

TechnoTalk

The TASC Newsletter

Volume 13

Number 11

November 2004



Editorial by Jo Ford

Welcome to the final edition of TechnoTalk for 2005. As the festive season approaches TechnoTalk has a Christmas theme with plenty of assistive technology ideas to ponder until the New Year.

Samantha Puffett provides you with an overview of The Mercury a new voice output communication device on the TASC shelves. This system is a Windows XP computer on which a range of communication software such as Speaking Dynamically Pro™ can be used. It also includes environmental control capabilities.

Rachelle Woods provides her final article in the series on Switch Software. This month she covers single switch automatic scanning or two-switch step scanning.

We would also like to introduce a new staff member to the TASC Consultative Services team. Natalie Carden, occupational therapist, started with us this month in the seating service and will be working on Monday and Friday.

Finally the TASC Consultative Services team would like to wish you a safe and happy Christmas and New Year and look forward to your continued support in 2005.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Jo Ford



by
Samantha Puffett

The Mercury



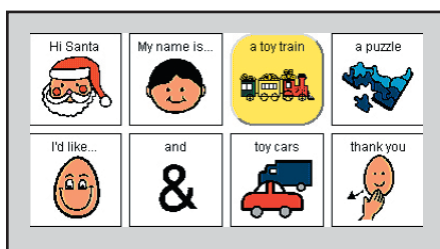
The Mercury is a voice output communication device that is new to the TASC service. It is a Windows XP computer which has been adapted to enable it to be used as a communication device with dynamic screen. Direct access to The Mercury is through the built in touch screen although it also offers alternate access through switches and joysticks. The option of scanning varies depending on the type of communication software selected for use. A range of communication software can be used with The Mercury including Speaking Dynamically Pro™. Environmental control capabilities are built in, which enables the user the ability to control appliances such as a television or stereo. The Mercury has a built-in desk stand and mounting plate.

Speaking Dynamically Pro™ is software that can be used with The Mercury. It utilises synthesised or recorded speech. Communication pages can be created with access to digital pictures, symbols, or text generation and pages can be changed through touching the screen or selecting a cell that will automatically link to an associated page. Speaking Dynamically Pro™ comes with sample communication boards that can be customised to suit each user. Pre-made board sets may also be purchased.

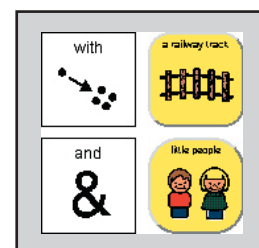
Functional Speaking is a communication board set that can be used with Speaking Dynamically Pro™. Functionally Speaking provides the user with pre-made language board sets most suitable to younger users, there are 2 levels available depending on the level of language ability of the user.

Christmas is coming up and this is an ideal opportunity to create motivating communication pages for children. Here is a sample board set for a visit to santa:

Main
Page



Pop-up



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



CALL FOR PAPERS
AGOSCI National Conference
31 August-3 September 2005
Sheraton Brisbane Hotel • Brisbane, Australia

For more Information
Please visit
www.agosci.org.au



Hello, my name is Natalie Carden. I recently started work at TASC as a seating consultant, two days per week, Monday and Friday. I may be familiar to some, as I worked in this same position in 'CENTEC', between 1997 - 1999.

Following CENTEC, I worked at GTK Rehab as a seating consultant using commercial seating products and worked closely with manufacturers to customize seating solutions.

In 2002, life became busy with the first of my two children Amber 2 ¾ arriving, followed by an interstate move home to Perth for a year where Jay 1 year, joined us.

It is great to be back in Sydney working again at The Spastic Centre and great to see so many familiar, friendly faces! I look forward to working with you all.



by
Rachelle Woods

Free Computer Activities for Switch Users - Part 4.

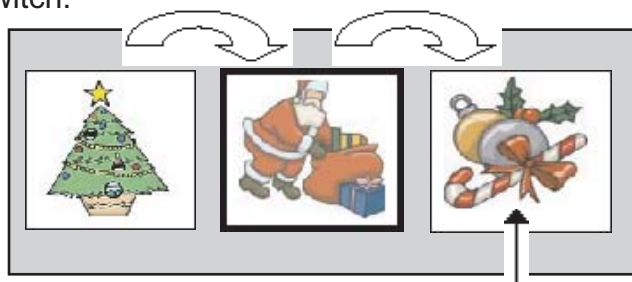


Last month we reviewed free and low cost computer activities that involved timed single switch use. In our fourth and final article we focus on activities that require switch scanning - single switch automatic or two-switch step scanning.

1. Untimed single switch use – press and release the switch to result in an outcome (cause and effect).
2. Repeated untimed single switch use – press and release the switch in a series of steps to result in the desired outcome (switch building).
3. Timed single switch use – time press and release of the switch to result in the desired outcome.
4. **Switch scanning – single switch automatic scanning or two-switch step scanning.**

Switch scanning can provide switch users with control over devices such as computers, voice output devices, environmental control units and powered wheelchairs by enabling them to make selections from a range of choices/options. The choices are presented in a scanning array and highlighted systematically (scanned). The switch user activates their switch when the item they want to choose is highlighted.

The example below shows a simple Christmas scanning array with a black and grey scanning highlight. The highlight steps through the three pictures (it is currently on Santa packing the presents). When the highlight is around the item that the user wants to select they activate the switch.



To select this option the user needs to wait until the highlight reaches this cell and then activate their switch.

Two common types of switch scanning are single switch automatic scanning and two-switch step scanning.

Single switch automatic scanning involves the highlight automatically stepping through the choices and the user activating the switch when the highlight reaches their choice. This requires the user to be able to monitor the movement of the highlight and press the switch at just the right time.

Two-switch step scanning requires the use of two switches. One switch is used to step the highlight through the choices and the other switch to make a selection. This method of scanning removes all timing demands and requires the user to be able to access two separate switches.

Switch scanning is a complex skill that can take much time and practice to master. Here are some free switch scanning activities available on the Internet that could be used to assist in developing switch scanning skills:

- Senswitcher – this series of switch activities with simple graphics and sounds (<http://www.northerngrid.org/ngflwebsite/sen/intro.htm>) has been mentioned in each of our articles. The last group of activities called *Scanning* provide an excellent introduction to single switch scanning with errorless learning. The scan time can be customised for individual skill level. (Windows only)
- Some of the demos available from www.hsj.com/demos.html include switch scanning activities. The Mac and Windows demos are available to trial before purchase and run for 3 minutes. Programs such as *Switch Wars*, *Switch Arcade*, *New Frog and Fly*, *Spider Maze*, *Scanning Picasso* and the *Scan and Match* series include single switch and two-switch step scanning activities. A switch-adapted mouse is required to access the

Continued from page 3

single switch activities. To access the step scanning activities users require a switch interface that that will accept two switches and emulate the space bar and left mouse click e.g. DJ Switch Interface Pro, Crick USB Switch box, IntelliKeys, X-Keys.

- There are two free programs available for download from the Inclusive Technology website <http://www.inclusive.co.uk/downloads/downloads.shtml>. *Talking Faces* requires the user to record voices or sounds (the stop, record and play buttons are scanned) that are then played back while a face animates. *Inclusive CD Player* is a free utility that enables switch users to play audio CDs on the computer. Both of these activities can be set up for single switch and two switch scanning access. (Windows only)
- Some of the free switch activities available from <http://www.switchintime.com/FreeStuff.html> involve single switch scanning and can be accessed with a switch-adapted mouse. *Simple Access Concentration* is a switch accessible version of the board game Memory. It involves row/column scanning where the user firsts selects the row and then the item within the selected row. *Simple Access Colouring Book* is a switch scanning paint program – some users may find following the scanning highlight difficult. *Single Switch Bingo* provides a switch accessible bingo card where users can mark off numbers as they are called, please note that this activity requires column/row scanning. (Mac only)
- Free demo downloads of some of the popular Edmark software such as *Bailey's Book House*, *Thinkin Things* and *Sammy's Science House* is available from http://www.riverdeep.net/products/downloads/free_downloads.jhtml. These programs come with inbuilt single switch scanning access. (Windows and some Mac)

In addition to the free computer based resources we have highlighted in our series of articles there are many commercially available programs that are designed specifically for developing switch access skills. Please contact TASC for further information.

There are a range of issues to consider when determining the most viable switch set-up for an individual. Please contact TASC if you would like to discuss this issue in more detail or would like more information about switch accessible activities.

We hope you have found our series of articles helpful.



New look
TechnoTalk Newsletter
coming in 2005

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@tscnsw.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.