Free Assistive Technology

The Technology Resource Center at SSB's 2200 office has a vast array of assistive devices and computer systems for our customers. Some of the equipment available to use at the resource center includes CCTVs, handheld video magnifiers, braille displays, standalone portable reading systems, and PC and Mac workstations.

We host staff-assisted Open Lab hours every Tuesday from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM and every Thursday from 12:30 – 3:30 PM for individuals who are interested in using workstations setup with low vision, blindness, and DeafBlind technology. Staff will be on hand to provide basic instruction for getting started using Resource Center workstations, basic troubleshooting and advice on using or purchasing assistive technology. The Assistive Technology Resource Center will accept walk-ins and / or reservations can be made by contacting our Assistive Technology Coordinator, Shawn Wallin, at (651) 539-2299 or via e-mail at shawn.wallin@state.mn.us.

The following is a list of free and low cost assistive technology options available for Windows, mac, and mobile operating systems.

NVDA (Non-Visual Desktop Access)

www.nvaccess.org
NVDA is a free screen reader for Windows PC's. NVDA supports many common Windows programs like web browsers, Microsoft Office, etc. In addition to the core NVDA software, dozens of free, downloadable add-ons expand NVDA's capabilities further. NVDA can be installed onto a computer directly, or run from any USB flash drive.

System Access To Go (SA To go)

www.satogo.com

System Access To Go is another free Windows-based screen reader. The unique aspect of this screen reader is that it runs from the Internet. No software is installed onto the computer. SA To Go is a great solution for computer labs, libraries, and other public places where users cannot install software, and/or USB ports are disabled.

Keys for K-12

http://www.serotek.com/kk12

The Keys for K-12 Program from Serotek provides access to a suite of assistive technology, in portable form, all for free. Students get the System Access screen reader, subscription to Samnet (an online community and set of resources for blind and visually impaired users), and DocuScan Plus. Students can plug in a USB flash drive containing all this software into any Windows PC and have a portable screen reader, access to online resources and social media, and scan paper or inaccessible PDF documents.

SAMNet Vets Program

http://www.serotek.com/samnetvets

Serotek also offers life-time subscriptions to the SAMNet community to qualifying veterans as a thank you for their service.

WindowEyes for Office

www.windoweyesforoffice.com

GW Micro recently partnered with Microsoft to offer a full version of the WindowEyes screen reader for free to anyone running Microsoft Office 2010 or later. As long as a authorized license for Microsoft Office 2010, 2013, or Office 365 is installed onto a computer, users can download and run a full licensed copy of WindowEyes. This version of the WindowEyes screen reader is exactly the same as the paid version. The only things lacking are official paper or audio documentation, a higher quality text-to-speech voice, and technical support. All of these items can be purchased as needed at a lower cost.

Windows Magnifier for Windows 7 and 8

http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/make-screen-items-bigger-magnifier#1TC=windows-7

Since windows 7, Microsoft has included a free, full screen magnifier. This magnifier can be run in full screen, docked, or lens modes, and also supports inverted colors. In windows 7, the windows Aero system scheme must be enabled to provide full screen magnification. Many

traditional assistive technologies like screen readers disable Windows Aero while running, so it is impossible to run, for example, Jaws and windows Magnifier together. Both System Access and NVDA can be run along with the free windows magnifier. In Windows 8, traditional screen readers like Jaws can be run along with windows Magnifier.

Windows Narrator for Windows 7 and 8

http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/hear-text-read-aloud-narrator#1TC=windows-7

Windows Narrator is a free, built-in basic speech tool that allows a blind or visually impaired user to perform some basic Windows tasks. Narrator isn't yet a full screen reader. Narrator is useful for completing initial Windows setup in Windows 7 or 8, and for times when other assistive technology, like screen readers, stop working. Narrator in Windows 8 also supports touch gestures for Windows tablets and computers with touch screens.

GlassBrick

http://www.glassbrick.org/

GlassBrick is a free Windows magnifier that supports multiple color modes and other visual customizations for free.

Mac Accessibility

http://www.apple.com/accessibility/osx/

All Mac computers; laptops and desktops, have a suite of accessibility tools built into the operating system. These accessibility features can be enabled right out of the box. For blind and visually impaired users, every Mac comes with a fully functioning screen reader called VoiceOver, and a full screen magnifier called Zoom. These tools can even be enabled during the initial computer setup process.

IOS Accessibility

http://www.apple.com/accessibility/ios/

Apple's IOS devices: iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad, all come with accessibility features built into the operating system. Like the Mac, each IOS device has both VoiceOver and Zoom available for blind and low vision users. A totally blind user can fully use the touch screen of an iPhone, iPod Touch, or iPad using VoiceOver.

Android Accessibility

https://support.google.com/accessibility/android/?hl=en#topic=6007234

Android phones and tablets also contain several accessibility features. TalkBack is the built-in screen reader. Newer Android devices also support full screen magnification. Because many

of these accessibility features were recently implemented, SSB recommends only getting Android devices running Android 4.2 or later. Previous versions of Android lacked the magnification feature. For refreshable Braille display users, Android users will also need to download the free BrailleBack app from the Google Play store.

Other Technology Resources

AppleVis

http://applevis.com/

AppleVis is an online community and resource for blind and visually impaired IOS and Mac users. The site contains both an IOS and Mac app directory, user forums, podcasts, and other resources. The app directories list apps and how accessible they are to VoiceOver users. Anyone can also register for free to add to the app directory and participate in the forums.

Android Access

http://www.androidaccess.net/

Android Access is a resource for blind and visually impaired Android users. Like AppleVis, Android Access contains a list of accessible Android apps and other resources.

I Can Work This Thing

http://icanworkthisthing.com/

This site contains guides, tutorials, and cheat sheets for a wide variety of computer programs and consumer electronics.

Audacity for Blind Users

http://wiki.audacityteam.org/wiki/Audacity_for_blind_users

This site contains tips and tutorials on using the free audio editor software, Audacity.

Alternative Funding and Loan Programs for Assistive Technology

Minnesota STAR Program

http://mn.gov/star/

The Minnesota STAR Program's mission is to help all Minnesotans with disabilities gain access to and acquire the assistive technology they need to live, learn, work, and play.

Eye-Link Foundation

http://www.eye-link.org/

The Eye-Link Foundation's mission is to provide adaptive technology and training to Minnesotans who are blind or visually impaired.

Lion's Club International

http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/index.php

Lion's Clubs are another good source for getting assistance in purchasing assistive technology.

Pacer Center

http://www.pacer.org/

the Pacer Center provides a variety of services to children and their families, including assistive technology services through their Simon Technology Center.

PC's for People

http://www.pcsforpeople.com/

PC's for People is a non-profit organization throughout the northwest that is attempting to improve digital inclusion by eliminating the number of individuals without a computer or access to the Internet home. Qualified individuals can receive affordable computers and other technology from a variety of locations around the state.