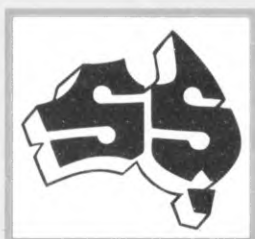


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## Services for people with disabilities

### Assistive Technology Solutions Griffith University

The library at Griffith University is part of Information Services, a division that provides a variety of services including information technology and flexible learning. Having IT specialists and library staff in the same division makes it simpler for us to work together to identify and solve some of the accessibility problems that face students with disabilities.

Like other educational institutions, we have grappled with the difficulty of extending access to assistive software to our clients at their point of need; whether in common use or school computer laboratories, library training rooms, postgraduate rooms, offices or elsewhere in the library or on campus.

Several initiatives were tried but failed to give our clients the flexibility and independence they required and we were not always able to respond as quickly as they wished. Finding a solution that was affordable, reliable, swift to implement, and that did not place onerous demands on support staff became imperative. As with most great ideas, the best solution was the simplest one.

Students with vision impairments are provided with a USB key with either Jaws screen reading software or MAGic screen magnification software installed and configured to start automatically. The university purchased a limited number of software licences and on start-up one of the available licences is retrieved from the licence server. Once the key is removed and the machine reboots, any evidence of the software is removed.

Feedback from the students using the USB solution has been positive. The ability to use any computer, thus participating fully in computing classes with their peers and enabling a variety of computing facilities on campus

accessible at any time makes, the students feel less isolated from the rest of the community.

Students with print disabilities do however still need the dedicated facilities we have traditionally provided. Braille embossing can be very noisy and disruptive to others, and extensive use of screen readers requires intense concentration. Griffith University has Assistive Technology Centres in each campus library that provide students with a range of assistive hardware and software – Braille embossers, scanners, document magnifiers, screen reading and screen enlargement software, voice recognition software, literacy support software, and so on. A common image has been designed for the computers in these Centres so that students who study across campuses will find the same interface and software wherever they go, and be able to access their home drive (which is a centralised and safe storage place for their files) and their student email from them.

The usual range of library support services is also provided – photocopying, book retrieval, library research support, checking for the availability of alternate format material, etc. The library also has a policy to both purchase audio-visual resources and to record off-air material with captions if available, ensuring that these are searchable in our library catalogue.

Information about the USB solution for assistive software, contact Project Officer Melissa Irvin, [m.irvin@griffith.edu.au](mailto:m.irvin@griffith.edu.au), <http://www.griffith.edu.au/ins/disability/>

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#### Did you know...

that the children's classic *Where the wild things are* by Maurice Sendak has been adapted for the big screen. The feature will star Catherine Keener, Forest Whitaker and Australian actor Angus Sampson. A novelisation of the picture book will also be released this year. [www.smh.com.au/undercover](http://www.smh.com.au/undercover)

12/01/08