New equipment in the Special Needs Centre of the State Library of New South Wales

THE SPECIAL NEEDS CENTRE of the State Library of New South Wales has recently acquired some new equipment for people with visual and other print disabilities, through a generous sponsorship from the Adolf Basser Trust, to facilitate their access to 'mainstream' resources and services within the library:

• The Vista Screen-Enlarging System has been installed on the Centre's IBM PS/2 Personal Computer, which is now linked to the State Library's automated catalogue via the local area network (LAN). For the first time, clients who are large-print readers are able to search the State Library's catalogue independently.

• The Keynote PC+, based on a Toshiba laptop, is also linked to the automated catalogue via the LAN to provide access with synthetic voice output.

• The Eureka A4 Word-processor allows input to the machine in Braille and provides output in voice. The Eureka is an Australian design which provides 'electronic secretarial assistance', meeting a variety of communication and information needs. Features include a telephone directory, combined with an automatic telephone dialler and a music composer.

Both the Keynote PC+ and the Eureka may be linked to the Kurzweil Personal Reader, allowing clients to scan and download reading material for use on their own equipment at work or at home.

• The Artic Voice Synthesizer consists of a card, which is installed in a PC, and special software which is loaded from a floppy disc. A small speaker or headphones may be attached. The Artic is another way of providing voice access to data stored in computers and is being trailed with the CD-ROM products available in the General Reference Library.

The Kurzweil Personal Reader continues to be the centrepiece of the Special Needs Centre equipment. The majority of the Centre's clients use the Kurzweil to scan printed information and take the data away on a floppy disc to be re-read at a later time.

Users include a lawyer, a telephone salesman, an author researching Australian history for her next book, a computer science lecturer at a country campus who is anxious to get access to the Kurzweil through telecommunications channels and students, who for the first time have easy access to the vast print resources of the State Library.

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