

NEWS

Tech Information and Technology Center for disabled students

By Caren Gamm
Staff Writer

Starting last year, the Library and Disability Resource Center have been developing an enhanced, up-to-date, assistive technology center for disabled students. The AsTech workstation, which stands for Assistive Technology, is a laboratory system specializing in equipment and software programs for registered disabled students.

SSU's AsTech workstation is located in the IT Center in the Library. The laboratory has been a work in progress as of last year. This semester, AsTech lab has acquired two new computers, along with specialized, adaptive equipment, such as movable armrests and an articulated keyboard. AsTech also has a piece of adaptive technological equipment called "Clarity." Clarity enables the student to place information, such as a paper or a book, on a tray while a magnifying lens produces a large magnification of the information onto the computer screen. The magnification of the material on the screen greatly enhances the ability of those students who are vision-impaired to see material they normally would not be able to see.

Along with new computers and equipment, the AsTech workstation has incorporated new adaptive software programs to the programs already in place. The developments of adaptive software programs help many disabled students in a variety of ways.

The new software programs include Dragon Speaking Naturally, JAWS, and Inspiration. Dragon Speaking Naturally is a program that

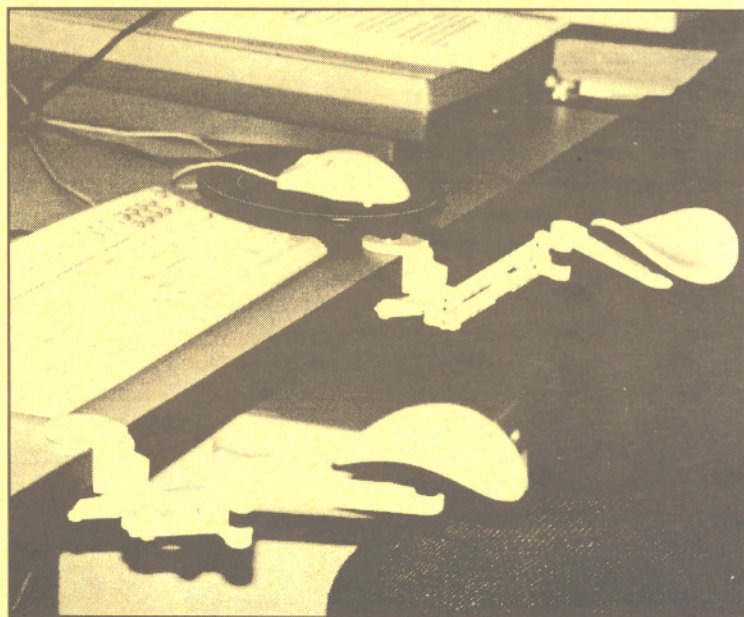


Photo by Chip McAuley

The new AsTech workstation in the IT Center helps students with disabilities by using specialized computer equipment.

allows the student to dictate information directly to the computer and the computer will convey this information on the screen. The program called JAWS is one in which the information content on the computer is read by a voice and is heard by the student through a set of headphones. Through the headphones, the student can hear the necessary information. This also helps students who are vision impaired. Inspiration is another adaptive software program designed to help the student create and organize their ideas while writing a paper. All of these software programs have been designed especially for those students with special needs.

The AsTech Information and Technology laboratory is open to reg-

istered disabled students, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Susan Baur is there to assist students. The Disability Resources staff is very excited about the new adaptive equipment and technology.

Linda Lipps of Disability resources hopes that the equipment and software programs, along with two full-time disability advisors and student assistants, will, "Raise the number of students who work in the laboratory, improve grades, and help increase students' enjoyment of classes."

According to Lipps, the Disability Resources is, "Working to incorporate the new software programs into computer labs throughout the campus."★