightness and scan speeds
    * Carer mode to change telephone numbers and basic functions
    * Two programmable auxiliary outputs for control of third party devices
    * RF output to operate Possum relays & pager
    * Telephone book with 30 stored numbers with fast dial option, or dial any phone number
    * Telephone symbols for mobile, home, work numbers
    * 18 'get started' device templates - TV, DVD, bed, VCR, etc. Allows ustom template design.
    * Macros (scenes) fully editable up to 20 functions per macro
    * Up to 16 hours battery life (dependent upon usage) with fast recharge time
    * Visual and audible low battery indication
    * Full, on board programming
    * PC back up software with email option
    * Wall, floor, table or wheelchair mounting options

The Primo is 190mm (W) x 100mm (H) x 44 mm (D).  It weighs 529g. Price is A$1,495.

VABILITY Technology

**ECU**

# Logitech Harmony 1000i

This is a generic 3.5" touch-screen remote control device. You can train commands from existing remotes, but it is much easier to obtain the codes for different products from the Internet, where Logitech claim to have codes for 5000+ brands and 175,000+ IR devices. Up to 15 devices can be controlled with the unit.

The device is light and recharges constantly in its cradle. Programming is reasonably straightforward. It can also be programmed for the IR Mini Controller, giving access to the world of X-10 and hence control of lights, lamps, fans, heaters and other appliances.

Logitech has designed the remote to have a maximum of four layers of menus, so users don't get buried in an overcomplicated menu tree. All in all, it seems like a good system, but as with any new remote, it will take some getting used to. You can also create customised buttons in the Harmony software. However, we didn't see a way to create your own button design.

The device has some "hard buttons" as well, for common functions, but it is a simple matter to program these same commands into touch-screen buttons.

From our experience the touch process itself creates some problems. You need to touch the icons slightly off centre sometimes and your finger needs to linger for the touch to be recognised. But the good news is that it will work with mouth sticks and other hard objects.

Both Mac and Windows are supported.

Cost? Prices range from $270 to $870! So shop around.

A very useful device.

**ABILITY Technology**

ECU

# Disc Manager 100

This product stores and retrieves up to 100 discs (CDs, DVDs, BlueRay). It does not load the discs for playing, so don't get over-excited.  But what it does is still useful.  It essentially catalogues your discs and spits out the ones you want.

Once you load the OpdiTracker software on your computer (Mac and Windows supported) you can then load into the device your:

* Music CD's (content is automatically catalogued)

* DVD Movies

* Blu-Ray Discs

* Photo DVD's

* Game Discs (X-Box & PlayStation)

* Data Discs

This helps you organise your disc collection, catalogue them, store
them safely and select them on request.  You can also keep a track of discs that have been loaned out.

Power & data are transmitted via a single USB cable (provided). Because no external power plug is used, the system can be used anywhere in the world (regardless of voltage variances). Up to 5 can be stacked, holding 500 discs in total, all running off the single USB connection.

Cost is A$199 per unit.  Go the http://discmanager100.com

ABILITY
Technology

# Phones

## WebCapTel - US Service for People with Hearing Loss

WebCapTel lets you enjoy telephone conversations with the convenience of online captions. You make / receive phone calls using any phone you want, while viewing captions of the call in the Internet browser window on your computer. The standard CapTel service requires a special CapTel phone. Behind the scenes, a specially trained operator at the CapTel captioning service transcribes everything the other party says into written text, using the very latest in voice-recognition technology. The written text appears on a bright, easy-to-read display window built into the CapTel phone. The captions appear almost simultaneously with the spoken word, allowing the CapTel phone users to understand everything that is said - either by hearing it or by reading it.

But WebCapTel service, announced in 2008 by Sprint,  is a new free web-based service that allows a person who can speak but has challenges hearing over the phone, to read word-for-word captions of their calls on a web browser. This new service is expected to help an estimated 23 million Americans with hearing loss, who may face challenges hearing over the telephone.  With Sprint WebCapTel, users can make and receive calls on their own telephone, cell phone, land-line, or even an amplified phone. During the call, if they have difficulty hearing what is being said, they can log into www.sprintcaptel.com and read written captions of everything their caller speaks. Captions appear virtually at the same time as the person speaks, allowing users to enjoy a natural telephone conversation.

When displayed on a web browser, the user can change the font size, color, and even background. When a call is completed, the user can save the captioned conversation for later review, allowing the user to concentrate on being involved in the conversation.

"WebCapTel puts people with hearing loss back in control of their own telephone conversations - any time, anywhere – by capitalizing on the convenience and prevalence of the Internet," states Robert Engelke, president of Ultratec, Inc., the company that developed CapTel technology. "It gives people with hearing loss the confidence to rely on the telephone again, leveling the playing field for professional opportunities, in social situations, and in matters of personal safety."

This free service is available for Sprint customers anywhere in the United States and within US Territories. We believe a similar service for Australia is being explored.

**ABILITY Technology**

# Phones

## iPhone Accessibility

A group at the University of Washington have created a prototype of a technology that makes touch-screen devices such as the iPhone accessible to people with vision impairments. You can see (ironically) the YouTube video of the technique at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=496IAx6_xys.

It just shows that the barriers to accessibility are not technological, but a matter of the will.

Meanwhile a stylus has become available for the iPhone.  The Pogo Stylus features an ultra-light aluminum body with an anodized finish and laser graphics. The soft tip glides easily over the surface of the display.  It is available in Australia for around $33.

## X-Lite SoftPhone

This is a very popular softphone when using VoIP for phone calls. It enables you to utilise whatever access method you already employ for computer access.  The quality of VoIP calls will depend on your computer's sound system and the quality/speed of your internet connection.

You can download X-Lite (Mac and Windows) from: http://www.counterpath.net/x-lite.html

ABILITY **Technology**

# From the Workshop

## Joystick to Mouse ... now available for Vista

The latest version (1.78) of OnScreen (formerly called My-T-Mouse) is now Vista compatible. It can be purchased online from http://www.imgpresents.com/onscreen/onscreen.htm for US$119.95.

## New software for Andrea Superbeam Array Microphone

New software is available for the popular Andrea Superbeam Array desktop microphone.  Go to: www.andreaelectronics.com/customer2.htm

## Australia's Most Expensive Internet Plan?

One of our clients with a disability has an internet service that was set up through Telstra (NextG Wireless G Fast 1 GB).   Some of the monthly bills have been astronomical – like $1400+ (for 9GB excess usage)! This is the most expensive internet connection we have ever experienced.  The account payer was never informed of the excess usage. Complaints were lodged but no action taken by Telstra.

The lessons are:

1.      Get a plan that is capped.  This means that when the limit is reached, the connection is slowed rather than the meter clocking up ridiculously large bills.

2.      Shop around for better deals than the Telstra one our client used.

**ABILITY Technology**

# Ability Activities

## Vacancy - Occupational Therapist

Our work is still expanding and so we are seeking an additional occupational therapist to join our team.  The position can be full-time or part-time. We would prefer someone with experience in assistive technology, or at least some solid clinical experience plus an interest in AT.  Call or email for more information.

## Goodbye Alan

Meanwhile a hearty thanks to ALAN BIMSON, who has decided to retire after 11 years of faithful service.  Over the years Alan has contributed in areas as diverse as sales, product testing, technical support, environmental control and web design.  He will be missed. Well done Alan!

## Burglary

Sadly the Ability office was burgled just prior to Christmas, resulting in the loss of all of our assessment notebook computers and significant damage to doors and locks.  This has set our work back significantly and we are only now getting the replacement equipment in operation.

## Trips Coming Up

Forthcoming trips include **West Wyalong, Canberra** and **Moree**.  If you have clients in these vicinities then please contact us to take advantage of our presence.

## ARATA State Meeting

The NSW Chapter of ARATA is having a sharing meeting, to be held at CATS (Northcott Society, 1 Fennell St North Parramatta) on Thursday 19 March from 11 am to 2 pm. Call/email us if you'd like to attend.