



IN THIS ISSUE...

The Passion of *Freedom Machines*: It's a Movie, Not a Telethon

Freedom Machines producer Jamie Stobie, who is not disabled, previewed an early cut of the documentary for sound designer Jim LaBrecht, who has spinal bifida. Stobie hoped LaBrecht would join the *Freedom Machines* production team. LaBrecht, she recalls, did not like the cut, "and he let us know it." The sound designer, she says, "used the word 'telethon.'" What was missing from that early version, Stobie remembers, was a hard political message to blanket the compelling characters she and her team had selected to tell their stories. Jim LaBrecht, Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) founder Jackie Brand and many others from the disabilities community helped Stobie and the movie's executive producer Janet Cole craft the message that drives the documentary.

Freedom Machines is not just a documentary about the benefits of assistive technology, although it is a superb documentary that has moved PBS viewers nationwide this fall. It's not just a movie about individuals for whom AT is an equalizer, although it is made clear to non-disabled viewers that AT, in fact, provides enormous positive life changing benefits at a reasonable cost. Instead, it is *the* movie about the marriage of passion and will to technology, of machines to the human spirit, and a cry

for justice for those for whom technology, when it is made available, makes all the difference.

Freedom Machines is not a telethon. It is a movie with a message, and the message, according to Jackie Brand, is this: Life-improving technology exists, but the political will to make it available to those who need it does not exist – yet.

This issue examines the making of *Freedom Machines*, its lessons and its import to disabled individuals and their families and to the non-disabled "typical" community where the votes that give voice and power to political will reside.

The Filmmakers – and Jackie Brand – Speak

Freedom Machines is the brainchild of Richard Cox, a computer consultant for the Richmond, CA school district. Back in the 1980s, Cox attended an AT presentation by Jackie Brand and current ATA Executive Director Mary Lester to the Disabled Children's Computer Group in Berkeley, CA. The passion of Brand and Lester ignited a spark of inspiration that encouraged Cox to try his hand at documentary filmmaking. In the ensuing years he took a number of filmmaking and writing courses in the Bay Area as he sought to gather the expertise that would serve as the foundation for his filmmaking effort. He'd made short films before, but nothing on the scale that he envisioned for the documentary he had dubbed *Freedom Machines*. His funding proposals

were rejected many times. At a Film Arts Foundation workshop in San Francisco he encountered documentary screenwriter Sharon Wood. Wood bought into the Cox concept and agreed to be his writer. For a year Wood and Cox prepared a reapplication to the National Science Foundation for a grant, an effort that would finally bear fruit for Cox. It was then that Wood introduced Cox to Jamie Stobie, who brought together a production team that eventually included the film's executive producer Janet Cole. Both Stobie and Janet Cole were veteran documentary filmmakers whose work has appeared on PBS TV stations across the nation. Jackie Brand was also called in by Cox as a consultant. Brand's daughter, Shoshanna, was one of the film's main characters. Two years in the making, their documentary is the clearest film statement yet that assistive technologies, in the hands of individuals who are determined to make the most of the technologies' benefits, are indeed freedom machines.

In support of our interviews with Stobie, Cole, Brand and Cox we feature members of our **Knowledge Network**. The members spotlighted this month focus on various aspects of AT accessibility. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.



Freedom Machines: Give them the Tools

An Interview with Jamie Stobie, Janet Cole, Richard Cox and Jackie Brand of FREEDOM MACHINES,

In the dark early days of World War II, with England teetering on the brink of defeat, in desperate need of warships to combat U-Boats that were strangling the island nation's commerce, and the U.S. still neutral, President Franklin D. Roosevelt told Americans, "If your neighbor's house is on fire, you lend him a garden hose."

Across the Atlantic, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill growled, "Give us the tools – and we will finish the job."

Assistive technologies, Freedom Machines demonstrates, are tools that enable individuals with disabilities -- from nine-year-old Melanie Sarmiento, who can neither speak nor use her hands, but for whom an engineer, Rick Kjeldsen, has designed a non-touch switch that eliminates the need for a keyboard, to Gladys Wang, age 93, who is hearing impaired, to high schooler Latoya Nesmith who, despite cerebral palsy and experiencing constant difficulty in obtaining the AT she needs, is determined to produce an opera in Polish or Dutch, to Susanna Sweeney-Martini -- to compensate for those disabilities.

AT is Like a Pair of Glasses: a Tool

Explains longtime disabilities advocate Jackie Brand, "It's like someone with poor vision buying a pair of glasses; there's no difference. Glasses are tools." What is different, she notes, and which the movie

powerfully points out, is the lack of general availability of these tools.

In *Freedom Machines*, freshman Susanna Sweeney Martini, with cerebral palsy, negotiates her way in a wheelchair through her first day of college classes at the University of Washington, the camera eye upon her. She readily acknowledges the role AT plays in her life. "I'm not like other 'normal' kids," she admits, her eyes flashing with an uncommon fierceness of determination that is her trademark. Referring to the voice input program on her computer, she says, "It's probably the best thing they ever came up with for me, aside from a wheelchair."

However, Susanna's mother, a special education teacher who has struggled for 18 years to get Susanna the AT she needs, asks, "Where is the money and why isn't it used here?" She replies to her own question: "Because they don't think these people will be out voting. They don't consider that Susanna is going to make a difference, but they're really in for a big surprise." In *Freedom Machines*, Susanna reveals that she wants to be a marine biologist.

Walking the Line

Says Brand, "One of the more difficult aspects of the film is walking the fine line between the excitement and potential of the technology, and the reality that most people who need it don't have access to it, to make a film in which it's not assumed that everyone has the tools and yet not to appear so hopeless about the difficulty in finding funding and getting access."

The film not only focuses on individuals with obvious disabilities, but also on those whose disabilities are more subtle, like

93-year-old Gladys, who is hearing impaired. Says Brand: "Often, films made about people with disabilities tend to be made around people with very obvious disabilities in order to make the point very clear. But the use of Gladys was an effort to say, 'You don't even have to label yourself as having a disability. It's all about function, and what these tools can mean to your ability to have a quality of life.' What is portrayed is only a taste of all the available technologies. The hope was that what was shown would be symbolic of the entire spectrum and that people will understand that when you have a functional limitation that tools are available to help. That was Gladys' purpose."

"You Can Hear a Pin Drop"

The impact of *Freedom Machines* in the non-disabilities community, Brand says, cannot yet be evaluated. "What I do know is that viewers are engrossed in the film. You can hear a pin drop during a showing. Viewers talk about different aspects of the film. For example, people have commented about Floyd [Stewart] and his story, the fact that he had been an electrical engineer and you see these early photos of him and then see that in a heartbeat his life changed. All of a sudden this man you're looking at, a man you think you couldn't possibly have anything in common with, you realize that he had been like you and would be like you except for an accident in a split second in time. Someone you could identify with, you now see as 'the other.' His story has struck a chord with a lot of people."

Viewers have written to the movie's website, explains Brand, with questions about Latoya Nesmith's ongoing difficulty in obtaining the AT she needs. "They say, 'What a brilliant young woman! How can

she be in this situation?" The truth, adds Brand, "is that Latoya is still struggling to get any attention, to be able to get placed in an accessible location. I don't think most people realize how typical her story is. People are struck by her clear intelligence and her capacity compared to the little access she's had."

Viewers are also struck by the inspirational nature of the movie's stories, Brand says, "But they are also taken by the level of persistence required for these individuals who have managed to some degree to succeed. A lot are surprised that there aren't systems out there that take care of people with those needs. They think that there is some sort of parallel universe that takes care of individuals with disabilities by providing resources. They are shocked at what a struggle it is at every level."

Much AT "Is Not Expensive at All"

Latoya's struggle to obtain AT, Brand notes, inadvertently feeds "this misconception about technology that it is so expensive that people fear to get near it. The truth is a lot of these tools are not expensive at all. They literally provide a pencil and paper to a kid who doesn't have the most basic tools to learn."

That's not to say, Brand adds, that some tools are not expensive or that there is no training or support that goes with the tool. The greater expense is not the tool but the support system that's necessary to use the tool that otherwise sits in a closet. It's an expense we can't afford not to accept."

With AT equipment theoretically available to individuals like Latoya, explains Brand, "The dilemma is that there is not a single system for getting at this technology. An

individual's age, income level, employment status, student status, and disability defines where he or she has to go to start looking for this technology. It's a difficult process even once you determine that you want to find out what those tools might be. There needs to be a system like the public library because the tools you might need will differ in different points in a person's life depending on what he or she wants to achieve, age, the status of one's disability – a person ought to be able to go in and out of a very open system and trade in what you're currently using for what you need next."

Busting Out of the Box

"We have to bust out of this box we're in," Brand declares, "where people have no understanding of what these tools are. If more people understood what's possible and what the power of that technology is – if doctors in their medical training were being exposed to these tools, if teachers in their training were learning more and getting the support to use these tools, if families had obvious places to go when their kids had certain disabilities and understood the tools these kids might be able to use, if there were more places for basic awareness and training – then there would be an aggregation of demand that would force this forward much more effectively."

Dispelling the notion that AT is a form of "cheating," a notion which Freedom Machines dramatically addresses, is a key to reaching that objective, Brand observes. "Yes, that notion needs to be dispelled. It goes back to teacher training. We need to build in the understanding of what these tools are about, why they're used. We need to promote the notion of access to the necessary technology as a civil rights issue. That was raised in the

film. I think that's very important and not a matter of being a frill or cheating, or a weakness – which says, well, gosh, if you need to use those tools then somehow you're not working at getting over your disability." At what point, she asks, "do we say, 'This is who we are and these are the tools we need to build on our strengths and to compensate for our weaknesses, weaknesses that can't be willed away.'" All children, she declares, deserve that right.

Using her daughter, Shoshanna as an example, Brand remarks, "If I had asked, 'If we get Shoshanna a big keyboard where she could learn to use a computer, is she going to stop working on her motor dexterity?', she'd be 30 years old today and still trying to get her fingers to work. It wouldn't have happened. At what point do you say, 'Shoshanna has some real motor dexterity issues that are standing in the way of using a piece of chalk at the blackboard or a pencil or paper, but she has to move forward and learn?' She isn't going to continue to be mired in this 'getting ready to learn' state of being, which what we faced when she was young. They said, she's not ready to do this, that and the other. Yes, she is ready. She just doesn't have the right tools. It was a terrific struggle back then."

Is the employment of Universal Design (UD) an objective worth struggling for? Would it have a positive impact on individuals like those spotlighted in the movie?" For Jackie Brand, the answer to both queries is a qualified yes. "The concept of UD, if looked at in terms of the curriculum as well as in terms of the tools, is an important piece but is not the whole pie. There are certain components of the solution that will never be workable within a UD or more mainstream context. There

will always be a need to allow for the specific, specialized technology or services to be available and integrated into the whole. But we can go a long way with the UD concept. It's not an either/or. There are two parts to the whole picture."

Freedom Machines, she notes, "says that if you are always designing products for the broadest market you'll make a product that works better for a lot of people, including a lot of people with disabilities. When I look at my daughter Shoshanna's needs, they exceed what UD can accommodate. UD will go a long way; it can invoke speech in all educational materials for those kids who need speech output." The goal, she says, is to promote the realization that "that technique has applicability beyond blind kids and can include kids who are struggling with the printed word for any of a variety of reasons." UD, she adds, "doesn't correlate with a specific disability. It's just another tool. It has much broader usability than many might guess. UD will have a lot of impact on the kids who fall between the cracks, who don't get diagnosed, but when the mainstream gets this understanding that kids learn in a variety of ways and that kids have a variety of needs over the course of their educational careers, you're going to serve a lot of people who have needs that otherwise aren't served."

The Making of Freedom Machines: The Computer Is Infinitely Patient

For years, Richard Cox told and retold the stories he had heard from Jackie Brand and Mary Lester at Berkeley's Disabled Children's Computer Group meetings he attended in the 1980s. He clearly recalls two stories from that era. "One little girl had a disability that required that everything be done for her. When the

appropriate input device was implemented, she began to use AT to improve her interaction with the world around her. Once, when she was struggling with a difficult computer task, someone asked her, 'Do you want me to help?' The girl responded with a forthright, 'No, I can learn to do it on my own.'" That response, Cox says, "made me aware that she had begun to feel a sense of empowerment, and she didn't want anyone to take that away from her."

Cox heard about an autistic boy who was unable to relate to his environment, "but when he started using a computer he began to express himself to other people and, I later found out, he went on to develop his computer and people skills, which led to a job in AT."

From Jackie Brand, Cox says he learned "that the computer is a wonderful educational tool because it is infinitely patient."

Documentary filmmaking is also a tool, but is one that requires both patience and iron determination to wield with skill, and that's after funding is obtained.

Eight Years in the Making

By 1996, Cox was chairing a local computer group that met monthly to discuss ways in which computers could be used. "I thought of a presentation about AT," he remembers, but as I started researching the project, I realized it had much more potential than a monthly event." He turned his attention to producing a PBS broadcast. "Although I'd done smaller film productions, I never had any experience with a project of the magnitude I felt was warranted," he admitted. "Nevertheless, I attempted to make contact with people in the industry

by attending workshops and events to help understand how to turn the idea into a real endeavor. Along the way, he says, "I met a number of people who were interested but chose not to stay with the project." It was one of those individuals from the earlier years, he recalls, who suggested the project's name: Freedom Machines.

He submitted proposals for funding, which were rejected. Finally, he says, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Science Foundation told him why his proposals had been rejected: "They said, 'You have a good idea but we can't visualize how you want to present it.'" Enter Sharon Wood, whom Cox met while taking a film writing workshop.

With the help of Wood and the team of filmmaking professionals that gravitated to Cox's ambitious project, funding was obtained and the process – and ordeal – of production went forward under the guidance of producer/director Jamie Stobie. Cox, meanwhile, remains very active with the project, handling its finances and supervising its Internet outreach and website infrastructure.

Bridging a Gap, Gaining Trust

Throughout production, Stobie fretted that her non-disabled condition might be ill-suited to produce a documentary about individuals with disabilities and the devices they used. Jackie Brand, however, disagreed with that notion: "I think Jamie Stobie was the perfect person to make the film because she is not disabled and because the audience for the film is the non-disability community." In Brand's experience, she says, "The problem often is that when you have producers without real grounding in the [disabilities] community, the producers

often don't listen very well; they come in with preconceived notions." Jamie Stobie, however, "didn't do that, which made all the difference in the quality of the movie."

Explained executive producer Janet Cole, who joined the production team later in the filmmaking process: "Although many members of the disabilities community had the opportunity to vet the film, we didn't make it for them; they're not where the funding for AT comes from." Her role in the production process, she explained, "was that of a bridge between a social issue and the general public." As filmmakers, she says, the question we had to answer was, how do we craft a story, and a film, that's going to make people think differently?"

The filmmakers, she says, "insisted on gaining the trust of the disability community, but we were not doing a film for the community." Their objective, she adds, "was to bring the issue to a general audience, to people who don't have the background, don't have the interest, and help restart a public conversation about this section of the population whose needs are not being adequately addressed."

The technology employed by the characters, she explains, "is clearly a character as well as the human characters and is a great way to get the interest of viewers who are interested in that technology but not, perhaps, so interested in the subject matter."

Permission to Stare

One of the documentary's accomplishments, Cole continues, "is that it gives viewers an opportunity to break the rule we all learned as kids: Don't stare; don't embarrass by looking." The movie, she declares, "tells the viewer to

stare." Granting permission to scrutinize the characters, she observes, "lets our common humanity come through." Cole has a friend who is a film editor "and what struck her immediately when she screened the movie was seeing the way Susanna's hair moved when Susanna brushed her hair behind her ear, that unconscious gesture of a teenager who's coming into flower, just how universal that gesture is, and how disarming."

For Stobie, the disabilities learning curve was very steep. "I didn't realize, on a daily basis, what people with disabilities have to deal with. I just didn't understand." In that way, she says, "I was pretty typical of most people who are afraid to look at someone who has a disability, afraid to look them in the eye."

That attitude, she says, "really bothered me, because I had two individuals in my life who were disabled and were very influential: my uncle, who lost his legs in World War II, and a former employer who was a quadriplegic from polio – yet still I had this fear."

Stobie, who did not become a mother until she was in her 40s, admits to a terror that she would give birth to a child with disabilities. "You're so aware of all the things that can go wrong as you get older." Whenever she'd see a child with a disability, "I'd avert my eyes; I don't like to feel that way."

Whiplash

When she had been on the project for awhile, she encountered a former colleague, Betsy Bayha, who had been a National Public Radio reporter for eight years. Bayha's hearing, however, had deteriorated to such a degree that she had to end her career as a radio

journalist. Bayha, who would sign on as the project's senior associate producer, told Stobie that she wanted to return to production and had spent time after leaving NPR as director of technology for the World Institute on Disability. "Not only had Betsy learned a lot about technology associated with hearing, she'd been educated in an entirely new perspective as a person with a disability."

Bayha, Stobie recalls, "really put me through my paces, in terms of the language I was using, how I was thinking about the people I was preparing to interview, what I knew and what I didn't know about different disabilities. All of us on the production staff heard her frustration; Betsy wouldn't let up until we got it right."

Screening for Bay Area disability advocates, Stobie remembers, "was like whiplash. We'd screen for these constituencies and often they would hate it." The experience, she says, "was maddening, because we realized the film was not passing muster with the people who mattered."

The problem, she says, was that the hard political core message was absent, as were the bullet points we needed to stress as themes for the viewers. The stories weren't building an arc and coming to a conclusion."

The filmmakers persevered. "We kept at it, kept pulling at it, kept stretching it and continued listening." Fortunately, she emphasized, all our hard work and frustration resulted in a very good movie, so much stronger than it would have been without the input of the disabilities community."

The Mothers from Hell

The producers, Stobie notes, settled on two main themes: 1) Today's state-of-the-art technology has more meaning for people with disabilities than for those without disabilities; 2) For those with disabilities, obtaining the necessary technology can make the difference "between a life of participation, a life of isolation, a life of unemployment and a life of employment."

What amazed Stobie, "is how little AT information is out there. There are people you'd logically go to for AT information – teachers, doctors, local community technology sector – but the information is not available there, even today. They just don't understand the value of this technology."

Those who did understand, she says, "were the moms of the children and young adults with disabilities." The movie's producers jokingly, but respectfully, called them "the mothers from hell" because of their relentless determination "and refusal to take no for an answer when it came to their kids' well-being." From watching them, Stobie says she learned that "unless you are the kind of person to be an aggressive advocate, have the knowledge to do it, the resources to do it, chances are you are not going to get what you need for your child."

What fascinated her about the technology depicted in the movie "is how the equipment that is used and adapted by persons with disabilities then becomes useful for all of us – like the curb cut. That's what people don't understand about the technology – it's utility for the general public."

Many Melanies

She loved the “feedback circle” between nine-year-old Melanie Samiento and her engineer, Rick Kjeldsen. “He’s been working on that non-touch system with her for years, trying to perfect it. She was just six when he started. She’s 10 now. He keeps working and working at it. She gives him so much information to use.” It surprises her, she says, “that other engineers don’t take more advantage” of feedback circles with children like Melanie.

The producers encountered many Melanies in their nationwide search for characters, Stobie says. “Years ago, when I first started in TV, I worked with BBC producers who had a very, very rigorous research process. You read. You find out all you can. Then you get out on the road and interview people. Betsy, Sharon and I crossed the country. We took mini digital cameras and interviewed dozens of people, people with disabilities, doctors, teachers, parents.” The producers began with Brand and Mary Lester, who provided them with referrals at ATA centers nationwide. The center directors then put the producers in contact with potential interview subjects.

Making Us Whole

From a filmmaker’s point of view, she recalls, “We were looking for really good characters who are in it up to their eyeballs, fighting the good fight every day, people who came off well on camera.” It was not difficult finding good interview subjects, she says, “the hard part was letting people go. I could have made a 2-3-hour film with no problem. Everyone had a different story to tell and every story was compelling.”

From making Freedom Machines, Stobie has learned that by failing to address the issue of human differences in learning and mobility, “we’re giving our kids such a false impression of what it means to be a human being. I don’t want my kids to have that impression. It’s about combining our different abilities, our different talents and our different perspectives. It’s about finding a way to give people with disabilities the tools they need and deserve, the tools, the technology, that exists in abundance in this country. That’s the only way that we as a nation and as individuals are whole.”

Despite the passage of time and legislation, despite the making of movies like Freedom Machines, in some ways, Jackie Brand notes, little has changed since her struggle, and Shoshanna’s began three decades ago. “As a parent of a 30-year-old grown daughter, when I look back and then talk to a young parent of a child with disabilities, I can’t believe how much those struggles are still the same and how little has changed in the school around that struggle, despite the legislation that should have changed the face of life and education for kids with disabilities.” To a large degree, she says, “Things remain the same. We have to push for the public policy change that says not only do we need laws but we also need the funding that gives teeth to these laws. We’ve put the education system...under more and more duress because we have more and stronger requirements.... Teachers are struggling just to keep the basics going. We are working in the context of larger systems that are struggling and are not very functional.

“We need more parent leadership in this area. We go through cycles. We had great

parent leadership in the struggle for mainstreaming, for the formulation and passage of IDEA. Now there seems to be a reduction in parent leadership. The result is that young parents don't have the knowledge that these hard-fought goals are very vulnerable. Parents have always been in the forefront of our struggle and that needs to be the case again. A high profile push for access and for the right tools is very much in order."



Eye on...Freedom Machines

To see Freedom Machines on television, please check your local PBS viewing schedule for date and time.

To purchase a copy of Freedom Machines, contact:

Freedom Machines

P.O. Box 1495

El Cerrito, CA 94530

Phone: (415) 821-3791

www.freedommachines.com



KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

AAC Institute



The Institute is dedicated to improving communication for individuals with severe

speech impairments who rely on augmentative and alternative communication. Aspects of this field include clinical service delivery, education and research. Common causes for severe speech disability include cerebral palsy and other congenital conditions. In addition, persons acquire conditions, like Lou Gehrig's disease, that result in speech loss or suffer from the effects of head injuries.

The Institute provides the following products and services: PeRT, ULAM, LAMterm, The Gallery and AAC Keys – and services: AAC assessment, intervention and performance measurement; language sample analysis; and educational services.

PeRT is software to facilitate creation of the AAC Performance Report, a set of 17 quantitative summary measures of communication performance that can be used to set and monitor therapy goals and to measure outcomes.

AAC evidence-based practice (EBP) requires the collection and analysis of language samples. Automated language activity monitoring (**LAM**), or alternative logfile recording, is now a standard feature in a growing number of AAC systems. Language Activity Monitoring (LAM). LAM data can be easily analyzed using PeRT to produce the AAC Performance Report. However, many older and lower level AAC systems do not include the LAM feature. **ULAM** is PC software that facilitates the collection of language samples and provides for the inclusion of notations. ULAM records the time and content of language events that are available on a serial port or in audio form.

LAMterm – Language Activity Monitor terminal program – is software that facilitates the uploading of LAM data from an AAC system to a PC. LAM-term uses the serial port.

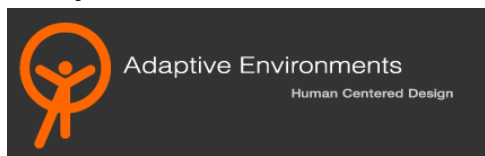
The Gallery is an area of the AAC Institute website dedicated to the promotion of and distribution of various creative works produced by individuals who rely on AAC. Purchase of the items benefits the artist/author and the institute, a non-profit, charitable organization.

AAC Keys is a keyboard and mouse emulation program for Microsoft Windows-based computers. AAC Keys receives commands through the user's computer serial port and translates them into keystrokes and mouse movements, giving the user full control of the computer from another device such as an AAC system.

For more information about the Institute, contact:

AAC Institute
338 Meadville Street
Edinboro, PA 16412
Phone: (814) 392-6625
Contact: Katya Hill, Ph.D., Executive Director
khill@aacinstitute.org
<http://www.aacinstitute.org>

Adaptive Environment Center, Inc.



The 25-year-old Center balances expertise in legally required accessibility with the promotion of best practices in universal

design. AEC projects are local and international in scope. The Center provides easy access to information and guidance about civil rights laws and codes that inform the foundation of accessibility in the U.S. AEC provides education and consultation on strategies, precedents and best practices that go beyond legal requirements in order to help design places, things, communication and policies that accommodate human diversity.

The Center's projects include: consultation to public and private entities on accessible, universal and human-centered design; promotion and education via web and print publications; lectures, workshops and conferences; formal and tailored courses; and public policy advocacy.

The Center is home to the Rosemary and Gunnar Dybwad Library, a specialized, multi-media library with materials that cover the past four decades of information and research on design for access. The collection includes analyses of design in institutional environments from the 1960s to the most recent magazines, books, videos and CD-ROMs. The library also contains print materials on universal design, the Americans with Disabilities Act and other access- and design-related topics. Many print materials are available in Braille, on audiotape and on disk. Also available are articles, monographs, videos and slides. The library is open to the general public.

To learn more about the center, contact:

Adaptive Environment Center, Inc.
374 Congress Street, Suite 301
Boston, MA 02210
Phone: (617) 695-1225

Fax: (617) 482-8099
<http://www.adaptenv.org/index.php>
info@AdaptiveEnvironments.org

EnableMart: Technology for Everyone!



EnableMart is an AT vendor with more than 800 AT products available from 60 manufacturers. The company's website enables consumers to research, locate and purchase AT devices. Consumers can research in-depth product information, read customer reviews and utilize online search tools.

The four-year-old company began as a developer of educational software solutions based on J.P. Gilford's *Structure of the Intellect* with the goal of improving select cognitive skills. The founders quickly saw the growing need for AT devices as well as for educational software. They also recognized that while there was no shortage of AT products in the marketplace, an awareness barrier hampered consumers' search for the most appropriate, most affordable devices. To enhance product availability and accessibility, the company launched a website for consumers who favored online product research and purchase and then a catalog for consumers who preferred to order via phone or email. The company recently opened its first retail store and demonstration center in Portland, Oregon.

EnableMart annually donates 10% of its pre-tax profits to charitable organizations.

For further information on the company, contact:

EnableMart: Technology for Everybody!
400 Columbia Street, Suite 100
Vancouver, WA 98660-3413
Phone: 1.888.640-1999
Fax: 1.360.695-4133
Contact: Nick Tostenrude, founder
Nick@enablemart.com
<http://www.enablemart.com>



Equal Access to Software and Information (EASI)

EASI offers online training in adaptive technology and in the ways that institutions can provide barrier-free computer and information technology systems to individuals with disabilities. Since its 1993 founding, EASI has provided online training to more than 5,000 people in three dozen countries.

Courses may be taken individually for continuing education units or in a five-course package that earns the participant a Certificate in Accessible Information Technology offered in partnership with the University of Southern Maine. Course selection includes: beginner barrier-free web design; advanced barrier-free web design; accessible multi-media; barrier-free e-learning; designing accessible course content using familiar software; train the trainer; learning disabilities and accessible software; business benefits of

accessible informational technology design.

To learn more about EASI, contact:

Equal Access to Software and Information (EASI)

P.O. Box 818

Lake Forest, CA 92609

Phone: (949) 916-2837

<http://www.rit.edu/~easi/easi/alleasi.htm>



Maryland Assistive Technology Co-op (AT LAST)

The Co-op is a program of Assistive Technology: Loans, Acquisitions, Services, Inc. (AT LAST), which provides discounted purchasing and training opportunities to schools, agencies, organizations and families. The Co-op uses the combined purchasing power of Maryland's schools to make AT more affordable.

Since its beginning in 1999, the Co-op has saved participating members more than \$650,000 by combining their purchasing power to negotiate AT price reductions while training more than 800 professionals and parents in the use of AT devices and software.

The Co-op negotiates directly with and conducts semi-annual bids with more than 50 AT manufacturers and vendors; allows participants to put items from multiple manufacturers on a single purchase order

to foster economy and efficiency; works closely with the Maryland Guaranteed Loan Fund to obtain AT at the lowest possible cost and with the lowest possible interest rate; displays and distributes manufacturers' catalogs and demo disks at training events open to the public; brings nationally-known speakers to Maryland for professional development activities; and assists school districts in writing grants to improve the performance of students with disabilities through the use of AT.

The following AT equipment is available from the Co-op: educational software; communication devices; computer access; aides for daily living; visual supports software; sensory aides; and therapeutic supplies.

For additional information the Co-op, contact:

Maryland Assistive Technology Co-op (AT LAST, Inc.)

P.O. Box 428

Savage, MD 20763

Phone: (410) 792-9901

Fax: (410) 792-9901

Contact: Susan Garber, Executive Director

info@matcoop.org

<http://www.matcoop.org>

Newsletter Editor:	Thomas H. Allen
--------------------	-----------------

Electronic Formatting and Distribution:	Ana-Maria Gutierrez
--	---------------------