



The 2017 Accessibility Conference:
**Becoming a Catalyst
for Inclusion**
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You Included Us!

Transcript from the 2017 Accessibility Conference

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Transcripts are available courtesy of [Ai-Media](#) who provided live captioning at the 2017 [Accessibility Conference](#).

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JILL VIGERS:

I am delighted to be here. This is an amazing project to be able to share. It all started at the past accessibility conference when Debbie Gillespie gave a talk about wayfinding for low vision or

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blind people. How it is to travel within her surroundings, and what that would be like. We had a wayfinding project coming up that was really focused on exterior wayfinding, so that is where we started the project. This didn't really bring us anything practical, so we really wanted to do (inaudible), capitalising on what is there.

We started with physical signage, and we started looking at things, and the City of Toronto was extremely gracious in giving us their lessons learned.

Obviously, we are different from a huge city, and they made a physical connection, but they still had their signs equipped with a number to call and a little bit of Braille involved.

Again, we kept thinking and questioned the basics. How do we actually make wayfinding useful when we look at accessibility issues rather than just providing braille for which you have to find the sign, then find the braille on the sign, then be able to read the braille and/or being willing to touch it. We followed good conventions like contrast and hard surfaces at the base of the sign but we wanted to go beyond braille, which didn't seem practical in this application.

So, as we said, we started looking at an aspect of wayfinding and signage that would focus on visitors and faculty who are blind or partially sighted. What I didn't realise is that we are one of the top two destinations for graduates from the school for the blind. That was pretty exciting to learn that.

We are approaching 30 students now who are either blind or partially sighted. I think we have two members of faculty and I'm sure quite a few guests to campus and hopefully more after this project is completed.

In this slide, is something I really like to go back to. For me, it was completely enlightening. The big things I took from her (Debbie Gillespie's) lecture... Preplanning is hugely important. As you are travelling, having indications, and that confirmation or affirmation of where you are travelling and that you got there is key.

Now we not only can confirm where you are, but we can give multiple layers of information through Blindsquare. It is remarkable what we can convey in many different layers and levels inside and out.

We can also go into was and give much information, getting into all of the details of that.

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As I mentioned, we were very lucky to make the contact (inaudible) with Debbie Gillespie of CNIB and through her to Rob Nevin of U-R-Able.

The biggest thing for me was going back and really questioning what we were trying to do, how we fulfil that, and what is practical. There are limitations due to maintenance, budget, all those things that I have to contend with, so it was trying to navigate all the basics.

Phase 1 is going to be a really good step forward, and I will hand it over to Rob.

ROB NEVIN:

Thank you for coming to this session.

I am going to play a short video. This is Ronja Oya, a Finnish Paralympian, we'll join her in this video as she seamlessly travels from outdoors, on a city street, to indoors, in the ITIS mega mall in Helsinki Finland.)

[\(Video plays <click to link to video>\)](#)

A project in Wellington, New Zealand illuminated, with automatically supplied information, to shoppers who are blind in their central business district. This project started last August. We have many such installations and beacons, and Helsinki is one example. We established that we could scale up to the thousands of beacons and thousands of locations, but we set out to show what we could do, with one. One beacon in one shop, one shop in a sea of 200 shops now accommodating shoppers who are blind.

Any time we deliver information, we deliver it into layers. The first visitor would be interested in more information, as they may want to know where the washroom is. We can be quite specific saying the men's is on the left, the women's is the right and so on.

A frequent visitor may not need the details. This represents the principle that we want to say as much as necessary, in as few words as possible. For people who are blind or visually impaired, their hearing is a critical asset. We reduce the time where information conveyed is an interruption. It is good to hear the footfalls of someone coming up behind you, for example.

This is a short video that concerns the project, and I will show you this as well.

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[\(Video plays <click to link to video>\)](#)

ROB NEVIN:

There is a connection between the project in Wellington and the project at the University of Guelph. (inaudible) When walking, location information is provided by GPS, when entering indoor locations, once you lose sight of the satellites, we become blind again. It is really just the absence of information. This addressed by the installation of Beacons. I am holding a beacon, it looks a bit like an ant trap. It fits in the palm of my hand.

It is Bluetooth, the same as the Bluetooth headset, but it does nothing more than emit a signal, with a unique identifier, three times a second. In the case of the University, we have many buildings, so equipped, providing continued access to location information, very illuminating. As you go out the door, turn left, for example, we advise your travel options.

But what is the alternative?

So although this is complex, it is a highly developed campus with a visual focus - highly visually focused. But let's look at the campus a bit more.

The campus has many emergency poles, but we addressed that. What good is having this service if they can't be found at a time of need? Perhaps (inaudible), and a user came back and said, "I didn't even know that was there."

Many buildings, academic and otherwise - there are a smattering on screen - (slide illustrates distribution of buildings and features on-screen), and this is all part of campus life.

There are other things that need to be communicated. We described them as cautions and clues. You might encounter something where you least expect it. In fact, we can advise whether or not that is a hazard.

Another example, there is a stairwell by the library. Open in the summer, closed in the winter. The cane will tell you that you have encountered the wall, but wouldn't you rather know before you hit it?

There is a lovely path that leads up to the Arboretum. In the area preceding the door, there is a reflecting pond, without a railing or other warning. The travellers cane should tell you of the

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sudden fall-off, but what if not? As you enter, we can advise you of such hazards (or cautions) to allow the traveller to be extra vigilant.

ROB NEVIN:

If you have never been to Calgary, you will appreciate that you really don't have to go outside to move from building to building. This is especially beneficial in their winters!

The frequent alternative for persons who are blind is to ask for help. However, many have learned to ask several people and average the answers! Well intentioned sighted people wanting to help still use words and directions in their personal context, not necessarily considering the person they're talking with is blind.

A blind person might ask how to get to McDonald's, with a response like "Walk down to the yellow sign and turn left." How good is that (if you can't see the yellow sign)

Braille is a common response. The fact is that 10% of people who are blind are able to read braille. Less than 10% will be inclined to read in a public place. We augment signage with the use of BlindSquare Blazes (dynamic QR codes) that have black and white squares and, when scanned using BlindSquare's built-in reader, provide tremendous information resources, at the tips of the fingers. It is a good tool for people who are blind, because you can read it from different directions and it does not require precision to be successful.

We know that, at best, a blind person has one hand available. The other hand will be tied up with a guide-dog harness, but that leaves you with one hand. If not walking with a dog, a hand is dedicated to the white cane, or the elbow of a friend. The imperative is a solution that does not require more than one hand to use, and in many cases, by a single finger alone.

SPEAKER:

The bullring is a circular building. It lends itself to a description like a clock face. At the time, shake for the audio menu.

ROB NEVIN:

I will shake it now.

SPEAKER:

When entering from the double doorway, you are standing at six o'clock. Around the clock face,

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you will find the following features. At one o'clock, men's restroom. Five o'clock, a food service area. Six o'clock, the main exit. Seven o'clock, stage. Eight to 10 o'clock, seating with five chairs. 11 o'clock, women's restroom. When entering, facing in, you are standing at six o'clock.

ROB NEVIN:

So you can hear what direction we would be facing in if we enter from a certain direction, from Trent. If you go to the back door, it is a single door, and even that has been explained.

(inaudible), but I didn't skip ahead. If I knew I was going in the back door, I could simply listen to the information (inaudible)

The bullring is the perfect case for being compared to a clock face because it was already in a circle.

Now illustrating a single-user washroom. The type with accessibility controls that benefit those in wheelchairs or who may have mobility concerns with their hands which precluding the ability to lock a door. These washrooms now have big red buttons, easily pressed, and well signed to warn the user that they must press the button, to lock the door. As the signs are visual, blind persons could well find themselves in a compromising position. If you don't know HOW to lock the door, or why .. the information void can lead to embarrassment.

Just as we are approaching this gentleman, if you want homework, go to the website what3words.com. That project, which is significant, that is identified as planet Earth in the form of 57 trillion 3x3 metre squares. 57 trillion.

OK, thank you very much, Rob and Jill for speaking to us. I would like to present you with a jar of our very own university honey. Please join me in thanking our speakers.

(Applause)

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