

Chapter 26

Ten Hot Assistive Tech Websites That You Won't Want to Miss

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces ten websites that can be used to access and reference information on assistive technology. Assistive technology is defined as technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. With the advent of more advanced technology comes the need to understand what is available, how to get it, and how to use it. The Internet provides easy access to this information; however, search engines can make it difficult to screen the vast number of websites available. The authors have screened websites to facilitate those interested in assistive technology more than simply company products and advertising. The criteria for determining which websites to include were applicability for teachers and availability of additional resources. Each website has a listing of the website's sponsor, the full Web address, and a description of what information, products, and tools can be found on the website. Website authors include companies, teachers, individuals with disabilities, and government organizations. The websites chosen range from those offering products and resources for entire classrooms to those customizing computer controlled devices for individual students.

INTRODUCTION

Type in “assistive technology” into a search engine on the Internet and pages of websites will appear. Many websites are from companies selling their devices or approaches. Some are from teachers,

government organizations and even from individuals with disabilities. Rather than chase randomly around the Internet to find information on assistive technology, you can read through this article and check out the ten websites extracted from those pages the search engine provides. These websites were selected based on the information available in them. The websites reviewed below include

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everything from free materials to lists of computer vendors who specialize in high tech solutions for individuals with disabilities. Make these your starting place to fruitful web searching. Each of the ten includes the web address, the name of the website sponsor and a brief description of what information can be gained from the website.

THE TOP 10

1. **Equal Access to Software and Information (EASI):** <http://people.rit.edu/easi/resource/input.htm>. A computer does a student no good if he or she cannot access it. This website from the Rochester Institute of Technology is a great place to start if you need a list of companies specializing in alternative input hardware and software and do not want to weed through what your search engine may include. These companies produce alternative keyboards, on-screen keyboards, trackballs, joysticks, various switches, and voice recognition.
2. **SMART Technologies:** <http://smarttech.com/us/Solutions/Education+Solutions>. This is the website for those SMART boards, other SMART products and programs. If you click on the *Resources* tab and select *Programs and funding* from the drop down list, there is help in getting a grant and ideas for fundraising. In the same drop down is *Research and data*. The last item is *Explore our research library*. Clicking on that will take you to a list of topics that includes *Special Education*. There you will find research on what works for students with various disabilities. Holding the best part until last, also under the *Resources* drop down is *SMART Exchange*. This allows teachers to download free programs that other teachers have created for use with SMART products.
3. **Captioned Media Program (CMP):** <http://www.dcmp.org>. Provides free-loan, open-captioned videos to students who are deaf or hard of hearing and described video for students who are blind or have visual impairments. These include classic movies, educational videos, and special-interest videos. In addition the organization acts as a clearinghouse for articles on accessible media utilization [click on the *Clearinghouse* tab and then on one of the last items, *Accessible Media Utilization... For Educators*.].
4. **The U.S. Department of Labor's job accommodations network:** <http://askjan.org/soar/disabilities.html>. This website allows you to search by disability and provides lists of accommodations. At the bottom of the page are four listings that display products useful for cognitive/neurological, deaf/hard of hearing/motor and vision impairments. It is a super compendium of products and ideas that can be adapted to the classroom. These also make a great basis for a transition plan.
5. **Alliance for Technology Access (ATA):** <http://ataccess.org>. Selecting the *ResourceHUB* tab takes you to a page with excellent definitions of assistive technology and a left hand list of resources. Under *Publications*, you can find free, downloadable publications including a "Guide to Low-Cost/No-Cost Online Tools for People with Disabilities" and "Making a Switch Adapted Toy." Clicking on *ATA Centers* takes you to a state-by-state list of assistive technology centers. *ATA Partners* provides yet another list of assistive technology vendors. The strangely named *Ning* opens up a new Internet window called the *ATA Disability Access Community*. This is a question/answer forum where you can join in the assistive technology community.
6. **Empower Technology:** <http://empowertech.org/Technology.html>. Although this is a California organization, the website contains great information under the *Technology* tab. This tab sends you to a super list of assis-

2 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/ten-hot-assistive-tech-websites/55485

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