Digital Repository of Textbooks for Students with Disabilities

Tip Sheet
revised
December 2010

we engage

Alberta

Government of Alberta

What is a digital repository?

A digital repository is a secure online database that houses digital versions of most authorized grades 4 to 12 student basic textbooks for language arts, mathematics, social studies and science. Individual publishers cooperated to make this digital repository a reality.

The agreements to share these digital files will be in effect until June 2012.

Why a digital repository?

This repository is one strategy for addressing the needs of Alberta students who have disabilities relating to accessing print materials. The goal of this repository is to improve access to digital learning resources and reduce the need for school staff to scan individual textbooks. These publisher-supplied files also require less editing than scanned files.

In the future, publishers will be making the majority of student resources available digitally, either through direct purchase from the Learning Resources Centre or through the publishers' websites, and there will no longer be a need for the digital repository.

What students are eligible to use these digital files?

Only students with disabilities related to manipulating, seeing or reading text (referred to as "perceptual disabilities" in Canadian copyright legislation) are eligible to use these files.

In Alberta, this includes students with the following types of disabilities:
- learning disabilities
- cognitive disabilities
- physical disabilities
- vision loss.

Individual students using these files must also:
- have an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) that identifies their special education needs related to reading and/or accessing text and that identifies the use of digital text as an accommodation to meet these needs
- be registered in the course related to this grade-level textbook
- have a print copy of the related textbook available for their use in at least one learning environment.
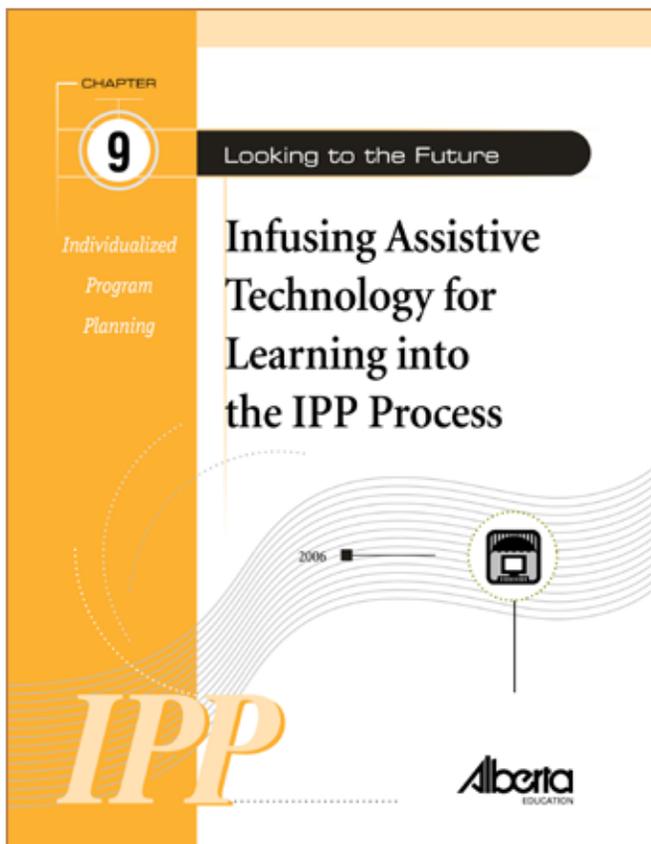
How will students use these files?

- Students with physical disabilities can use these files in place of books and will be able to use assistive technology to navigate through the text.
- Students with reading difficulties can use these files with text-to-speech software so the text is highlighted and read aloud.
- Students with vision loss can adjust the presentation style and/or font size. In addition, they can use text-to-speech software to have the text read aloud.

These agreements with publishers were negotiated before the widespread use of interactive whiteboards in Alberta, so **conditions of use are limited to technologies used by individual students**.

For more ideas about using assistive technology for learning, see "Infusing Assistive Technology for Learning into the IPP Process," Chapter 9 of *Individualized Program Planning* (2006), at http://education.alberta.ca/admin/special/resources/ipp.aspx.

> "For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible …"
> – National Council on Disability

CHAPTER

9

Looking to the Future

Individualized Program Planning

Infusing Assistive Technology for Learning into the IPP Process

2006

IPP

Alberta
EDUCATION

Where can students use these files?

These digital files can be used by the eligible student in the classroom, at home or in any other learning environment, as required. When the student has completed the course related to this textbook, the downloaded PDF files must be permanently deleted.

How can school staff access the repository?

To access the repository, go to http://www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca and click on the "Login" tab. On the Online Services Log In page, click on "Registered Customer." The next screen will ask for your LRC Account #, user ID and password. Your school LRC account administrator (e.g., principal, secretary, purchaser) can create an account for you.

You can also e-mail your request for an account to lrccustserv@gov.ab.ca, indicating your name, school name, phone number and job title. Please ensure that you cc: the person at your school/jurisdiction responsible for ordering (e.g., LRC account administrator/head of purchasing). Each school staff member accessing the repository should have his or her own account.

How are these files organized?

These files are organized by grade and subject area. To view a list of all available files, click "Expand all." Most resources are organized and stored by chapters. Staff may choose to download the entire resource or select certain files.

Can I request a new resource be added to the repository?

No, the scope of the repository is currently limited to authorized student basic texts in the four core subject areas, grades 4 to 12. The majority of eligible resources are now available in the repository, with the exception of a few older resources that are not available as digital files. The goal is that, in the future, newly authorized basic resources will include digital versions that can be purchased and used by all students.

Are there other authorized resources available in digital formats?

A number of the novels authorized to support the grades 4 to 12 English language arts program of studies are available in digital formats. For a list of digital novels, see http://education.alberta.ca/media/825930/ld-digitalformatselanovels.pdf.

"... assistive technologies [such as text-to-speech software] can help make classrooms more inclusive."
– Caren Sax in "Using Technology to Support Belonging and Achievement"

How can students access files from the repository?

School jurisdictions have a number of options for making these files available to eligible students, including:
- posting downloaded files on a secure server for jurisdiction staff and/or student access
- putting files on a portable format such as a CD–ROM or flash stick
- downloading directly to a student's designated computer.

The digital repository site is for the use of school staff only. For security reasons, students and parents must *not* be accessing files directly from this site.

How can these files be used in the classroom?

One of the goals of this repository is to reduce barriers to learning for students with special education needs. Hopefully, these digital texts will allow students with reading or physical difficulties to participate more actively in the day-to-day learning of the classroom.

When might these files need to be edited?

Most of these files are high quality because they have been obtained directly from the publisher. However, when using text-to-speech software with the files, school staff may want to modify pronunciations of specific words or equations. In addition, if text is embedded as part of a graphic, the text-to-speech software cannot read it unless alternate text is added. There is specialized software available that can be used to do these kinds of minor edits.

What software will read these files aloud?

There are a number of software products available, both free and at a cost, that will read text aloud. For example, Adobe Reader has built-in Read Aloud capability. The latest version of Adobe Reader can be downloaded for free from the Internet.

Read&Write GOLD currently is available in many Alberta schools. This software includes PDFaloud. The PDFaloud toolbar launches within Adobe Acrobat or Acrobat Reader files and speech-enables PDF content. The toolbar also provides options for controlling voice output settings. With PDFaloud, text is highlighted for the student as it is being read. Many students benefit from seeing the text highlighted at the same time it is being read aloud.

Are French-language resources available through the repository?

Yes, French-language resources are also available through the repository.

For more information

Contact:

Learning Resources Centre, Customer Service
Office: 780–427–2767 (Option 1, 1)
Toll-free (within Alberta): Dial 310–0000
E-mail: lrccustserv@gov.ab.ca

"The success of technology has more to do with people than machines. All the right parts and pieces together won't work miracles by themselves. It is people who make technology powerful by creatively using it to fulfill their dreams."
– Alliance for Technology Access 1996