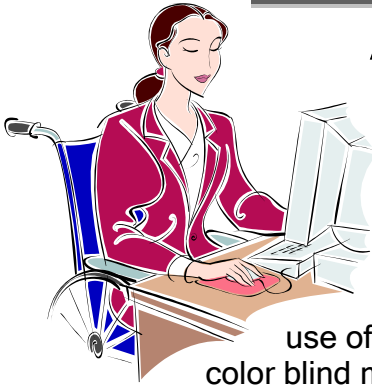

Accessible Information Technology



Technology is used in the 21st century to distribute, gather and process information. It enables neighborhood and global news to be delivered to you personally via the Internet, computers and mobile devices. Sometimes this plethora of information cannot be accessed by all people. For example, blind persons cannot see an illustration on the computer screen; and someone with limited use of their hands cannot manipulate a computer mouse. People who are color blind may not be able to distinguish between color-coded options. People who are deaf cannot hear an audible signal. People who use wheelchairs cannot operate a copy machine if the controls are out-of-reach.

Just as the Church welcomes all into its buildings via ramps and elevators, we must also consider access to the ways people learn about and practice their faith in today's world. Here are some examples of accessible information technology that is usable by people with a wide range of abilities and disabilities.

- Multimedia products – CDs, DVDs, Podcasts and YouTube videos should be available with captioning for audio content, like spoken words and music lyrics; and with audio description for visual content. Talking menus enable those with vision loss to find the desired content.
- Websites -- Accessible websites are designed so that all visitors can navigate the site, access content, and participate in interactive web activities. They provide a text equivalent for all images, graphics, and animation. This allows people who cannot see the computer screen to use software which reads the text aloud.
- Office equipment
 - Computers have integrated accessibility features that allow for different ways to accomplish tasks, like using the keyboard alone, using the mouse alone, or a combination of both. Besides built-in access features, all computers should be compatible with the assistive technology that is designed for people with disabilities.
 - Fax machines, copiers & printers are accessible if they can be operated in more than one way using keypads, touch screens or voice commands. Height and position can be adjusted so that controls are within reach and the display can be viewed easy.
 - Telephones with features like large buttons, text screens, voice commands and volume adjustments make land line and wireless phones accessible.

The optimal goal for information technology is universal design in which products and environments are made so all people can use them without the need for adaptation. When this goal is achieved, products and services are usable by everyone, not just people with disabilities.

Resources:

DBTAC New England ADA Center http://adaptiveenvironments.org/neada/site/it_overview
Disability.gov http://www.disability.gov/technology/accessible_technology

*For more information contact Marsha Rivas, Equal Access Ministries
Diocese of Toledo 419-244-6711 mrivas@toledodiocese.org*



Equal Access Ministries