

Library hoping for \$9,000 gift

# Computer reads, sings for blind

By STARR MOORE  
Battalion Reporter

What will computers do next? They may read, or even sing.

A computer did just that Monday at Texas A&M University's Sterling C. Evans Library. The Kurzweil Reading Machine for the Blind "sang," or rhythmically recited, Chattanooga Choo Choo for two attentive audiences.

Shane Snowden, a Kurzweil sales representative, demonstrated the machine to about 40 people, including Texas State Rep. Bill Prenal, a representative for the state commission for the blind and a veteran representative who works with handicapped students.

Snowden said the machine can not only read lyrics to music, but can also compute multiple-digit equations.

She said that it follows 1,000 rules of the English language and can read aloud anything from newspapers to hard-cover books.

The machine can also speak at various pitches and speeds according to listeners' preferences, she said.

"After a while, you get the feeling the computer is a human being," Snowden said.

The machine reads all types and styles of print, she said, making the invention especially helpful for the visually handicapped.

She said it allows a visually impaired person to hold a job such as an airline reservationist, since the machine will repeat the reservations audibly, just as a regular computer records the information visually.

Snowden said 220 machines have been sold throughout the country over the past five years, with a sales increase in the last year due to the lowering of the computer price from \$29,000 to \$9,000. Most buyers come from public and university libraries, she said.

Snowden said that large corporations and the federal government are becoming more interested in the reading machines, which allow more jobs to be filled by the handicapped. This function helps keep organizations within their affirmative action requirements, she said.

Prenal said, however, that he does not foresee the state of Texas supplying all counties with the machines, like the state of New York has done, due to the size and number of counties in Texas.

Kathy Jackson, head of the Texas A&M library reference division, said Dr. Irene Hoadley, director of the library, wants to make organizations aware that a reading machine would be a valuable gift for the University. Jackson said Hoadley is looking for possible sources of funds if the computer is not given to Texas A&M.

Jackson said she would like to

see the University be able to offer use of the reading machine to its visually impaired students. She said it would not only allow them the independence that no other reading aid offers, but would also give them access to any book in the library.

Kenneth Ballard, a psychology major and one of the visually impaired students at Texas A&M, said the machine would be a "good thing" for him.

He said it would be useful, although he finds it hard to understand the computer voice — or "outerspace" voice — as Snowden calls it.

Ballard said other traditional blind reading aids, such as talking books and hired readers, are not as convenient as the machine. He said readers are often unreliable.

Snowden said the visually impaired especially enjoy the reading machines' efficiency and convenience.

# 'Sexist' stories challenged

By WAYNE COOK  
Battalion Reporter

The degree to which "boys will be boys" and "girls will be girls" may be influenced by the images of males and females presented in children's books.

Distinctions in children's literature between passive, nurturant, submissive girls and aggressive, forceful, dominant boys are being questioned.

"Non-sexist" story books are coming into use as society changes its perception of sex roles. These "non-sexist" story books avoid sexual stereotypes.

However, using "non-sexist" story books with pre-school youngsters seems to change the teachers' attitudes toward stereotypes faster than the children's, said Dr. Dolly Thiem, head of home economics at Tarleton State, part of the Texas A&M University System.

Thiem tested 79 black and Mexican-American children in a North Texas pre-kindergarten program to determine if "non-sexist" books and trained teachers changed the role perceptions held by 4- and 5-year-olds.

Twenty books were chosen for the study, including "The Man Who Didn't Wash His Dishes," "William's Doll" and "Mommies at Work."

"Teacher attitudes changed significantly with training, but children's did not in the short, four-

week observation period," Thiem said.

Similar results were found in an earlier study by Thiem using white children.

The study underscored the theory that pre-kindergarten children have already developed ideas of roles based on gender. These early ideas are probably received from family attitudes, other story books, television and perhaps even from images in the news media, Thiem said.

Teachers' expectations have an important impact on classroom interactions and children's perceptions may change with time, Thiem said.

Dr. Judy Huffty, director of curriculum and staff development for Col-

lege Station Independent School District, agrees that teachers' views and their choice of curriculum can play a part in a child's perception of sex roles.

"It is important to present a balanced viewpoint," she said. Huffty said she tries to raise the awareness level of teachers and librarians with respect to children's sex role perceptions.

Teachers graduating from college in the past five years seem to be more conscious of sexual stereotypes, Huffty said.

Book publishers are also becoming more aware of how the sexes are depicted in children's books. They are concerned with accurately reflecting modern society, she said.

# Caperton, McNiel outline issues in local Jaycee debate

By NANCY ANDERSEN  
Battalion Staff

The two candidates for State Senator District Five discussed the race issues in a Bryan College-Station Jaycees debate Wednesday.

Kent A. Caperton (Dem.) and Dr. N.A. McNiel (Rep.) each summed up their campaigns and then answered questions.

Caperton said the race boils down to three basic issues: qualifications, perception of the issues and the ability to articulate the issues and to do something about those issues.

"I have varied experience that does equip me," he said.

Caperton said the issues are education, law enforcement, agriculture, maintaining a strong business climate and getting control of state government.

Faculty and staff salaries should be increased, he said, as well as maintaining the Permanent University Fund. In addition, law enforcement salaries are too low, he said.

Once these problems are recognized, Caperton said he has the ability to quickly establish a leadership role in the Legislature. He said he is aggressive, active and knows the legislative process.

McNiel said he has campaigned on three points: morality, integrity and leadership.

The country should get back to some basic moral beliefs, McNiel said. "Government has interfered too much in churches."

Also, "Integrity is a necessary part of service in the public section," he said.

McNiel explained his motivation for seeking public office.

"I was told that when a person retires, they should do what they want to," he said. "And for the past nine months I've been doing just that."

# Energy conservation seminar set Friday

The Texas Energy and Natural Resources Advisory Council is sponsoring an Energy Conservation Seminar Friday from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. in the old city hall at Church and Wellborn in College Station.

The seminar is divided into three segments.

Malcolm Verdict, project manager for Texas Energy and Natural Resources Advisory Council, will discuss the state's role in conserving energy as the first presentation.

The second segment of the program will deal with general aspects of energy conservation on heat transfer. The technicalities will be explained by Bob Henry, energy con-

servation coordinator with the Texas Engineering Extension Service.

Bahman Yazdani, an energy code engineer with the Public Works Training Division of Texas Engineering Extension Service, will begin the third segment dealing with energy conservation for buildings.

Another feature of the program will be a slide show of the inspection and identification of energy saving materials.

Yazdani said although the program is geared toward builders, subcontractors, engineers and architects, everyone is welcome.

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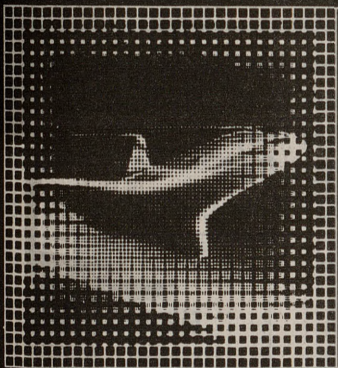
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