

# Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR) Report 2012

WATR is Wyoming's Assistive Technology Act program and a resource for assistive technology (AT) needs in Wyoming. AT may be a device or solution that enhances an individual's ability to live, play, or work independently. AT can take the form of a device, tool, or adaptation that supports a person when participating in everyday activities and settings.

WATR is staffed by University of Wyoming faculty and staff who hold credentials in assistive technology as well as in their areas of expertise. WATR provides a continuum of activities that can help increase appropriate AT implementation and integration that include:

- Information and assistance
- Device Demonstrations
- Device Loan Center
- Device Reutilization
- Alternative Financing
- AT Assessments and Evaluations
- AAC Assessments and Evaluations
- Training and Technical Assistance
- Public Awareness Activities
- Coordination and Collaboration

WATR, along with Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND), offers statewide assistive technology-related assistance through coordination and support of multiple activities. Our staff is dedicated to providing current and high quality information about assistive technology devices and services to increase knowledge and to facilitate participation in life activities. WATR is a member of the Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP). WATR receives technical assistance through the Catalyst Project of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA).



A FORCE FIGHTING FOR  
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



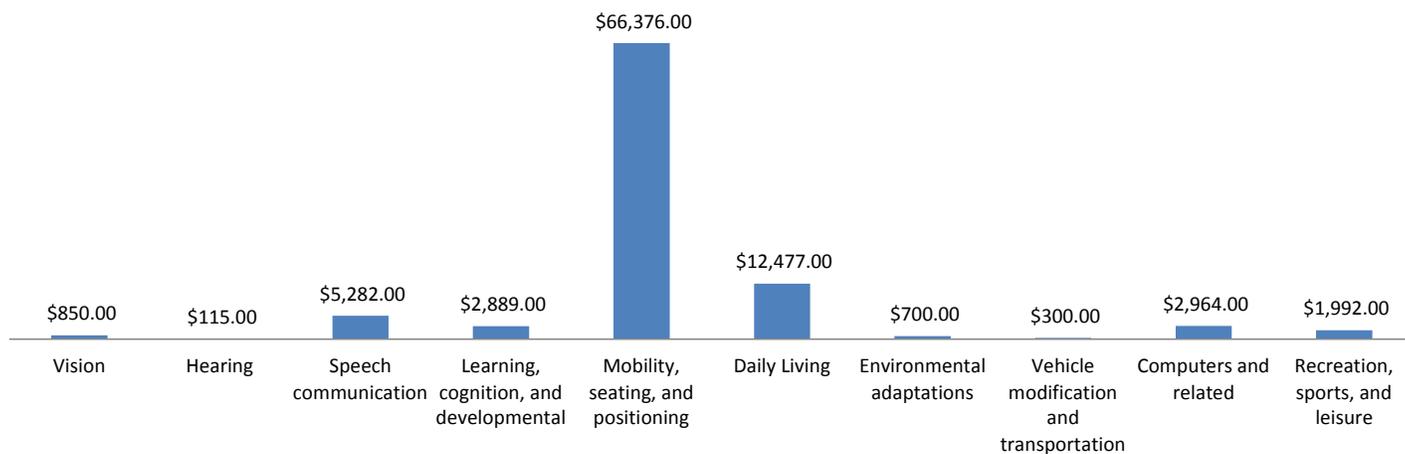
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## Savings to consumers

### Device exchange and open-ended loans

WATR provides significant savings to consumers who wish to acquire their own AT devices. Individuals can purchase used AT devices listed by other users through our loan website, AT4ALL. Individuals may also receive devices through WATR directly as an open ended loan.

#### 2012 Savings to Wyoming consumers: \$93,945



### Wyoming Technology Access Program (WYTAP)

If a person would like to purchase assistive technology equipment or modifications, he or she could apply for a loan through The Wyoming Technology Access Program (WYTAP). WYTAP is a collaboration between WIND, Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation, and First Interstate Bank. This specialized loan program offers interest buy-down for individuals who want to purchase assistive technology.

#### 2012 Financial loans by the numbers

**12** financial loans provided for assistive technology totaling **\$101,143.73**

**19** loan applications were submitted to First Interstate Bank

**12** requests for modified vehicles/accessible vehicles

**2** requests for stair chairs

**2** requests for home modifications

**3** requests for other needs, such as power chair repair, a service dog, and hearing aids

## Device Loans



WATR's device loan center offers a wide variety of assistive technology for Wyoming residents interested in borrowing a device for trial. Loan periods are typically six weeks and offer people the opportunity to try devices so that they may make educated decisions prior to purchase. All loans are made at no-cost; the borrower is only responsible for return shipping fees. WATR loans devices to individuals as well as school districts. All our devices are listed on the AT4ALL website, <https://www.wy.at4all.com/>.

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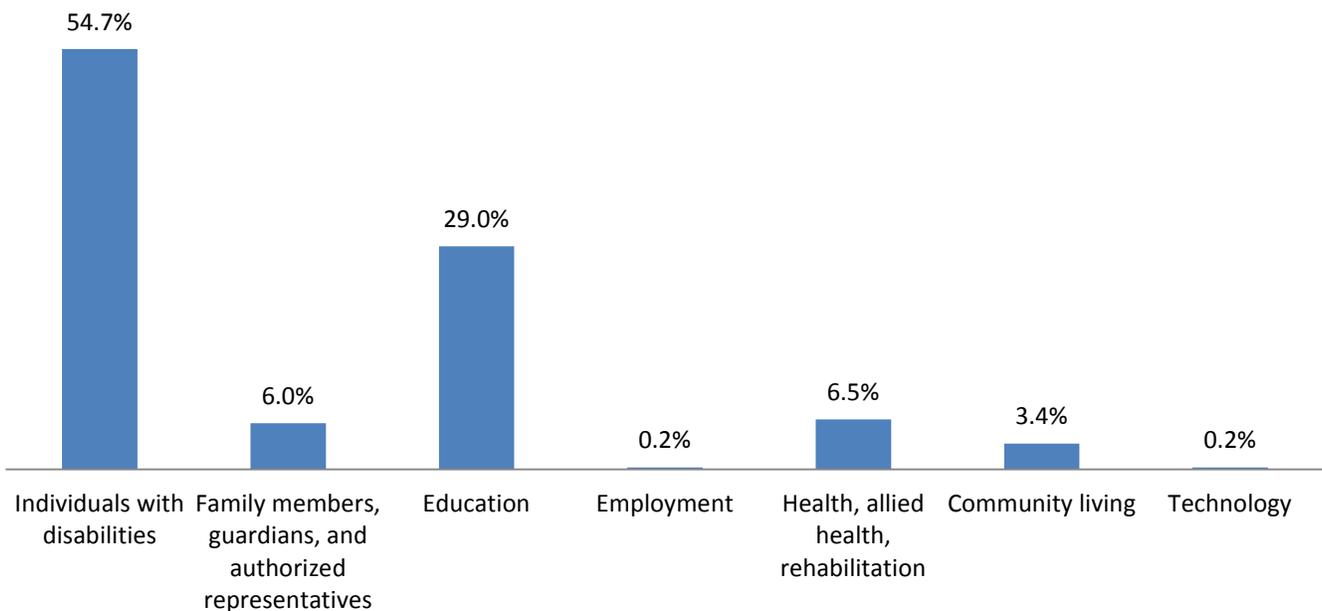
I love having the opportunity to try out equipment before buying it. Anything for special needs is so expensive. It really helps to make the best use of any money we have available.

-Comment from a loan library user

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### 2012 Device loans by type of borrower: 417 loans



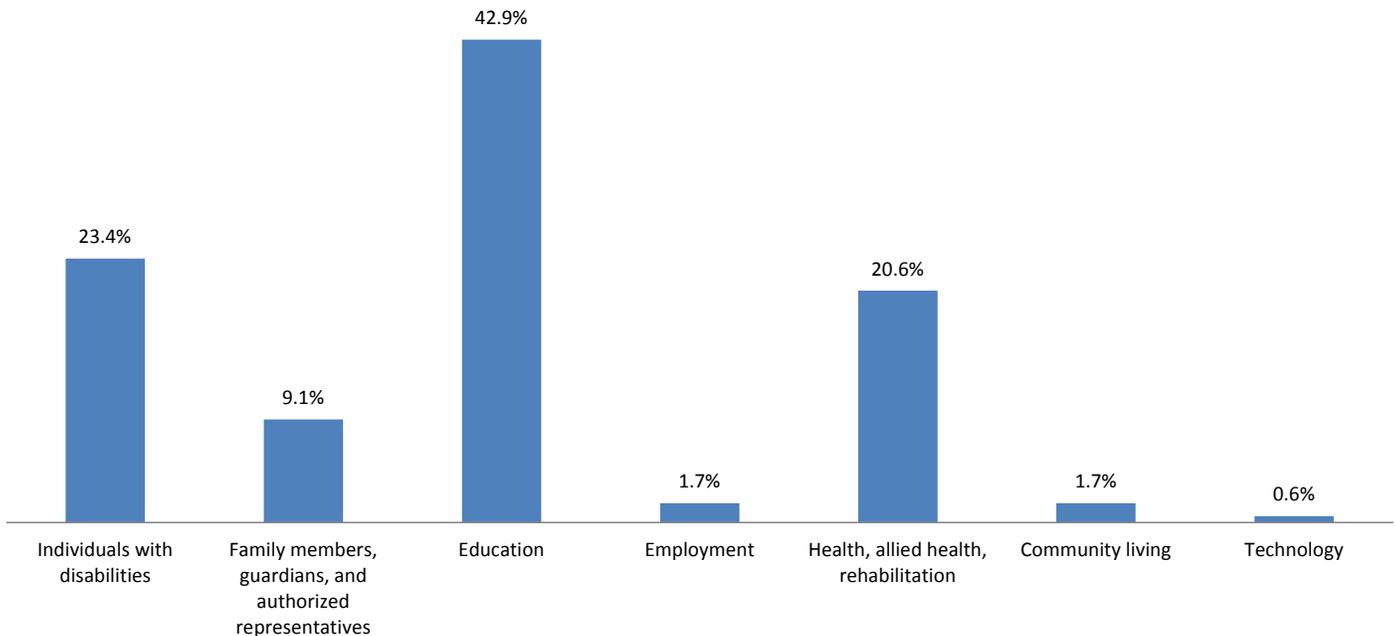
# Device Demonstrations

One of our most valuable services is the demonstration of assistive technology devices. Many individuals who could benefit from assistive technology are not aware of specific solutions, or maybe are not sure what is available. WATR works with people individually to arrange a customized demonstration of potential solutions.

WATR also hosts several Demo Days events around Wyoming each year. Demo Days is a chance for individuals with disabilities, caregivers, professionals, employers, or anyone with a curiosity about assistive technology to see a wide range of devices in one location. WATR faculty and staff set up several devices from our loan library and are on hand to answer questions and show how each device or system works.



## 2012 Device demonstrations by type of borrower: 175 demonstrations



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After a demonstration of the Writing Bird last year, the family bought one for their grandmother/great grandmother with severe arthritis. Seems that all she could write on birthday/Christmas cards was her name...which was un-readable. After learning how to use the Writing Bird, she now can write notes and make a readable signature. The great granddaughter says it is the first time she has ever received a readable note from the grandmother.

-Story and comment following a demonstration

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# Training and Technical Assistance

WATR offers statewide trainings for individuals in the areas of education, early intervention, adult service, health care, higher education, and businesses. Trainings are facilitated by WATR's accredited staff and faculty, and we frequently host nationally renowned trainers. In an effort to reach more people throughout Wyoming, we provide in-person trainings as well as online trainings through webinars. All of our webinar trainings are free and archived on the WATR website. WATR's trainings strive to teach participants about the latest low-tech systems and assistive technology.

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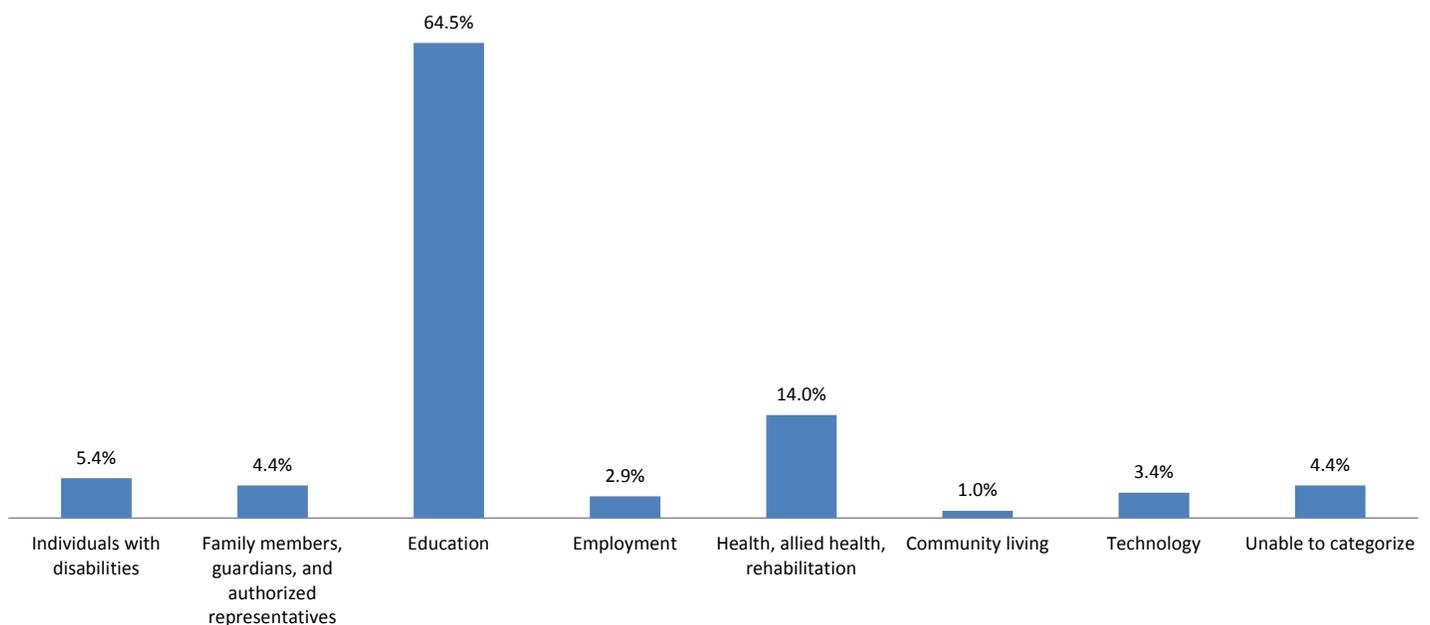
WATR collaborated with AIM and Disability Support Services to provide an assistive technology transition training to a group of students transitioning from high school to college and employment settings. Students were introduced to AT for reading, writing, organizing, mind-mapping, and studying. The group was provided information about AT and then offered a chance to try out different tools. One student discovered that software helped him correct words he commonly misspelled. Another requested purchasing information for the colored overlays to help her read her textbooks. The students gained awareness about assistive technology solutions that may help them transition to new environments.

-Feedback from a training event

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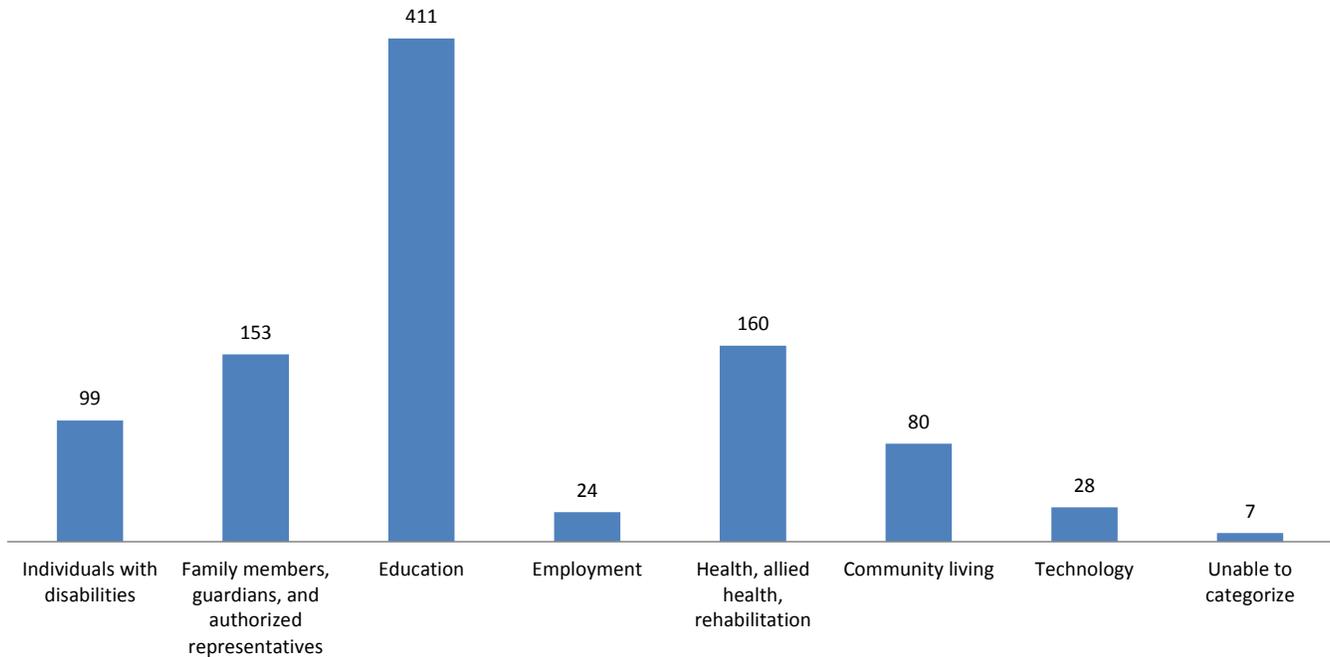
## 2012 Training and technical assistance by participant type: 408 participants



# Information and Assistance

WATR provides information regarding assistive technology devices and services, funding, and other disability-related topics by E-mail, to walk-in visitors, on our website, and through our toll-free phone number, and through our various publications. *DispATch*, WATR's electronic bulletin goes out to readers monthly. *DispATch* includes links to upcoming WATR events, quick project updates, and regional activities. WATR's biannual publication, *Waves*, is Wyoming's only assistive technology magazine for AT users and professionals. WATR also publishes *Stories of Success*, a biennial program report for assistive technology advocates. To be added to our WATR mailing list E-mail [watr@uwyo.edu](mailto:watr@uwyo.edu).

## 2012 Information and assistance interactions : 962 total interactions



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Thanks for the encouraging information on accessing AT and AIM. We keep forwarding the newsletter and recommending that all special education staff contact you to enroll for the newsletter. Great information; good job.

-Feedback on WATR publications

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### EARLY INTERVENTION TODAY HELPS WITH LEARNING TOMORROW

By Sara DiRanzzo, WIND Information Specialist

"I'm going to make you some cookies in my 'red kitchen,'" Jack Charfield says to his mom. Jack starts mixing up some imaginary cookie batter only to soon be distracted by a yellow school bus car toy. And then, he is off again, running around the playroom to find more trucks.

Jack's mom, Sarah Charfield, smiles and watches him gallop around the house. Jack is two years old and has optic nerve hypoplasia (ONH), an underdevelopment of the optic nerves in his eyes which classifies him as blind. Jack's story is exciting because early intervention services have aided in creating an environment to help him best learn and grow.

"When Jack was four months old I took him to the doctor for a check up on his eyes. I was worried because my husband, Dave, and I were at a party with some friends who had a daughter around the same age and she was staring straight at me. It freaked me out because Jack never stared at me like that," said Sarah.

Sarah took Jack to see a pediatric ophthalmologist in Cheyenne where the Charfields learned that Jack's eyes were not responding to light, functioning at 20% of average. Jack was then diagnosed with ONH.

"After Jack's diagnosis I felt like I needed to immediately know everything about blind children and ONH right then. But, I think the two things that really helped were, first, my husband's attitude. He said that we were just going to have a different adventure. And, second, we visited the Anchor Center for Blind Children (in Denver, Colorado) where I saw kids just playing like normal kids together," Sarah said.

This is when the Charfields began to seek out early intervention services for Jack and more information on how to create an environment to best facilitate learning and growth for Jack. First, the Charfields called the schools and got an evaluation for services. Soon after the evaluation, a team in their home district was formed. Team members helped in many different ways from being an advocate to teacher, to helping filter through overwhelming amounts of information.

"The assistive technology we used in the early intervention services included a cane and the iPad. The iPad was especially helpful for working on eye tracking and other associations through games," explains Wendy Alameda, WATR assistive technology specialist, and who was also a member of Jack's early intervention team at the time.

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# Partnerships

## **Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND)**

Wyoming Institute for Disabilities is Wyoming's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), located in the College of Health Sciences at the University of Wyoming. WIND works to assist individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, professionals, and University of Wyoming students through education, training, community service, and information.

## **Wyoming Technology Assistance Program (WYTAP)**

In 2004, WIND, Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation Inc., and First Interstate Bank of Laramie partnered to develop a program offering people with disabilities an opportunity to finance assistive technology devices and services. WYTAP loans make it easy to borrow money for an AT device that will improve mobility, accessibility, or quality of life. Loan counseling and assistance are available at no cost throughout the application process as well as throughout the life of the loan.

## **University of North Dakota at Casper College Occupational Therapy Program**

Through a partnership with University of North Dakota at Casper College, WATR works with the Occupational Therapy program to provide instruction to students about specific assistive technologies. Once the students understand the uses and potential application of devices, they demonstrate a select number of devices to individuals in the community.

## **Wyoming Life Resource Center**

In 2010, WATR collaborated with the Wyoming Life Resource Center and the Anna Marie Weston Lending Library to inventory assistive technology devices at multiple sites. The combined collection of technologies is listed on the WATR reutilization website and are available for long-term lending to any Wyoming resident.

## **College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (CEAS)**

The College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, through funding from a National Science Foundation grant entitled "Undergraduate Design Projects to Aid Persons with Disabilities," collaborates with WATR to design unique or low-cost assistive technology devices

for people throughout Wyoming. Additionally, CEAS works with WATR to offer hands-on, single switch construction workshops that teach caregivers and professionals how to modify toys or equipment with switches.

## **Wyoming AgrAbility**

Wyoming AgrAbility is a program of the University of Wyoming's College of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service. The program works with WATR to provide on-site assessments, assistive technology expertise, and outreach. Wyoming AgrAbility focuses on promoting independence and success in agriculture, so that individuals with disabilities and their families may continue to ranch and farm.

## **Wyoming Department of Education (WDE)**

The Wyoming Department of Education provides funding to WATR to sponsor our Demo Days events and our Professional Learning Community in assistive technology. The WDE is committed to working with WATR to ensure students receive the assistive technology they need.

## **Accessible Media and Materials (AIM)**

The Wyoming Clearinghouse for Accessible Media and Materials coordinates the requests and provision of accessible instructional materials for eligible Wyoming students with disabilities. Through a contract with the Wyoming Department of Education, the Clearinghouse works with districts to meet the requirements of the 2004 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. WATR assists with the provision of AT devices and strategies to access digital and other specialized formats.

## **Wyoming Accessibility Center (WAC)**

The Wyoming Accessibility Center provides fee-for service training, technical assistance and assessments to improve the access of individuals with disabilities to education, training, and employment. Services include assistive technology assessments, transcription and conversion of conference materials to braille formats, conversion of books and materials to audio and digital text formats, tactile graphics, closed captioning, website and course accessibility review, and conversion of materials to meet Section 508 compliance.