

Ability Newsletter

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Evluent Keyboard

"Mouse friendly"

Evluent are the makers of the popular *Vertical Mouse*. They have now released a keyboard with the numeric pad on the left - this enables a mouse device (for a right-hander) to be positioned closer, resulting in less strain on the arm and shoulder. The keyboard retails for \$109 inc.



Wrist Support

Evluent also makes a *PostureRight Wrist Support*. It has a contoured surface that reduces forearm twisting and increases the contact area, giving greater comfort. It sells here for \$66 inc.



The Evluent *Vertical Mouse* continues to be available in left and right hand versions.

Computer Access

FrogPad

Another challenge to the standard keyboard! The FrogPad keypad is small - 5 x 3.5 x 0.4 inches - and weighs only 4.9 ozs. However the keys are the same size as those on a standard keyboard. It is a standard USB plug-and-play keyboard, with full keyboard functionality. It works on PCs and Macs, with beta drivers for mobile phones and PDAs. Left and right hand versions are available.

The makers claim that 86% of the time you only need to press one key, and you never need to press more than two keys at one time. Typically the FrogPad is held in one hand and operated with the other, although it could certainly function as a tool for one-handed typists.

The key layout is optimised around the keys most frequently used and around the strongest fingers of the hand. It comes with a tutorial. Typing speeds of 40 wpm are suggested, after 6-10 hours of practice.

A Bluetooth version is available.

The cost is US \$149.



Computer Access

Libretto is back

Some will remember with fondness the little Toshiba Libretto from years past. It's back, packed with more punch in its tiny shell. How tiny? Well, it weighs 791g and measures 210 x 1565 x 29mm.

It has a 7.2" WXGA TFT display (1280 x 768). It is powered by an Intel Pentium-M 753 running at 1.2 GHz. It comes with 512 Mb RAM, expandable to 1 GB. It also has a 60 GB hard drive. This is no toy.

The Libretto also comes with a DVD Dock, which houses a DVD-RW drive. It has 802.11g WiFi, a 56k modem and Bluetooth 2.0, while ports include 1 x fast Ethernet, 2 x USB 2.0, Microphone, Headphone, 1 x RJ11, 1 x RJ45, 1 x Firewire, 1 x SD Slots and a Biometric Fingerprint Reader. Battery life is "up to 5 hours".

The cost is not small however, at \$3,400.



New Five Finger Typist

A new version of Five Finger Typist, a typing tutor for people who type with one hand, is due for release in the next few weeks. Many new features will be included. The cost will be a very reasonable \$99.



Computer Access

textHELP 8 now available

A new version of the popular literacy support program, *Read & Write*, is now available. Some of the enhancements to textHELP **Read&Write 8 GOLD** include *Fact Mapper* – To help organise facts visually on screen, multiple options for toolbar positioning, activity specific toolbars, expanded prediction database, improved speech output, updated PDF Aloud, user-friendly Fact Folder, and extended Teacher's Toolkit. It sells for \$790.

Enhancements to textHELP **Read&Write Version 8** include: multiple options for toolbar positioning, new look toolbars, expanded prediction database, extended Teacher's Toolkit and study skills toolbar. It sells for \$380.

Clicker 5

Many of you who have purchased the first release of Clicker 5 may have noticed that while there have been some great improvements, such as the grid management feature, there were also some glaring omissions. In particular there was no single switch access option, and it no longer worked with Penfriend word prediction. The good news is that there is now an update available; the bad news is that this update does not solve all of the issues, and in some ways creates more.

Clicker 5 still does not work with Penfriend, though we have been assured they are working on this. Single switch scanning is activated however this can only be accessed (apart from the exception below) using the Crick Switch Interface box, that retails for \$349 (making it one of the most expensive switch interfaces). If you do not have a Crick Switch Interface you can access switch scanning by using the F7 and F8 keys on the keyboard, so those of you with IntelliKeys should be able to set up switch access without the expense of purchase a Crick Interface Box. We are investigating other options, such as alternative switch interfaces.

New users should also be prepared to purchase a training guide or attend training sessions, as the user guide supplied is very minimal.

To download the update, go to <http://www.cricksoft.com/support/>.



Home and Phone Control

Nohandcom

"*nohandcom* is a fully integrated accessibility solution that provides an easy access to today's most advanced mobile devices like Smartphones and PDA-Phones. It enables even severely handicapped persons to control the full range of their embedded functions like for instance telephony, writing, games, email, internet and much more."

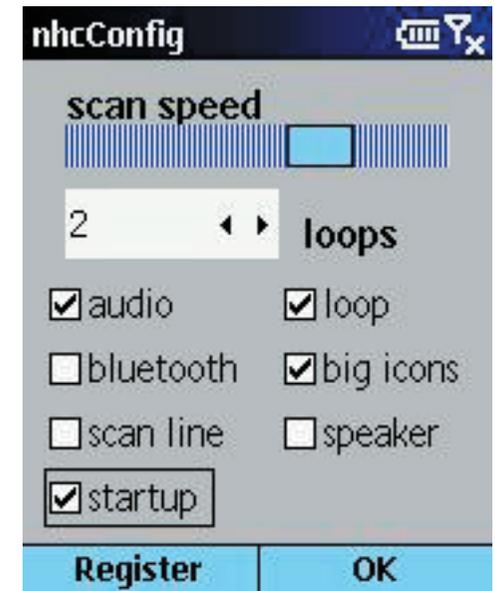
The basic idea behind *nohandcom* is to provide unlimited access to today's most advanced devices by ensuring that all the input methods available for normal use are being emulated. For that, *nohandcom* has to put an additional layer between the device's operating system and the user. This layer is called the *nohandcom* control solution.

In order to make the device switch accessible, one needs an adapter that connects to the device's serial cable. Various switch adapters are available. A bluetooth adapter is also available. It enables wireless control of the devices and connects directly to all control switches.

Some of the input methods supported include:

- Emulation of all hardware buttons
- Different scanning views (overview, single etc.)
- Mouse cursor: fully replaces the stylus
- Crosshairs: fast alternative for the mouse cursor
- Keyboard scanning: text input
- Native Scanning: text input through the SIP (Software Input Panel)
- Supports any SIP keyboard: word prediction and symbols in any language available!
- Configuration "on the fly"
- No extra speaker needed
- Supports landscape mode (comes in handy when using it as a communicator)

Read more at their web site: www.nohandcom.com



Home and Phone Control

GEWA PROGRESS

The venerable GEWA PROG has been a favourite ECU option for for many people. Now there is a model that features a dynamic colour display that can be customised with pictures, symbols and sounds! The PROGRESS is built around the iPAQH5550 Pocket PC. It is powerful - able to access up to 256 infrared functions. It also has one relay output for controlling an external alarm.

It can be trained from existing remotes. It comes with 30 pre-made pages and hundreds of pictures and symbols are included.

Access is via direct selection (on the touch screen) or via switch scanning (two sockets included). Cost is \$4,200.



PROGRESS Star/Micro USB

These provide the same functionality as the PROGRESS, but on your PC. They are USB trainable infrared transmitters that are used in conjunction with PROGRESS PC software.

The Star includes two switch jacks and enables operation via switch scanning. With the Micro USB you would use whatever computer access devices/methods you already use.

The cost is \$1045 for the Star and \$980 for the Micro USB.

You can download the software and manual without cost at: <http://www.gewa.se/english/download/loadfram.html>

A tremendous development for people who require customisation of the interface to enable them to have some control over selected home facilities.

Sample Page



Ability Services

Online Technical Support and Assistance

Imagine an assistive technology expert sitting next to you, wherever you are, to provide you with advice, technical support and training. While we are unable to provide that level of direct personal support, especially for people in rural areas, our new TechAssist service does the next best thing. Through modern internet-based technology, we can share control of your computer from our base in Sydney. We can see your screen and you can see ours. Through such a system we are able to diagnose problems, give advice and even provide training.

The system works on broadband and dialup internet connections. Ideally we can talk with the client (or a support person) on the phone during the session, although a "chat box" is also available.

Privacy is safeguarded during the session. All support requests must be initiated or approved by the client. Ability staff are unable to access the client's computer without the client's approval.



Already we have assisted people with a variety of tasks, including:

- Setting and running programs such as Clicker 5 and Dragon Naturally Speaking
- Problems with backing up data
- Problems with synchronising a PDA to a desktop
- Assisting a person to use textHELP Read & Write to undertake specific functions

We are extremely excited by this new service and what it means!

The TechAssist project has been funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training through the Regional Disability Liaison Officer/Disability Co-ordination Officer (RDLO-DCO) Special Project Funding. It is a pilot project, to see how effective this type of support can be.

There is **NO COST** for this service until the end of April 2006.



Ability Services

Ability Training Day

One-day intensive: Friday 7 March 2006

***Computer access *Environmental control**

We are now extending our training schedule by offering an intensive one-day training seminar on Friday 7 April 2006. Be early for this one!

You will have a hands-on opportunity to see and sample all of the latest technology, in the areas of **computer access** and **environmental control**.

This seminar will suit occupational therapists, special education teachers

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

Methods for controlling lights, TV, curtain, doors and fans. Control options via remote control, touch screen, voice operation or computer.

- See how these systems are setup and used
- See how these systems work
- Study the pros and cons of each
- Learn how to assess needs in this area

COMPUTER ACCESS

Alternative text entry and mouse control options, both hardware and software.

- Including speech recognition
- See portable notetakers as well
- Also literacy development software
- Learn how to assess needs in this area



PLEASE! Book early for this course! Places are strictly limited. The cost is \$250 per person, including a great lunch, notes and CD.

Ability Activities

University Course: Technology for Life



Graeme Smith giving an address at the Global Entropolis technology conference in Singapore in September 2005

Nearly 50 final year Occupational Therapy students at the University of Sydney will emerge from their course later this year with a greater awareness of assistive technology. This is because they have chosen a new elective - *Technology for Life* - which will be offered for the first time in 2006.

The course is being designed and taught by Graeme Smith and Lynda Hutchinson from Ability Technology and will commence on 9 March. It includes a mixture of lectures, visits, guest speakers, group activities and challenging assignments.

Topics to be covered include:

- Computer access
- Communication devices
- Multi-sensory environment technology
- Environmental Control Systems

The course will also examine various assessment tools and processes, as well as an evaluation of government assistive technology policies (or lack thereof) in areas such as employment, education and aged care.

Ability Videos

Ability Technology will soon have available training and information videos, covering a range of assistive technology options. These digital movies and screen action movies will be able to be emailed to clients or sent to them during on-line support sessions (see Page 8).

The videos have been generously funded jointly by the Manly-Warringah Leagues Club and the Dee Why RSL Club.



Ability News

Brain Injury Presentation

Dr Graeme Smith will be presenting a paper on Assistive Technology and Employment for People with Brain Injury, at the inaugural National Brain Injury Australia Conference, on 31 May to 2 June 2006. The conference is being held on the Gold Coast.

Ability Staff

There have been some staff changes in recent months, but our present team is:

- * Graeme Smith (Director)
- * Lynda Hutchinson (Senior Occupational Therapist)
- * Lucy Acheson (Occupational Therapist)
- * Alan Bimson (Product, web and ECU guru)
- * Jeff Taylor (Technical officer)
- * Leigh Lockrey (Research assistant)
- * Deidre Hopkins (Office Manager)

Loan computer

Doing without a computer, in the event of malfunction or theft, can be a tough time for a person who has come to rely on their PC. An on-site warranty may save cost but doesn't guarantee a quick turnaround. To meet this need we plan to have a notebook computer available for loan. It could be set up with the basic access facilities required by the client, enough to keep them connected until their own computer is returned or replaced.



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