



Deafblind Newsletter - November 2007

DeafBlind Communicator to be Capable of SMS Texting

Typing messages from one cell phone to another has increased dramatically in recent years. This process is called SMS Texting or Text Messaging. Instead of talking verbally on one's cell phone, users type brief messages on the cell phone's keyboard which are sent to other cell phone users.

You may recall that the DeafBlind Communicator (DBC) consists of two separate parts, 1) the DB BrailleNote, which contains an electronic Braille display and either a Perkins or QWERTY keyboard, and 2) a portable "companion" unit that has a small visual display and a tiny QWERTY keyboard for use by sighted

people with whom the DB user communicates in face-to-face situations. These two components communicate wirelessly with each other using Bluetooth technology.

DeafBlind Communicator

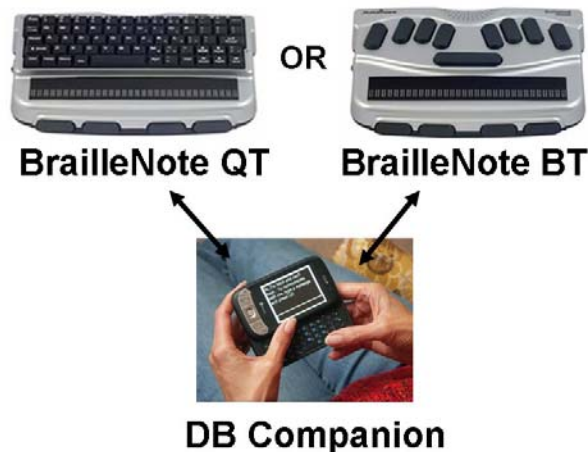


Photo of DBC Components

Here's the really good news: Since the DBCompanion unit is housed in a smart cell phone, DB users can choose to expand its functionality by signing up with a cell phone



Photo of DB Companion

company's service plan thereby turning their face-to-face communicator into a cell phone. This will allow them to send and receive text messages to and from other cell phone users.

Subscribing to a cell phone plan means the DB user will receive a monthly bill. SMS Texting often costs extra. The FCC does not require state or federal agencies to pay for personal services for people with disabilities. It is important to know that DBC users will be responsible for the set up, payment of and care of any cell phone service plan. When DBC users choose a cell service plan, the cell company will issue an SMS Texting number other cell phone users can call. Note: DBC users will not be able to send text messages to or receive such messages from TTYs because cell phone systems and landline connected phone systems are not capable of texting each other.

How will the DBC's SMS Texting facility work? When the DBCompanion is activated as a cell phone, the user will have the option of starting a TTY (requires a landline) or SMS conversation after entering a phone number. At this point, the user would choose SMS. No additional software needs to be installed in the DB BrailleNote. That part is

automatic. When in use, the DB Companion unit simply remains attached to the user's belt or in a bag because the user controls everything from the DB BrailleNote. The user can write text messages using the DB BrailleNote's keyboard and read text messages sent from other cell phones on the DB BrailleNote's Braille display.



Photo of DB BrailleNote with DBCom
Highlighted on Belt

The Deafblind Communicator will not only facilitate traditional types of DB communication (TTY and face-to-face) but also enable deafblind users to access and enjoy more modern, mainstream telecommunications technologies.

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