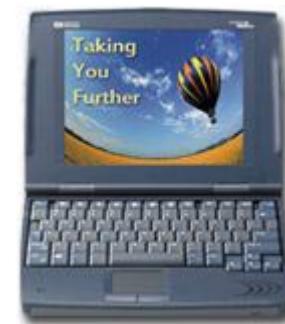# *Ability Newsletter*

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Lightweight Notebooks

Lightweight portable computers can be useful for students with disabilities in particular, but also for those who have difficulty carrying or moving a standard notebook computer (which can often be over 3kg). At one end of the scale there are devices such as the Dreamwriter 200, at around $1200. But what if you want industry standard software and a colour screen – what are your options?

Jornada 820

One option has been the HP Jornada 820. It has an 8″ colour screen, 16 MB of memory, a lid without a latch, USB and infrared ports, a built-in 56k. modem and cut down versions of Microsoft applications such as Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint and Internet Explorer. It has 10 hour battery life and weighs less than 1 kg. It was selling for around $1700 here, but was recently dropped from the Australian product range (it is still available in the US and some dealers in Australia). The Jornada 720 is much more compact. It has a 6.5″ display, a 56k modem and weighs

Jornada 720

Product News

510g. It also has the Windows CE set of software. It sells for around $2100 in Australia. Connection of both Jornadas to a desktop computer, for file transfers, is very simple.

Similar in size and performance to the Jornada 820 is the Sharp PV-5000A. It has an 8.2" display, infrared (but no USB) port, Windows CE software and 10 hour battery life. It weighs 1.2 kg and sells for $1789.

Sharp PV-5000A

Sony Vaio SR9G

Further up the price scale we come to devices such as the Sony Vaio SR9G, which has a Pentium III 600 and a 10.4" active matrix display. It comes with a 12GB hard drive and a USB port, but weighs only 1.5 kg. A very serious computer indeed. It sells for $3499.

What is most suitable for a particular individual depends on many factors. What these devices share is business level software, light weight and long battery life. They are certainly worth considering as alternatives to portable note-taking devices in many circumstances.

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Trackman Marble FX

This unusually shaped trackball allows a more natural angle for the (right) hand. The ball itself can be rolled with the forefinger or thumb or both. The left and right click buttons are quite large and accessible, located below the ball on either side. The device has two additional buttons, quite small and located above the ball on the left side. All four buttons can be assigned various functions, including scroll, zoom and drag lock, with the Mouse Ware software. In some circumstances it is not possible to use proprietary drivers, so in such cases only the left and right click buttons would be available.

A Cordless Trackman FX is also available, similar in shape and features, with a removable wrist rest. You need to be within 2 metres of the computer to use the device. It uses digital radio technology and is reportedly very comfortable to use (see <u>PC Magazine</u> February 2001). We are exploring the possibility of making this device more accessible by tilting it on its side.

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Renaissance Mouse

Using a joystick device as a mouse allows a very comfortable position for the hand. The Renaissance Mouse by 3M is a mouse rather than a joystick – the stick does not move in isolation from the rest of the unit. The whole device moves around the desk. The ball is located underneath, just like an ordinary mouse. Two sizes are available for this innovative product.

The thumb is used to access a two-way rocker button for left and right click functions. The PC version has a third button to control a scrolling feature or other programmable features. It comes with a USB connector and a USB to PS/2 adaptor.

One of our users liked the feel of the device but found it not accurate enought for detailed graphics work. But for more general use we believe it is a good option.

The Renaissance Mouse is available through Input Options for $99.

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Who's Who at Ability

We start the new year with an expanded team of people. We combine our various skills and backgrounds to bring you the best quality service in all areas.

To make things a bit easier for you, here is a list of the main responsibilities of each person. When trying to contact our staff, remember that we are often called out for assessments, training sessions and support calls. So please be patient – we will get back to you as quickly as we can!

Graeme Smith	Responsible for overall management and planning, research projects and medico-legal assessments.
Michael Berryman	Occupational therapist. He is responsible for rehab and school assessments, as well as training and technical support.
Alan Bimson	Responsible for Web page design and maintenance, system orders and environmental control system testing.
Shannon Schmidt	Looks after sales and orders. She is the person to contact for most account enquiries.
Lesley White	Maintains our contact database, does newsletter and brochure layouts and also has responsibility for equipment rentals.
Matthew Stevenson	Provides assistance with computer configuration and technical support.
Leigh Lockrey	Maintains product database and conducts Web-based research.

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Guards for Kensington Trackballs

Ability is pleased to announce the availability of high quality guards for Kensington Expert/Turbo Mouse trackballs. The new guards are made from the highest quality material. They are available for $79, a considerable saving on previous alternatives.

Trip South

We're on the move again! In March an Ability staff members will be visiting the Cootamundra – Albury – Wangaratta areas. If you would like an assessment, training, technical support or product demonstration, please call the Ability office ASAP or send us an email setting out your needs.