

Accessibility Lab

Haven Daley:

Imagine trying to type on a keyboard using a big rubber ball.

Reporter:

I'm trying to make it pointy.

Haven Daley:

That's the kind of problem Victor Tsaran tries to help solve at Yahoo's accessibility lab. Born in Ukraine, he lost his eyesight as a child.

Victor Tsaran:

Well, when I saw a computer for the first time, suddenly something clicked in my mind. And I was like, wow, this is such a great tool. I can do so many things, you know. I can scan books. I can compose music. I can go to encyclopedias. I can browse websites... And so I-I got into accessibility field maybe by need, if you will, you know, because that's technology I live on an everyday basis.

Alan Brightman:

Start it again.

Haven Daley:

The lab helps programmers and developers understand how disabled people use computers and access the Internet. For users with limited hand movement, a single button replaces the keyboard.

Haven Daley:

For users paralyzed from the neck down, a head mouse was developed. The computer can sense where the user is looking thanks to a sticker placed on the forehead. There are also similar devices that sense jaw movements or finger taps.

Video game player:

There we go.

Haven Daley:

Victor uses a braille display and a screen reader.

Voice synthesizer:

Hello Victor. How are you doing today?

Haven Daley:

When a user gets proficient, they can actually understand this:

Voice synthesizer:

(very fast speech)

Victor Tsaran:

So you get the idea, right?

Reporter:

You can understand what they're saying?

Victor Tsaran:

Yeah, I can.

Alan Brightman:

I have nothing against charity, nothing against philanthropy, but I've yet to meet a person with a disability who wants to be considered an object of charity. They-they want to be considered, in general, as part of the mainstream, which means, in part, they-they are customers, and they want to be seen as no less demanding or discerning a customer as anybody else.

Haven Daley:

Still, there's no doubt the lab's work is changing lives.

Victor Tsaran:

You know, salary increases are great, but nothing warms your heart better than hearing from users saying, you know: I love your new feature that you guys implemented, or: I loved using your particular site.

Haven Daley:

Yahoo's accessibility lab has been up and running for about two years now. Those working here say they hope in another ten years, accessibility issues will be solved, and the lab will no longer be needed.

Haven Daley:

Haven Daley, The Associated Press, Sunnyvale, California.

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