TechDis supports the Higher Education sector and others by providing advice and guidance on supporting disabled students and staff through the use of technology. Please do not switch off here. This was their first conference for HE, focussing in particular on staff from the new CETLs, but of use to us all, as I hope to show.

Font size too small on your screen?

Hold down the Ctrl key and scroll with your mouse button. It works whatever the package, and is somewhat quicker than using View > Text size > Largest in Internet Explorer.

There, you’ve learnt two things already, two things that participants at the conference also learnt, tips that are useful for all of us but particularly if you have certain disabilities.

Do you know about Styles in Word? It’s the tool that gives structure to documents with the added bonus of making a Table of Contents very easy to produce. When did you last add a screen tip to a document? Instructions for these are given at the end of this article.

SENDA’d to sleep?

Many of us have either been SENDA’d to sleep by the requirements of disability legislation, or else worried witless about what to do. On top of that is the new DDA 2005, which introduces a fresh duty to promote disability equality and requires each Higher Education Institution to prepare a Disability Equality Scheme, complete with action plans.

Down on the ground many of us want to engage learners more effectively but are worried that anything we produce, particularly for e-learning, may be inaccessible and require much more effort than traditional lectures and handouts.

The challenge for me is how can we stop being turned off by all this, and make it manageable in small practical steps. I know that the top tip is to make materials available electronically; doing this is the single most important contribution we can make, but are there other practical tips, that don’t take forever to master, are time effective, and would benefit all our students? Here’s where TechDis can help.

“Benevolent Bill”: including doing Sound Clips in Word

If you have never looked at the Windows accessibility options, try

Start > Programs > Accessories > Accessibility (Windows XP), or Start > Settings> Control Panel > Accessibility

This is just one example from the new TechDis Staff Training Pack, heavily featured at the conference, looking at the range of built in features in Windows and Word that are either designed to enhance accessibility or can be used creatively to make accessible resources.
There are information sheets on everything from AutoText to Sound Clips — yes, Sound Clips in Word!

**The Staff Training Pack**

Having seen one example you may want to browse for others at [www.techdis.ac.uk](http://www.techdis.ac.uk), but the aim of the pack is not primarily just for the individual but for those engaged in staff development. In other words, if you want to do some staff development, here it is on a plate, top quality free-standing materials including the ice breakers. It is available online but a limited number of hard copies are available from TechDis.

**The TechDis Toolbar**

The TechDis site offers much more than Staff Training Packs, and one of the latest offerings is a very clever Toolbar developed by Pete Rainger of Key2Access.Ltd.

It is very quickly installed and is designed to provide a simple way of viewing any web page with your chosen background and text colour, font type, and zoom. It is extremely useful for those with dyslexia who find it easier to read with coloured backgrounds, or those who prefer high contrast colour schemes.

**Styles**

Most of us have learnt Word on the hoof, and use what works. Our learning probably missed out about Style Sheets, which lend structure to documents.

At the top left of the screen is a drop down box offering you Heading styles.

Use these for headings rather than just emboldening and upping the size of font.

Highlight your heading and apply the style as in Fig 3.

![Fig 1 Example showing details of sound clips in Word](image1)

*Fig 1  Example showing details of sound clips in Word*

**Fig 2 TechDis toolbar allows user to select background and text colour, font and zoom**

You can change the attributes using:

Format > Styles and Formatting.

A frame opens on the right of the screen;

- Highlight your heading (Heading 2 here)
- Right click
- Select Modify
- Make the alteration

There is a real bonus to this: a table of contents in 5 clicks.
1. Click where you want your Contents to appear
   Tip: create the approximate space for your contents first, e.g. a page
2. Click Insert
3. Click Index and Tables
4. Click the Table of Contents tab
5. Choose the look you like and click OK.
   For updating the contents, move the cursor to it and press the function key F9.

Screen Tips

Pop up screen tips can be useful for annotating diagrams. Hover a mouse over a particular area and the screen tip is displayed as in Fig 5.

![Fig 5 Example of useful screen tip](image)

To create an area over which you wish the screen tip to appear:

- Draw a rectangle over the part of the image you wish to add further information to.
  (Use View > Toolbars > Drawing and select the rectangle. You can use any shape.)
- Right click on your rectangle
- Select Hyperlink and a screen tip can be added as in Fig 6

![Fig 6 Hyperlinks can be added to screen tips](image)

And Finally

I would do the conference an injustice to suggest that it was entirely about ICT, Microsoft and technology, though technology is what TechDis does. The keynote speaker, Professor Sally Brown posed the much larger question of:

“**How can we go beyond compliance to make disabled students’ learning experiences as productive and positive as possible?**”

Her keynote explored how inclusivity can be built into all aspects of assessment, and how we can ensure that the learning environment is conducive to learning for all.

It is a long time since I’ve been to such an enjoyable HE conference, well organised and with so much punch and practicality packed into 24 hours. TechDis in my opinion know about lots, including how to run a conference.

References

[1] TechDis
   http://www.techdis.ac.uk/
[2] The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 ; DDA 2005. The relevant urls are too long to quote but a search through Google will bring up the link to the relevant part of the Direct Gov web site http://www.direct.gov.uk