

TechnoTalk

The TASC Newsletter

Volume 13 Number 3

March 2004

Editorial

Welcome to the March Edition of TechnoTalk and my first editorial for the year. I've just returned from 10 weeks long service leave and would like to thank the TASC team for keeping the "show on the road" while I've been away.

The start of the year has been very busy with the technology team already providing outreach services to the ACT and Orange/Dubbo regions. We are now making plans for a visit to Moruya in May.

TASC Seating has also been busy with Sarah Whatman filling in as a locum until early April. Christine Vasiliou has started with us 3 days a week on secondment for 6 months from the Adult Resource Program. This will make a significant impact on our capacity to see clients in TASC Seating.

TechnoTalk this month includes the regular Review of Notetakers table. This popular resource has the latest information and updates on some of the well known products. Kerrie has spent time investigating the Link Plus which is yet to hit our Australian shores. The table should provide you a preview of its features.

Finally don't forget to get your registrations in for ARATA 2004, June 2-4. The full program looks great and should have something for everyone. Details can be found at www.e-bility.com/arata/index.php.

Happy Reading,

Jo Ford



by Kerrie Fry

Review of Notetakers

For students who have physical difficulties with handwriting, but find typing easier, there are some very good lightweight notetaking devices that can be used as a "pen and paper substitute". Notetakers are portable dedicated word processors that consist of a near full-size keyboard and a small LCD screen showing up to 8 lines of text at the one time. They can be connected to a computer to download documents for editing and printing or directly to a printer. Most now have the ability for infra-red transfer of data to a computer or printer as well.

Notetakers are portable in terms of weight and battery life compared with laptop computers, are quick to start up, generally simple to use and are far more convenient to integrate into the classroom. While notetakers do not meet the needs of all students in terms of access to special software, storage capacity or screen quality, they can provide a cost effective alternative to a laptop for some.

Our comparison table highlights the main features of notetakers. We have recently updated this table as most of the models in our last review (2003) have been upgraded. **Link Plus** has all the features of the classic Link device plus a larger display window, word prediction and a single switch scanning option using an onscreen keyboard. The **Dana** now has wireless capabilities for e-mail and Internet access and both the **Dana** and **Laser PC6** now have a predictive word processor available. The **Calculuscribe is no longer available**. Refer to the supplier or the following websites for further information on the notetakers reviewed in this article <http://www.assistivetech.com/prod-index.htm>, <http://www.alphasmart.com/> or <http://www.perfectsolutions.com/>. We still strongly recommend trialling devices before purchasing in the environment where they will be used – you can contact the suppliers or technology services such as TASC to do this.

Features important to consider when choosing possible notetaker options include: weight; battery life; storage requirements; the size, position and quality of the screen; font sizes; client's word processing requirements; editing facilities; ease of saving and transferring documents; compatibility with available computers and printers; rate enhancement or text-to-speech; after sales service; training requirements.




Please note that the comparison table attached is a working document and is regularly updated. Please call us if you have any questions, comments and/or feedback.






THE SPASTIC CENTRE

The Spastic Centre A.B.N. 45 000 062 288 * (The Cerebral Palsy Association), 189 Allambie Rd, Allambie Heights NSW 2100
PO Box 184 Brookvale NSW 2100 Phone 02 9972 8183 Fax 02 9451 9215 Email tasc@tscnsw.org.au

Comparison/Reviews of Notetakers

Feature	<p style="text-align: center;">Link Plus</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Alpha Smart 3000IR</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dana or Dana Wireless</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Laser PC6</p> 
Power Supply	AC adapter 4 AA rechargeable NiMH batteries lasting approx 8 hours Hibernation mode Auto save with low batteries Built-in battery charger	AC adapter; 3 AA batteries providing 200-500 hours of typical use. Optional rechargeable NiMH battery pack Hibernation mode Auto power off	AC adapter Rechargeable battery pack supplied 3AA batteries (not included) Customised auto shut-off interval, alarm options and sounds	AC adapter; 4AA batteries (optional rechargeable NiMH battery) 36 hrs continuous use with batteries 20 hrs continuous use with rechargeable battery Adjustable auto shut-down feature
Weight	1.0 kg	0.91kg	0.91kg	1.25kg
Display	Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) 16 lines by 60 characters or enlarged font option 8 lines by 60 characters	LCD 4 lines by 40 characters Can't change font size Non hinged display	LCD with backlighting 8 lines x 90 characters Write pad, touch pad screen and stylus pen, on-screen keyboard and standard keyboard options included Adjustable contrast Non-hinged display Display can be changed between horizontal and vertical orientations	LCD 8 lines x 80 characters or 4 lines x 40 characters with contrast adjustment for larger screen font Optional video expansion port to view display on TV screen Font size adjustable up to max of 4mm. Can enhance range of fonts by downloading additional software
Keyboard Layout	QWERTY or Alphabetical	QWERTY, right, left, DVORAK. Translucent keyboard case	QWERTY, DVORAK, right and left	QWERTY
Numeric Keys	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. Scientific calculator, access via main menu
On/off switch	Not certain on new model. Link had small sliding switch at the back of device.	Easy to reach key on the keyboard	Easy to reach key on keyboard. Option to select alternative keys to turn on/off	Small button on left side of device
Word Processor	64 pages of text in 8 files Simple save and retrieval system Basic formatting options: cut, copy, paste and tab Compact flash card slot for backup	100 pages of text in 8 files (approx 12 pages per file) Simple process to save and open files Includes cut, copy and paste	16 MB of memory. Digital and Multimedia compatible slots allow addition of memory (32 or 64MB), attachment of devices & backup of data. Can assign saved files to 8 separate function keys for easier access and customizing. Uses AlphaWord, a full featured word processor. Simple process to save and open files. Includes cut, copy, and paste. Formatting options of paragraph formatting, justify, bold, underline, italics, font selection available (additional fonts can be installed). Variable fonts and sizes	256K = Up to 45 Word processor files available / 14 pages max of text / 100 pages max text overall. Digital hard drive stores up to 121 files with passwords, 200 pages of text. 2 databases – Database / Telephone Directory; Spreadsheet. Spread sheet Lotus compatible (send to Clarisworks, MS Works, etc) Text formatting: Cut & paste, Tab, Underline, Bold, Find (Search and Replace), Margins (help menu in word processor), Header and Footer options.

Spell Checker	Yes	Yes - using a 70 000 word dictionary. Easy to access key on the keyboard Can disable the spell checker but can't add words to the existing dictionary.	Yes. Thesaurus also available	Yes – 80 000 words Access through Main Menu or within word processor
Sticky Keys	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Key Repeat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Text-to-Speech	Yes Synthesised speech	No	No	Yes. Additional feature option
Rate Enhancement	In-built word prediction Abbreviation expansion Instant messages	Can add Co:Writer Smart Applet for word prediction or Writer Tools (includes Spell Check + Thesaurus)	Can add TextPlus for word prediction or other Palm OS word prediction software.	Yes. In-built prompted word prediction. Option to choose prediction to appear after 1, 2, or 3 letters have been typed.
Compatibility	Mac and PC Uses USB cable.	Mac and PC	Mac and PC	Mac and PC
Exporting/ Printing	Yes Print via desktop	Yes Print directly to printer with USB cable supplied in the pack or additional parallel or serial printer cable or via a computer. Optional infra-red interface for wireless transfer to a computer or printer. Very simple procedure. Has print and send keys on keyboard.	Yes Print directly to printer (using USB cable supplied) or via a computer. Optional wireless infra-red connection to printer or computer. Simple 3-step procedure to print formatted text (via menu function). Also has send key but will only send plain print.	Yes. Built-in IR transmitter, receiver optional for wireless transfer to computer. One key of WP to send. Print directly to Apple ImageWriter and Stylewriter, HP DeskWriter; parallel (dot matrix, inkjet laser) printers or via a computer.
Importing Files	Yes. Must be saved as a .txt file	Yes, 'Get Utility' software required	Yes. Software required	Yes. Must be saved as a .txt file for PC and Mac
Voice Output	Reads back letters, words, sentences and paragraphs. DEC talk synthesizer with M & F voices. Can adjust volume, rate and pitch. Headphones.	No	No	Yes Text-to-Speech optional cartridge, speaks letters and words as typed; word processing files and the spell checker. Use headset or plug device into a PA system.
Mounting Plate	Yes (DaeSSy)	No	No	No
Moisture Guard	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Keyguard	Can be made or bought off shelf	Can be made or bought off shelf	Can be made by different company	Can be made by different company
Other Features	Adjustable legs to adjust angle of keyboard and display. Calculator, spreadsheet & personal organiser Built-in telephone with on-screen dialer (not yet set up in Australia)	3-yr warranty. Document protection with passwords. Keyboard timer for typing assessments. Smart Applet architecture allows up to 3 mini software applications to be downloaded to extend the devices abilities (eg. Writers Tools, Inspiration, Keywords, Co:Writer, FormMate). Able to share information with another Dana or Palm-powered device. "Slow Keys" option for individuals with a tremor.	Productivity pack provides software for integration with Microsoft Office. Word count Find and replace Thesaurus Calendar, Address Book, Date Book, To Do List & Memo Pad. Able to install approx 100 other Palm OS Applications Palm Reader (for eBooks)	Homework and daily calendar Telephone Directory Typing tutor (shows where to put fingers) Thesaurus option (500,000 words) Database (4 x 40 display) and spreadsheet software (8 x 80 display) Foreign language accents Able to view how much memory is available Privacy code function Scientific Calculator

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			<p>Trial versions of Palm Software are included on CD-ROM.</p> <p><i>Dana Wireless comes with built-in Wi-Fi allowing Dana users to access e-mail and the Internet wirelessly.</i></p>	
Approx. Cost	\$5,197 GST included (+ additional extras eg. keyguard, carry bag, mounting)	\$599 GST included (+ additional extras eg. carry bag, cables, wireless transfer Pod)	\$896.50 for Dana GST included \$995.50 for Dana Wireless GST incl. (+ additional extras eg. carry bag, cables, wireless transfer Pod)	\$899 GST included (+ additional extras eg. text to speech utility, IR receiver)
Supplier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northcott Equipment Service Ph. (02) 9890 0195 • Regency Park Rehabilitation Engineering Ph. 1800 243246 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability Technology Ph. (02) 9907 9736 • Battery Powered Computers Ph. 1800 688770 • Northcott Equipment Service Ph. (02) 9890 0195 • Regency Park Rehabilitation Engineering Ph. 1800 243246 • Spectronics Ph. (07) 3808 6833 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability Technology Ph. (02) 9907 9736 • Battery Powered Computers Ph. 1800 688770 • Northcott Equipment Service Ph. (02) 9890 0195 • Regency Park Rehabilitation Engineering Ph. 1800 243246 • Spectronics Ph. (07) 3808 6833 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability Technology Ph. (02) 9907 9736 • Battery Powered Computers Ph. 1800 688770 • Regency Park Rehabilitation Engineering Ph. 1800 243246

We welcome any feedback, good or bad, that you have on our service. Please feel free to contact us by phone on 02 9972 8183, email at <tasc@tascnsw.org.au> or in writing at the address on the front page. TechnoTalk is published monthly and costs \$27.50 (GST \$2.50 incl) for the 11 issues per year.