

“Essential Background and Resources for Understanding Accessibility to Digital Textbooks”

© 2007

Anthony Pantaleno, Ph.D.

School Psychologist, Elwood-John Glenn High School

478 Elwood Road

East Northport, NY 11731

(631) 266-5418

When IDEA 2004 was reauthorized, a major change was written into that legislation which will set the stage for how print-disabled students and adults may access their textbooks. Of particular significance, a National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) was established in Louisville, Kentucky under the auspices of the American Printing House for the Blind (APH). The NIMAC will receive and catalog publishers' electronic files of print instructional materials in a standard format called the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS), and these files will be accessible in a web-based database. Those SEDs or LEAs who have been authorized for access will be issued user IDs and passwords. These authorized users will be able to search the NIMAC database and download the file(s) they need to convert to accessible instructional materials for those students who are in elementary and secondary schools and have qualifying disabilities. You can search the NIMAC database, but there is not much there at this time since the law only covers textbooks published after 2006. When school districts order textbooks published after this date, they will specify on their Purchase Orders how many copies of the text they wish to purchase in a NIMAS file format. Our NYS regional repository will be tied to NIMAC. Anyone can search for an e-text as follows:

1. Go to www.aph.org home page.
2. For a textbook published after 2006, click on the NIMAC logo on the right side of the page and search the NIMAC
3. For a textbook published before 2006, on the APH home page, click on the fourth icon on the right side of the page to access the home page for the Louis Database. At the Louis Database home page, go to “Click here to search Louis and the APH File Repository”, then click on the third link, “Search for Textbooks, Recreational Reading, and Downloadable Files”. Search the Louis database by ISBN number if

- you have it to be sure that you are pulling up the correct edition of the textbook that you want. If you search by title or author, you will get hits for every edition of the text that was ever written.
4. Your search will tell you if the text you want is available in a digital format
 5. Access the file with your user ID and password, if your school or agency has one. All SEDs will develop procedures for distribution of user IDs and passwords to schools and agencies, but in the meantime, parents of students with print-related disabilities may request permission to download an available e-text directly from the publisher.
 6. Parents can find the individual publisher contacts for e-texts by doing a search on the home page of the Louis database. Scroll down to “About the APH File Repository” and click on the fifth subheading, “Publisher Contacts for Braille-Related Materials and Questions”.
PRINT THE LIST OF PUBLISHER CONTACTS AND HOLD ONTO IT FOR FUTURE REFERENCE!!!!
This will save you the many hours I wasted by calling the individual publisher customer service phone numbers and getting the runaround because their own customer service departments are not even up to speed on e-text technology.
 7. In a short e-mail to the publisher’s e-text authorizing agent, parents should identify their child’s print-related disability (eg, learning disability, visually impaired, blind), and give the name and e-mail address of the of the school district’s CSE Chairperson if additional qualifying information or a copy of an IEP is requested by the publisher.
 8. The publisher contact will e-mail the parent directly to inform them that permission is granted to download a copy of the e-text, and will simultaneously e-mail permission to Linda Turner, who is in charge of the APH file repository.
 9. Ms. Turner will complete the final step by e-mailing the digital text file to the parent in a zip file format. The file can be unzipped in Windows and saved in a file such as “My Documents”.
 10. The textbook can then be opened in Kurzweil with all of the regular Kurzweil features available (highlighting, extracting text ,creating vocabulary lists, etc). **IMPORTANT: TO SEE ALL OF THE TEXTBOOK’S CHAPTERS, HILITE THE TEXT IN THE MY DOCUMENTS WINDOW , THEN FROM THE DROPDOWN MENU (FILES OF TYPE), SCROLL TO “ALL FILES”.**

Some essential web links:

1. www.nimac.us
2. <http://nimas.cast.org>. Under the Highlights box on the upper right corner of the page, click on the NIMAS Resource page, scroll down to “Support for Local Educational Agencies” and look for the following subheadings:
 - a. “Accessible Instructional Materials and the IEP”
 - b. “Accessible Textbooks in the Classroom”
 - c. “Local Educational Agency (LEA) NIMAS Language for Purchase Orders”. An excellent FAQ discussion follows further down this page under the next main heading re: history of the NIMAC.
3. You can also “google” www.nimas.cast.org for an alternate January, 2007 Q &A discussion of NIMAC and NIMAS (third link down)
4. www.afb.org American Foundation for the Blind

Some key contact people to contact along the self-education path:

1. NYSED Primary NIMAC/NIMAS Representative:
Daniel Ryan (518) 486-7462 dryan@mail.nysed.gov.
Also, go to www.nysed.gov and in the search box, enter “NIMAC Coordinator” for a memo to school superintendents re: NIMAC/NIMAS dated November, 2006.
2. Long Island NYSED Regional Associate for Special Education office
(631) 884-8530.
3. NYS School for the Blind (at Batavia, NY)
Lisa DeSantis (runs the depository of e-texts)(585) 343-5384 ext. 207
dsanti@mail.nysed.gov
4. At the American Printing House for the Blind, contact the Repository director for the Louis database: Linda Turner (800) 223-1839 ext. 342
lturner@aph.org
5. An alternate publisher-driven database set up by publishers for college and university students and support staff to check on availability of e-texts is: www.publisherslookup.org.