

Reading Tools

Technology Accelerator Project

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12 and 4 pm

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Contents

- Introductions
- Background: Importance of Reading Tools
- AT Tools and Demos
 1. Bookshare
 2. Kurzweil
 3. Microsoft Read Aloud
 4. Seeing AI

Presentation Goals

- Take away general knowledge about reading tools
- Potential users of reading tools
- Benefits of the reading tools
- How to access and use the reading tools

About Me

Jennifer West

Student Services Coordinator/Assistive
Technology (AT) Coordinator

Temple University's Disability Resources
and Services

I help Temple University students with
their academic, housing, and meal plan
accommodations as well as their AT
needs

What Are ODP And TechOWL?

ODP: Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs

- Supports individuals with disabilities and their families
- Connects people to services, resources, and technologies

TechOWL: Technology for Our Whole Lives

- Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Act program
- Provides access to AT tools for people with disabilities

What Is The Technology Accelerator Project?

- Joint effort between ODP and TechOWL to create more inclusive learning, living, and working environments
- Provides training and resources on AT
- Focus on practical tools that enhance independence and quality of life for disabled people
- Audience includes people with disabilities, caregivers, educators, and advocates

Importance Of Reading Tools

- Many Americans experience disability related barriers to reading
 - Including dyslexia, brain injury, blind/low vision, etc.
- They can be life-changing and can level the playing field, opening doors to education, employment, and daily living
- Support independence and empowerment daily living, education, and community involvement

Bookshare

What Is Bookshare?

- Bookshare is the world's largest online library of accessible books for people with print disabilities
- Accessible formats: audio, braille, large print
- Created by Benetech, a nonprofit focused on software for social good
- Offers more than 1.3 million titles: textbooks, bestsellers, novels, and more

Potential Bookshare Users

- Supports students, adults, and seniors
- Free for US K-12 and higher education students with documented disabilities
- Nominal fee for US adults and seniors
 - \$79.99/ year membership

What Disabilities Qualify Students For Bookshare?

- Learning or Reading Disabilities such as dyslexia that significantly interfere with decoding words and reading comprehension
- Visual Impairments such as blindness, low vision, macular degeneration, and other types of vision loss that make it difficult to see words on a page or screen or read without enlarged font, audiobooks, or braille
- Physical Disabilities that make it difficult for students to hold a book, turn pages, move their heads, or physically manage a book or the act of reading a book in the way that someone without such a condition would

Key Features Of Bookshare

- Multiple accessible formats: DAISY, MP3 audio, Braille, and large print
- Customizable reading experience:
 - Adjust font size, color, and spacing
- Listen with many high-quality text-to-speech voices
- Follow along with synchronized text highlighting
- Read on a wide range of devices: computers, tablets, and smartphones

Benefits Of Bookshare

- Help with homework, professional work, and leisure

Kurzweil

What Is Kurzweil?

- Kurzweil 3000 is a comprehensive reading, writing, and learning software designed for people with learning disabilities, dyslexia, and other print-related barriers
- Developed by Kurzweil Education, it combines text-to-speech, study skills, and writing support tools in one platform
- Widely used in schools, workplaces, and for personal use to improve literacy and comprehension

Potential Kurzweil Users

- Children and adults with reading disabilities such as dyslexia and ADHD or who are blind/low vision needing text-to-speech support
- Anyone struggling with reading fluency or comprehension
- Available to students and adults
- Paid membership for non-students

Key Features Of Kurzweil

- Supports reading comprehension and independence
- Integrates with Bookshare
- Text-to-speech with natural-sounding voices, highlighting words as they are read aloud
- Supports multiple file formats including PDFs and Word documents
- Integrated study tools: dictionaries, highlighters, and note-taking

Benefits Of Kurzweil

- Enhances reading comprehension and retention with dual input (audio and visual)
- Helps users become more independent learners and workers by reducing barriers to accessing text
- Promotes academic success and workplace productivity by increasing confidence and efficiency with reading tasks

Microsoft Read
Aloud

What Is Microsoft Read Aloud?

- Microsoft Read Aloud is a built-in text-to-speech feature in Word
- Designed to support readers with learning disabilities, people who are blind/low vision, and anyone who benefits from auditory learning
- Provides a simple, accessible way to listen to written content directly within commonly used software

Potential Microsoft Read Aloud Users

- Students needing support with reading schoolwork, emails, or research materials
- Adults with dyslexia, ADHD, or blind/low vision who need audio support
- Anyone seeking an easy-to-use tool for improved comprehension and reading engagement

Key Features Of Microsoft Read Aloud

- Reads text aloud with natural-sounding voices
- Highlights each word as it is read, helping users follow along visually
- Offers adjustable reading speed and voice options to customize the listening experience
- Easily accessible in Microsoft Word

Benefits Of Microsoft Read Aloud

- Enhances comprehension by combining auditory and visual input
- Supports literacy development and reading fluency
- Enables independent access to a wide range of digital content without extra software or cost
- Reading work or school documents

Mac Users

- Similar feature for pages is “Speak Screen”
- Read aloud and highlights
- Pages

Seeing AI

What Is Seeing AI?

- Free phone app for people who are blind/low vision or have print disabilities
- The app leverages smartphone's camera and AI to read printed text, describe scenes, recognizes objects and people in real time
- Supports independence in daily task by providing spoken word descriptions of the environment
- Not recommend for reading more than a 1-2 pages

Potential Seeing AI Users

- People who are blind/low vision or who have print disabilities who want to better understand their environment
- Individuals needing assistance identifying text, currency, colors, products, or faces
- Anyone seeking a portable, easy-to-use tool for daily life and social interactions

Key Features Of Seeing AI

- Recognizes printed text instantly and reads it aloud
- Identifies and describes people, including facial expressions and approximate age
- Scans barcodes to identify products and currencies to assist with money management
- Describes scenes and objects, helping users navigate new environments
- Supports short and long text recognition with real-time audio feedback
- Available for free on iOS and android

Benefits Of Seeing AI

- People who are blind/low vision using it to read the label of canned food
- Dyslexic student who reads a club flyer on a bulletin board

Summary

- Today, we explored a range of AT reading tools designed to make reading accessible
- We covered four key tools—**Bookshare, Kurzweil 3000, Microsoft Read Aloud, and Seeing AI**—with different features for different user needs
- These tools support independence, promote inclusion, and help people of all ages overcome barriers to reading
- I hope that you will leave this presentation with new knowledge about reading tools, who can benefit, what they offer, and how to access them

Reading Tools Summary Chart

Tool	Format/Platform	Potential Users	Key Features
Bookshare	Online Library(web) download or stream titles	Students, adults, seniors with print disabilities	Accessible ebooks in audio, Braille, large print; huge collection; customizable formats
Kurzweil 3000	Web/download	People with learning disabilities, dyslexia, vision impairment; students & workers	Text-to-speech; reading/writing tools; highlighting; note taking; spelling/grammar support
Microsoft Read Aloud	Microsoft 365 (Word)	Anyone needing text-to-speech; students, workers, adults	Built-in TTS; natural voices; visual highlighting; easy access on popular software
Seeing AI	iOS and Android App	People who are blind/ low vision; other disabilities like dyslexia	AI narration of text, objects, people, scenes; barcode, currency, color recognition

Resources

- Bookshare - [Bookshare Link](#)
- Kurzweil - [Kurzweil Link](#)
- Microsoft - [Microsoft Read Aloud](#).
- Seeing AI - [Seeing AI Link](#)
 - iOS – [Seeing AI iOS Link](#)
 - Android - [Seeing AI Android Link](#)

Thank you

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