

Mr. Michael Takemura  
Director, HP Accessibility Program Office  
Hewlett-Packard Company  
3000 Hanover Street  
Palo Alto, CA 94304-1185 USA

Dear Michael,

As you may know, I am a transitional graduate student at Arizona State University, working on a degree in Psychology. I'd like to tell you what a difference the HP workstations at the Charles T. Hayden Library on our campus have made for me.

I can now use Open Book to scan large quantities of printed material. I am a teaching assistant for an introductory Psychology class, and I have to grade papers for 106 students, once a week. Open Book makes this task not only doable, but painless. You must know that for people with vision loss, most tasks involving print are quite time consuming and often difficult or impossible. Not here! I sit down at the workstation, open the Open Book, lay a page down, and begin.

I also use a program called Active Sync, which allows me to easily transfer files from the workstation to my portable Braille note taker. The files are easily converted to several types of formats, allowing for both printing in ink print, and embossing in Braille. Textbooks which, in the past, were only listened to in audio form, can now be put into a Braille note taker and carried to classes. This, you may not realize, is an extraordinary privilege.

Even more than that, I want to describe the pleasure at having most of the necessary programs and equipment in one place, eliminating the need to carry around heavy laptops, cables and connectors. Scanning a document for editing, reading virtually any printed material, converting files for braille and/or editing, and even working with professional databases and having complicated information at my fingertips – these tasks are now possible for me.

These things are the foundation of the workstation, but ultimately what I want to convey, is something far less tangible. As a person with limitations, I find there is a certain amount of acceptance that there will be things I cannot do that other people do easily. Other students can study on a bus or in a restaurant. Other students can obtain, skim and print out for later use, journal articles, and other students can write necessary reminders and information in the margins of notebooks. As time goes on, I have learned to compensate for, and even overcome, some of the limitations, but that is not the point. I have always desired to discover a situation in which I am able to equally compete with my fellows. Now that we have this workstation, and so many of the tools for adapting my world are in one place, I have nearly achieved my goal. Perhaps the most important point here is not the physical aspect of what has been provided, or even the logistical aspect of how tasks are completed, but an indescribable sense of pride at being able to perform

tasks independently, with little or no sighted intervention. I can't put words to the experience of reading my own articles, of grading my 106 papers without help, or of being able to open my text book to the page asked for by an instructor, in a classroom. There is no way to explain, sitting up straighter when I can follow along in my book. There isn't the shame of turning in late homework because I had to wait for someone else's help. There isn't the sadness of having to find alternative ways to access journal articles, because I can't read them. There isn't the frustration of trying to remember important points of a paper or chapter, because I wouldn't receive a Braille copy until a week after the class. Now, I can work in realtime, and with a little planning ahead, I can even be aware of upcoming needs, and prepare for them.

This has been an exciting addition to our library, and, in my opinion, an important one. This workstation has ended a long transitional period where resources were scattered and disconnected. For this I am personally grateful. I truly believe that without our new addition, my task, as a teaching assistant, would have been impossible. Thank you for helping me excel to a place where I can be of service to others around me, instead of being the one who always needs the service. It is a wonderful place to be.

Sincerely,

Jessicah Raechel Newton