



INsight

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New Computer Wing Booted Up

Although 44% of the students at the Institute are blind and 60% have some residual vision, they all share one thing in common: love of the computer. A state-of-the-art computer wing was recently inaugurated at the Institute, and it will certainly make all of the students happy. The specially equipped room was custom furnished and realized through assistance of National Insurance (HaMossad LeBituach Leumi). A large contribution by the Swiss Friends of the Institute, Hilfe für Blinde in Israel, helped to complete the project.

"In planning the new wing, we wanted to accommodate entire classes in order to teach new material and allow students to drill at their own pace," explains Nechama Lev-Ari, the teacher who planned and helped to design the wing. "We needed some modern equipment like Powerbraille which prints out a braille rendition of what appears on the screen for the use of blind students."

Some of the computers are equipped with enlarging devices which help to greatly magnify the screens, or areas of the screen, and there is also new voice interactive technology in which the student and computer can talk to each other. As so many Institute pupils are multi-handicapped, the computer offers tremendous satisfaction and a venue in which they can succeed (see box).



"In this age of computers and the stimulation they offer, it is important to be able to travel on the superhighway of information," explains Lev-Ari. "We already see the organization and discipline that is being taught, and even games take on a new dimension when played on the computer." The computer wing will soon be open for afternoon and evening courses for blind and partially sighted adults.

Excerpt from letter by Michael Peretz, 53, former JIB graduate and member of the Institute's Boars of Directors...

When I completed my studies at the Institute, I began working my way up in the world of computers amidst my sighted colleagues. My career has been rewarding, and today I am an experienced programmer and systems analyst. I lead a full life, and I am a member of the Board of Directors of the JIB where I grew up and obtained my education. All over the world, and also at the Institute, computers are a different entity today. Computerized educational programs have ushered in a new era, and computers are central to the learning and leisure of the younger generation. Computers have brought a fascinating new reality to the blind, — they share the same interests and promises for the future as their sighted friends.

Today, students at the Institute are in touch with the world through their fingertips, and special verbal programs and braille screens encourage them to widen their horizons. Along with our optimism, however, we know computer programs for the blind are extremely expensive and limited at present. Your contribution to the Jewish Institute for the Blind can help us continue to expand our computer education.

