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Orbit Research and APH Introduce the World's First Handheld Talking Graphing Calculator

Coming for the fall 2013 school year: A specially adapted version of the Texas Instruments TI-84 Plus calculator will transform STEM education for students who are blind and visually impaired

WILMINGTON, DE -- February 26, 2013 -- Orbit Research and the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) today announced the introduction of the Orion TI-84 Plus, the world's first fully accessible handheld graphing calculator. Based on the popular TI-84 Plus model from Texas Instruments, the market-leader in calculators and educational technology, the Orion TI-84 Plus represents a breakthrough in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education for students who are blind and visually impaired.

With the advent of the graphing calculator, mathematics educators immediately recognized its potential for improving both the efficiency and the effectiveness of mathematics instruction by using it to promote exploration, conceptual understanding, modeling and complex problem solving. Today, literally millions of graphing calculators are used in math and science classes, and are an integral part of the high-school math curriculum. The most widely adopted graphing calculators are from the TI-8x family.

However, the popularity and usefulness of graphing calculators also poses a challenge for students who are blind and visually impaired, since none of the models used in classrooms have been accessible thus far. While some specialized computer software programs for graphing exist for students who are visually impaired, it has been difficult for them to participate fully in classroom activities with other students who are using calculators such as the TI-84 Plus.

Building upon APH's vast experience in the development of educational products and Orbit Research's expertise in adapting mainstream calculators for accessibility, and its long-term partnership with Texas Instruments, the companies collaborated to develop this unique product.

"Texas Instruments is passionate about helping teachers bring math and science to life for all students and Orbit Research has helped to develop an accessible version of the TI-84 Plus for students who are blind and visually impaired," said Scott Sedberry, Strategic Business Manager for Texas Instruments Education Technology. "The identical functionality of the accessible and traditional versions of the TI-84 Plus enables students who are blind and visually impaired to use the same device as their classmates, participate in the same curriculum and take advantage of the vast knowledge-base and instructional materials that are already available for this handheld. We are very excited about the opportunities this creates in STEM education and are committed to continued efforts to level the playing field for this population of students through our partnership with Orbit Research."

The Orion TI-84 Plus consists of a compact accessory that is attached to the top of the TI-84 Plus and enables a user who is visually impaired to interact with the TI-84 Plus using speech, audio, and haptic (vibration) feedback. All textual and symbolic information on the screen, as well as each key-press is spoken using high-quality synthesized speech. Most importantly, graphs can be explored using either spoken announcements or the SonoGraph™ audio and haptic feedback. The user can also review the contents of the screen at any time, including all text and graphical information, without affecting the calculation.

The unit is fully expandable with hardware accessories through a USB port and can also print or emboss graphs when connected to a printer or braille embosser.

The Orion TI-84 Plus will be available through APH's Federal Quota Program and units will ship in time for the 2013-2014 school year.

About Orbit Research:

Orbit Research develops and manufactures innovative and affordable products that enable an independent lifestyle for people who are blind or visually impaired. Founded with the mission to fulfill the urgent need for affordable assistive technology products, the company has introduced breakthrough products like the Orion Talking Scientific Calculators and the iBill Talking Banknote Identifier that define the state-of-the-art in features, functionality, convenience and cost. For more information, visit www.orbitresearch.com.

About the American Printing House for the Blind:

APH, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the world's largest company devoted solely to researching, developing, and manufacturing products for people who are blind or visually impaired. Founded in 1858, it is the oldest organization of its kind in the United States. Under the 1879 federal Act to Promote the Education of the Blind, APH is the official supplier of educational materials for students who are visually impaired in the U.S. and outlying areas who are working at less than college level.

APH produces textbooks and magazines in braille, large print, recorded, and digital formats. APH also designs and manufactures hundreds of educational, recreational, and daily living products. For more information, visit www.aph.org.

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