

More Great Gadgets for Technology Teachers

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Computer educators in Texas and elsewhere continue to search for effective hardware resources that can be incorporated into the school environment. As in our previous article, we will examine technologies appropriate to classroom integration, and include sample prices from vendors. Also as before, with the exception of products available from sole vendors, additional vendors beyond the ones mentioned here may be approached for purchasing information.

Migo

The Migo is a specially designed key chain drive. It plugs into the USB port of Windows-based computers like other key chain drives, but rather than simply offering additional drive space, the Migo is designed to clone computer settings and easily allow the swapping and updating of files.

Plug your Migo into another computer and presto, the wallpaper changes, the icons on the desktop changes, the profile changes, all matching your base computer. The e-mail messages in Outlook that you have been working with are there, and so are your Word and Excel files as well as your Internet Explorer favorites. In short, it serves to temporarily clone one computer to another. Take the Migo back to your base computer, plug it in, and all the changes you made on the away computer will be neatly synched up.

One can see the possibilities of the Migo, especially for those school personnel who must work on multiple computers throughout the district. Wherever they are, whichever computer they are using, they can simply plug in the Migo and work on their files. One caveat: the programs must be identical on each computer. So if the away computer does not have Excel, for instance, the Excel files on the Migo won't be of much use.

Expect the Migo to gain in popularity with campus technology personnel and teachers wishing to easily work on their files at home and school. The 128 meg version of the Migo was seen recently for \$100 at the SystemPath WebStore. The 256 meg version was listed at \$134.

<http://usm.channelonline.com/systempath/storesite>

Multicard Reader

Do you have multiple digital cameras on your campus using different media types? If so, consider obtaining a multicard reader that can handle them all, regardless of brand. Whether your cameras deal with Compact Flash, Secure Digital, Smart Media, Sony Memory Sticks, or any other type of memory card, a single multicard reader can connect to your computer's USB port and you can access them all. This makes sense when you consider having one machine in a central location that can handle all the cameras on campus.

A variety of readers are available for USB 1.1 and 2.0. These products are inexpensive and can be found at Fry's Electronics stores or from their Web site at outpost.com. If searching at the site, enter "multicard reader" in the search box. Look for prices in the \$20 range.

<http://www.outpost.com>

HP Vertical Scanner

Desktop space remains critical for teachers and administrators. Flatbed scanners take up a lot of valuable real estate. Realizing that, the engineers at Hewlett-Packard developed a flatbed scanner that can stand vertically rather than lying down flat. An additional nifty feature of this particular scanner is it is transparent, allowing users to see the inner mechanisms while their documents are scanned.

The HP Scanjet 4670, the vertical scanner's official name, uses USB 2.0 for faster scan speed and comes with HP photo and scanning software, as well an optical character recognition program.

The HP vertical scanner can be found on Circuit City's site for \$199. Use their search function and type in "HP vertical scanner" to gather product details.

<http://www.circuitcity.com>

HP 1012 laser printer

Hewlett-Packard has also been in the forefront of new printers offered at decreased prices. While we are aware of the inexpensive inkjet printers out there, we are also aware of the exorbitant prices for the ink cartridges they consume. Heavy classroom printer use demands a laser printer, if only for economic reasons. Traditionally prices for the cheapest laser printers have hovered in the \$300-\$500 range. No more. HP has released a very inexpensive laser printer in the \$150-\$200 range. The HP LaserJet 1012 printer is rated at 15 pages per minute. It should be noted that at this price range it is not designed for network use but rather for individual computers. Tech coordinators looking to hook up four or five classrooms to one laser printer would probably be happier with a more robust laser printer with networking built in. However, in situations where one teacher or administrator needs a fast printer with laser quality, the 1012 might fit the bill. Toner cartridges run around \$70 for this model, but last much longer than their ink cartridge counterparts.

On occasion, the major office supply chains will offer \$50 off the usual price of \$199 for this printer. As of this writing, Staples was offering a \$50 instant rebate for the printer when ordering online, bringing the total cost down to \$150.

<http://www.staples.com>

Laptop Desk

The Laptop Desk from Lapworks is one of those ingenious products that make you wonder why you didn't think of it first. It is a non-skid, multi-position platform for laptop use that is ideal for the classroom environment. Resting on the student's lap, it helps keep the laptop from getting knocked over. On the student's desk, it provides a non-skid surface that can be safely angled up for better typing positions. Ventilation underneath allows the laptop (and laps) to stay cooler. External mice can be used on the side or with an optional attachment. The Laptop Desk is a useful addition to any mobile laptop cart, lab, or teacher workstation, and may save a laptop or two from taking a swan dive to the floor at some point.

The original Laptop Desk (Lapworks calls it version 1.0) is priced at \$19.95. Version 2.0 is designed for also being used as a desktop stand. It is priced at \$29.95 from the manufacturer for a single purchase. Bulk discounts are available (for example, two of the more expensive models are available for \$49.95). Visit the manufacturer's site for more details.

<http://www.laptopdesk.net>

Technology integration continues to be a multifaceted endeavor for technology teachers and administrators in Texas. Hopefully some of the products we've discussed here and in the previous issue will assist educators with successfully integrating technology into their classrooms.

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