

# Where can I learn about computer technology that might benefit my child?

by Sheryl Burgstahler, PhD

*EP is honored to announce a new monthly column contributed by Dr. Sheryl Burgstahler, director of the DO-IT program. DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Inter-networking, and Technology) began in 1992 with a grant from the National Science Foundation. Funded by the US Dept. of Education, the State of Washington and many other organizations, DO-IT serves to empower young people with disabilities as they transition to college and careers through the use of computers, assistive technology and the Internet. In addition to her role at DO-IT, Dr. Burgstahler is*

*also the assistant director of information systems, computing and communications, the co-director of AccessIT; and the director of the adaptive technology Lab, all at the University of Washington. "Tech Talk" will address practical ways to integrate technology into educational, work and home environments. Dr. Burgstahler will also endeavor to answer readers questions through this column. (Send correspondence to: Dr. Burgstahler, University of Washington, Box 354842 Seattle, WA 98195; fax: (206) 221-4171; e-mail:sherylb@u.washington.edu.*

**Years ago**, we had too little information and too few products that could help children with disabilities gain all of the benefits that computers have to offer. We hear about how assistive technology can level the playing field, but what if you are just getting started? Where can you learn about what is out there? The Internet provides a wealth of information about technology, and specifically about technology for people with disabilities. Here are some of my favorite Web sites:

## **The Adaptive Technology Resource Center**

<http://www.utoronto.ca/atrc>

Sponsored by the Resource Centre for Academic Technology of the University of Toronto, the site provides information on upcoming workshops, current and completed research projects on assistive technologies and access to the the ATRC library. Also housed by the site is a technical glossary that explains various assistive technology products and provides questions to consider when purchasing them. Information on resource center

drop-in hours, employment accommodation services, and instruction on inclusive Web design is also available.

## **Technical Assistance Project of RESNA** <http://www.resna.org/taproject/index.html>

RESNA's (Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America) Technical Assistance Project site includes contact information for 56 assistive technology programs in each state and territory. It also contains information on policy changes and emerging initiatives in community living, education, employment, healthcare and telecommunications/information technology. The program also provides access to a library consisting of laws, federal reports and budgets, international reports, congressional hearings, statistics, training materials, and other resources.

## **Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)**

<http://www.cast.org>

Furnishes information pertaining to the

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), including theories, research, tools, resources, examples, and activities related to UDL. Also available is information on the National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum (established by CAST and the US Department of Education's Office of Special Programs) and descriptions of CAST products such as the Cast eReader and the web based program Bobby. Specialized tours of the site are also accessible.

## **Closing the Gap**

<http://www.closingthegap.com/>

This site allows access to Closing the Gap's newspaper and a searchable resource directory (published every spring) which highlights a featured product of the week and contact information for supportive organizations. Closing the Gap also sponsors online forums on the site, which discuss announcements, polls, articles, education and assistive technology practices and strategies, while also making archived discussions available for review.

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### **DO-IT**

**<http://www.washington.edu/doi/>**

This Washington University site delivers resources on how technology can aid in college and careers for students with disabilities, their advocates, educators and their administrators, in addition to supplying information for K-12 educators. Furthermore, it allows access to information on programs hosted by DO-IT and a link to AccessIT (the National Center on Accessible Information Technology in Education).

### **Equal Access to Software and Information (EASI)**

**<http://www.isc.rit.edu/~easi/>**

EASI provides online training on adaptive technology and how institutions can provide barrier-free computer and information technology systems for persons with disabilities. To aid in this, EASI supplies a "starter kit" for on-line starter kit as well as a web-design kit that provides pointers on designing fully accessible pages. Additional information is available through links to resources in adaptive hardware and software, EASI publications and 13 libraries. The site also includes details on distance learning and legislation and affords online discussions through the EASI network.

### **The National Center on Accessible Information Technology in Education**

**<http://www.washington.edu/accessit/>**

This young site (sponsored by the University of Washington and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Education) contains a searchable knowledge base to answer common questions regarding accessible information technology in education. Information on upcoming training activities and events that might be of interest to those who want to learn about or share information about accessible electronic and information technology in education is also provided. Links to case studies and promising practices are also furnished.

There are also hundreds of interactive discussion lists parents can join. Many are organized around different types of disabilities, for example, to share ideas, concerns, and resources with parents of children with hearing impairments, with cerebral palsy or with developmental disabilities. If you have the topic, there is probably a list of people with the same interest out there on the 'Net. For a comprehensive list of Web sites and discussion lists, consult the publication, Disability-Related Resources on the Internet which can be found at <http://www.washington.edu/doi/Brochures/DRR/>. **EP**

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