

Kurzweil Educational Systems

Customer Profile

Robert Carter

Psychologist

Texas A & M University



Believe you **can**

The Situation

Robert Carter was born and raised in North Carolina. Blind from birth, he was one of the first blind students in the state to be mainstreamed into the public schools. He worked daily with a resource teacher who taught him Braille and touch-typing, and was aided by his mother who labored tirelessly to get his textbooks translated into Braille. Despite these supports, Robert remembers how difficult it was getting his schoolwork done. "Touch-typing was the only way I could submit my assignments. Each time I was interrupted, I had to start all over again because I forgot what I typed." Through diligence and determination, however, Robert made it through public school and continued his studies at the University of North Carolina where he earned a B.A. in English. During the summers he worked as a counselor at Western Carolina University — one of the first universities to purchase the at-that-time brand new Kurzweil Reading Machine*. Though the early technology was imperfect, Robert immediately saw its potential. "You can imagine my excitement about a machine that could read text back to me."

Robert feels fortunate to have been one of the first users of reading technology. However, while the Kurzweil Reading Machine was an important technological breakthrough, it was too cumbersome to use for his daily work and academic assignments. Robert still had to rely primarily on human readers as well as Braille and taped text. Keeping up with his work was extremely time-consuming and left Robert little time or energy for anything else. He recalls being extremely frustrated at not being able to read more deeply and widely in his field, or do the personal reading he so much enjoyed. Despite these hardships, Robert continued with his academic studies going on to pursue a Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Florida. There, his life changed dramatically with the introduction of the Kurzweil Personal Reader* — the precursor to today's Kurzweil 1000*.

The Solution

Unlike the large and expensive Reading Machine, the Personal Reader was portable and more moderately priced. Robert, still on a student's income, scraped together the money he needed to buy his own Personal Reader — a decision that was one of the turning points in his life. "Before the Kurzweil Personal Reader," Robert recalls, "reading technology was intriguing, but

For more information on Texas A & M University, see www.tamu.edu.



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Robert Carter (cont.)



not really of practical use.” With the Personal Reader, he could feed his insatiable passion for reading by scanning and listening to as many books, articles, and papers as he could absorb. As a lover of literature, he devoured hundreds of his favorite novels.

After earning his Ph.D. in 1989, Robert accepted his current position as a psychologist at Texas A&M University. He remembers keenly when Kurzweil Educational Systems introduced Kurzweil 1000 in the mid '90s. Robert found this innovative software product to be a significant improvement over the Personal Reader. He liked the fact that it could be upgraded and modified much more easily and that there were no limits on the addition of new features. Robert particularly liked the bookmark capabilities and the flexible Windows interface with the ability to work using a keypad. He appreciated the automatic page orientation when scanning. It was also far more affordable.

The Results

Today, Kurzweil 1000 is an important part of Robert's life. He uses it to read any printed material — from mail to articles and books — and finds it much more flexible and faster than taped material. His listening speed has continued to increase until now he can comfortably understand text read at 500 words per minute. (Human speech is about 200 words per minute.) “Kurzweil 1000 saves me time, because I can scan and read most mail and handouts at meetings, for example, so much faster than having a human reader read them to me. It even allows me to skim material.” Robert really likes the fact that Kurzweil 1000 can scan and handle so many different styles of print with great accuracy, and that it allows him to easily transfer documents to his BrailleNote giving him portable Braille copies.

In addition to his counseling work at the university, Robert has been an advocate for making technology more accessible to blind people in the workplace. He sees ease-of-use as critical toward that end, and feels Kurzweil Educational does a good job maintaining a healthy balance between simplicity and new features. “I really love the flexibility of Kurzweil 1000,” says Robert, “because it gives users complete control. You can use it as a text reader by pressing the scan key. Then, if you want to do more complex editing or marking up of the scanned material, Kurzweil 1000 has that capability as well.”

As a long-term user, it was natural for Robert to become a beta tester for Kurzweil Educational — something he has found very rewarding. “The people at Kurzweil Educational are really responsive to users and take our suggestions to heart.” That's why, Robert believes, Kurzweil 1000 continues to be the most flexible and powerful, yet easy-to-use reading software available today.

*While many of the same people have been involved in the evolution of the Kurzweil 1000, the Kurzweil Reading Machine was developed by Kurzweil Computer Products and the Personal Reader was developed by Xerox Imaging Systems.

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