DESIGN LIKE WE GIVE A DAMN! - LÉONIE WATSON
Transcribed by: Adrienne Smith & David Widman - Humber College

LÉONIE: Hi, I'm Léonie from the Paciello Group and I want to share some ideas about designing like we give a damn. Like we give a damn about the standards and specifications that we create and that we give a damn about the people who use those things.

So, the first idea is that we should all design like we're Banksy, which is to say, learn the rulebook, understand it, but don't be afraid to rip it up and challenge the accepted wisdom of things.

The W3C has done some amazing work in accessibility over the past 20 years. It's created standards and guidelines that are used by individuals, organizations, and even nations around the world. But accessibility, like a lot of other things in life, has to be challenged if it's going to continue to evolve. I think our challenge over the next 20 years has to be to make accessibility a core design principle of every W3C technology. More than that, accessibility must be part of the solution. I firmly believe that it can't be a challenge to its progress.

The next idea is we should design like we're da Vinci. We shouldn't ever stop being curious and looking for things that we can do to improve stuff.

Accessibility, I think, is sometimes, something that feels a bit like a test. You have to meet some check points, you have to pass some kind of review, but I'm curious to know if there's a different way to do things. What if every single one of us in the W3C decided to be curious about the things we could change? In the specs we write, the technologies we create, or the policies that we make. You know, with our collective intellect and passion and commitment and enthusiasm to the open web, aren't you just a little bit curious about what we can accomplish if we did things a bit differently with accessibility?

How about we design like we are Chanel? Let's strive for beauty and elegance but understand that those things mean different things to different people.

There's a good chance that most of you who are here today will look at a computer screen to consume content. I listen to mine with synthetic speech and a screen reader because I can't see the screen. You and I, both, probably use the keyboard. The developers amongst you probably use it more than most because you know it's more efficient than switching backwards and forwards between a mouse. I use the keyboard because I can't see the desk, never mind the mouse cursor. The point being is that we humans all use technologies in very

LÉONIE: different ways, perhaps because of context, environment, mobility, or just good old fashioned preference.

The beautiful thing about standards is that if we get it right, everything else kind of falls into place behind us. So, we really do have a responsibility to make sure that every W3C specification is accessible by default, so the people using those standards can do it confidently, knowing we've done our jobs properly.

Last one is we should design like we're Brunel, which is to say, planning is important but it takes imagination to make the extraordinary possible. Now, W3C knows all about planning. Hell, do we know all about planning!

[Laughter]

But let's think about the imagination. Consider the imagination it took you to develop the technologies that became the internet and everything that's come since; the imagination it took to create HTML, CCS, Aria, all of these technologies; in fact, the imagination that it takes to use those technologies and turn them into applications and products that are used by millions of people. Now imagine the world that we have where accessibility is often considered as a separate entity, or worse, an optional afterthought. Now imagine what will happen if we decide to challenge that accepted wisdom. What if we decided to work together to do something extraordinary? To put accessibility at the heart of everything we do within W3C and go out there and show the world that as the W3C, we really do design like we give a damn.

Thank you.

[Applause and cheers]

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