

# Versatile keyboard with front lighting can be app-specific

June 18 2015, by Nancy Owano

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Along with the arrival of touchscreens have come pundits' predictions that in time the keyboard will go away. In 2015 the keyboard is still a much-desired component, though, pain points and all. Over the years, the headaches continue as users complain: "Why do they call them shortcuts when I have to remember so many of them?"

The Sonder keyboard wants to redefine the keyboard as a tool for possibilities beyond those words, numbers and quotation marks in places you have memorized along with the list you keep when you forget certain shortcuts. Sonder's keyboard changes its keys to fit the range of a user's application needs.

Utilizing e-ink technology, all of its [letter](#), number and [function keys](#) can change appearance and function, depending on the application being used, said Ben Coxworth in *Gizmag*.

"With Sonder you can establish game-specific hotkeys, macros and specific in-game commands," said the company. "Customize each key to have their own individual iconography," it added, and "create your very own keys to perform whatever command you wish."

Hills, technology providers, has a Hills Young Australian Design Awards site, which expressed a view of how the Sonder concept could ease the work of designers:

"Sonder's E-ink keyboard is the inevitable solution to a compelling design sector need. Designers are required to memorize hundreds of application-specific [shortcuts](#), etc. Not only is this inefficient and costly for the sector, it's frankly frustrating."

Evan Killham wrote in *Cult of Mac* that the keyboard "features the 78 keys you'd expect from a standard, keypad-less typer, but the cool part is that about 50 of them include little screens that can show any [symbol](#) or icon you want."

The keys can be changed for different language settings and key layouts—such as from QWERTY to DVORAK, English to Chinese and typing emoticons to text.

Michael Zhang gave some examples in *PetaPixel* of what work might be like in design mode, using the keyboard. "When you're using Photoshop, you can have the icon on each key reflect the particular tool or feature that key is used for while editing your [photos](#). Need to switch over and do a little work in Adobe Illustrator? The keyboard will adjust the keys to reflect the new shortcuts you have at your disposal."

Sonder considered the users who may need to work in the dark; front lighting is provided through "a fiber optic waveguide" for working in the dark, said the company.

The keyboard works with a Mac or PC, tablet or smart phone through Bluetooth. After pairing them, you move your keyboard anywhere within range and go to work. Sonder said the internal battery is charged by plugging in braided fiber cables.

The [company](#) founders and directors are Francisco Serra-Martins, CTO, and Felipe Serra-Martins, COO. At what stage of readiness is the keyboard? They are taking pre-orders at \$199.

Sonder sent an e-mail to *Cult of Mac* saying "Given the insane interest to [date](#) from some pretty big names in tech, we will be launching an epic Kickstarter campaign later this year, and will be shipping internationally thereafter." The message also said, "With the assistance of NSW Trade & Investment, we are developing our E-ink keyboard and have already commenced pilot production in Sydney and Shenzhen."

The message also said where they want to take their concept next. The [keyboard](#), they said, "adapts intuitively to the user to display any application-specific shortcuts, in addition to any language or custom icons. Later, we will launch an online library where users can freely access and share cool new user-generated content."

**More information:** [www.sonderdesign.com/](http://www.sonderdesign.com/)

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