

MAKING ACCESSIBLE MEDIA: DOCUMENTING OUR PROCESS

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KAREN: Broadcast media is pervasive in every part of our life, and if you think about how much you consume, how much you stream, how much you watch, how much you interact, the idea of being cut off from that or restricted from that... is awful.

ANNE: I would be waxing on about accessibility and then Hillary one day said, "We should do a project together about accessibility." And then we went to a conference where we heard about the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund grant, and we turned and looked at each other and said, "We're going to get that." And we did.

JENNIE: And so, we started building the Making Media Accessible website. We started making the course that is going to be available to faculty, it's going to be available to students, it's going to be available to anyone out in the world. The course focusses on making audio video content accessible, video content accessible, printable materials such as accessible PDFs, accessible Word documents, anything that you'd be communicating with, we're focusing on making it more accessible.

ROBERT: You know, seeing it come together bit by bit is a very rewarding and satisfying experience, and creatively, very challenging, too.

JENNIE: Yeah, the team is really important because everyone has a different area of expertise. So, as a graphic designer, I think about the visuals and how someone who can't see will approach my design, where Li, for example, is a web developer, thinks about it in a totally different way. The content creators are thinking about it from a plain language perspective and making sure that they're writing in a way that's accessible. So, everyone on the team has this different approach that all together creates a really inclusive design.

MITCH: As a journalist, my goal is to present something and have people consume it. If I don't make stuff accessible, then I'm saying, "Hey, you guys over there, you can't consume my stuff, I don't want you to. Sorry!" Whereas, if I make it accessible, I'm saying, "Yes, you're just like anybody else. Whether you have these specific issues or not, or these conditions or not, come read my stories," you know.

ROBERT: Well, we're just sort of breaking the ice in terms of realizing there's a lot of people who have not been able to offer their full talents because they can't realize the full potential of what they're watching or listening to or delving into, in terms of media.

MARK: We have all this technology, we have a very large mass media industry that is well-funded and yet, we can't seem to meet simple core, basic principles of accessibility, like closed captioning.

ANNE: When you don't know something, it seems really hard. It seems impossible to do. How am I going to caption a video? It takes too long. I don't know what to do. But as soon as you learn how to do it, it just is, and it becomes part of what you do and who you are and how you make your media, and how you create your content.

Part of this course, or what this course is about, is delivering that material and showing people how to do it, why you do it, and then you know how to do it and then it just becomes who you are. It really becomes part of your humanness.

MARK: We know we can get content out. Now, can we get content out accurately and correctly for all to view and to see, and to experience and to hear? The keyword here is "accessible," is making more people, enabling more people to be involved with experiences. So, the delivery of content can now be truly enjoyed by multiple, millions if not tens of millions of people.

ROBERT: All those people are going to be able to bring their full measure of talent to whatever they're involved in because we're able to make things more accessible.

KAREN: So, it's vital and important that as we move towards a more inclusive society, that we not only make our media more inclusive but we also include a mindset or a world view about inclusivity, so that we can reflect those stories back to ourselves and keep that on record as part of the story of Canada, the story of where we are in this world.

MIKE: What's really exciting about this project is the whole idea of change. Change we can do within, with curriculum and how we teach students, but also, the change agents that we're going to create going out to work in the broadcast industry.

HILLARY: And so, for us, what we hope, in this course, is that people, our students and anyone else who wants to use the course, will create inclusive content from the very first phase of development.

ANNE: Yes.

HILLARY: From, you think of an idea and that inclusivity is part of that... from the start.

GUILLERMO: This is work that will change attitudes, will change minds. Taking a leadership stance in this area is something that makes me feel really proud. And the fact that we are graduating, or we're forming professionals that will have that accessibility and usability thinking first, I think will really make a difference in terms of the way that Canada and Ontario broadcast their media.

ROBERT: So, I hope the long-term benefit of the course, for example, is that we don't notice the differences between people... that we don't automatically assume things because we see a disability or see someone with a challenge. We assume that they will be successful. We assume that they will be able to put forth their greatest effort, like any student in college, for example, and move forward.

MITCH: That's kind of what I'm doing here, just trying to pursue something that I find is really important in life. If we don't have news, we don't know what's going on. So, hopefully that's what I can do... do one day, is be the guy in front of this beautiful camera, telling the truth, finding out what's happening, sharing it with my lovely Canadians... and be a great one, hopefully.

[END OF VIDEO]