



E-BUZZ ON “ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE”

Information around the world for persons with vision loss

September 2017 (16th edition)

Greetings from the Institute for Vision Rehabilitation!

It's our pleasure to bring forth yet another edition of E-Buzz to you!

This edition brings you updates and happenings ranging from assistive technology to accessibility, from education to leisure and recreation, from training to government policies from the world around us.

Hope you find this useful. Please do share it with your contacts who you think would benefit from it.

- **Google introduces new accessibility features with the release of Android 8.0 Oreo**

Marshmallow, Nougat and now finally the Oreo. Google recently unveiled its latest software update in line with its dessert naming

tradition for the world's most popular smartphone operating system. The Android 8.0 Oreo comes with some exciting new features and improvements over the Android Nougat. Over the last few versions, Android has produced a decent selection of accessibility options to make the devices easier to use. This time with the Oreo, two additional features have been added by Google under the accessibility spectrum – separate volume controls and a new way to access the accessibility shortcut. The addition of a separate volume control is especially helpful in situations where one is listening to any form of audio. If TalkBack was enabled, the previous version would lower the volume of both the music/media and the TalkBack. With this new feature, this can now be separated into media volume and accessibility volume – a step being welcomed by many users of the accessibility feature. The other feature is a new way to enable the accessibility shortcut. This will allow easy access of accessibility features from the navigation bar.

Source: <http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2017/08/25/google-introduces-new-accessibility-features-with-the-release-of-android-9-0-oreo/>

- **Traffic signals to make city roads differently-abled friendly**

Coming to the aid of persons with vision loss for who crossing busy intersections is a constant worry, Chennai traffic police have installed auditory traffic signals to make city roads differently-abled friendly. At ten crowded locations across the city including Secretariat, Dr. Besant Memorial and Ramapuram, these signals make an announcement when the Zebra crossing is open and closed for the pedestrians so

that persons with vision loss can cross the road without risking their lives. “The project is undertaken along with the State Differently-abled Welfare Department which has provided 75 lakhs for implementation,” a senior police officer in the traffic wing told Express adding that efforts were on to install 150 such auditory traffic signals in Chennai.

Source: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2017/aug/04/auditory-traffic-signals-in-city-to-cater-to-visually-impaired-people-1638048.html>

- **NDMA seeks Kerala’s help to make persons with disabilities disaster-ready**

It was a special occasion for Kerala when it became the first state to launch a disaster preparedness training program for persons with disabilities that was in May 2016. A year after, the State is again in the limelight. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) which is in the process of chalking out guidelines for training persons with disabilities on survival skills in times of natural disasters and other emergency situations, has decided to seek the help of the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) in preparing it. According to SDMA officials, keeping in mind the persons with disabilities, the handbook as well as the training material has been remodeled to appeal to the respective categories. In the case of persons with vision loss, the officials say the entire material has been reprinted in Braille and converted into DAISY format.

Source: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2017/jul/27/ndma-seeks-keralas-help-to-make-disabled-people-disaster-ready-1634079.html>

- **‘Dangal’ becomes first film on TV with audio description!**

Aamir Khan’s film ‘Dangal’ has become the first film to be aired on TV with an audio description for audiences with vision loss. The audio description of the film was completed by the NGO Saksham which has been working in the field for around 14 years. It has done audio tracks for over 40 movies including ‘PK’ and ‘Black’.

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/dangal-becomes-first-film-on-tv-with-audio-description-for-visually-impaired-audiences/articleshow/60071287.cms>

- **Students with colour blindness can now use a smartphone app to help conduct their lab experiments**

Indian scientists have developed a smartphone app that helps persons with vision loss and colour blindness to detect colour changes in a routine lab experiment, thereby ensuring their active participation and independence. The app Titration ColorCam, is a step forward in the ongoing effort to develop assistive mobile technology to aid persons with vision loss in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, said Mr. Subhajit Bandyopadhyay and Mr. Balraj B. Rathod of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Kolkata. “The design and development of the app

were primarily focused on the problems faced by colour-blind students in chemistry labs”, Mr. Bandyopadhyay said. “By following the application tutorial and laboratory training for handling the apparatus, a colour-blind student can perform the experiment independently and with ease”, he added. It can be freely downloaded from the Google Play Store on Android devices.

Source: <http://www.theweek.in/news/sci-tech/smartphone-app-colour-blind-students-conduct-lab-experiments.html>

- **New Act roots for inclusive education for children with disabilities**

The new central Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, yet to be brought into force in the State has reinforced the importance of inclusive education of children with disabilities. The act calls for all educational institutions, funded or recognized by the government to provide inclusive education by admitting children with disabilities without discrimination and permitting them equal access to education, opportunities for sports and other recreation facilities. One of the demands that emerged during the seminar attended by educationists from across the country was to bring education for children with disabilities under the Ministry of Education instead of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. “Why should the education of children with disabilities be left out? Education is for all”, said Mr. Satish Kapoor, founder of Delhi-based organization, Brotherhood, that advocates for inclusive education.

Source: <http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2017/07/03/new-act-roots-for-inclusive-education-for-children-with-disabilities/>

- **Ai Squared along with Freedom Scientific releases ZoomText Fusion**

Ai Squared along with Freedom Scientific releases ZoomText Fusion 11 for Windows, bringing together the two leading accessibility software programs for persons with vision loss, ZoomText and JAWS, the popular screen reader, into a single package. The simplicity of a single installation and authorization of these products is a huge advantage for schools, training centres and businesses, where users with a wide range of needs may be served. With Fusion, you have the ability to run ZoomText and JAWS together as 'Fusion' or you can run ZoomText magnifier and JAWS independently. Significant advantages and features of ZoomText Fusion 11 include screen tracking synchronized with speech and Braille as you navigate and read, fast navigation and reading on the web using simplified keyboard commands, magnification, screen reading and Braille output in all combinations.

Source: <https://www.freedomscientific.com/About/News/Article/183#main-content-anchor>

- **Medical Council of India agrees to allow students with colour blindness in medical colleges**

Following recommendation from the Supreme Court-appointed committee of doctors to lift the bar on people with colour vision deficiency (CVD) from joining the medical stream, the Medical Council of India (MCI) finally agreed to end its decades-old practice. MCI, the apex regulating body in the field of medical study and

profession had earlier contended that people with CVD would not be able to perform their duty as a doctor as they would not be able to do a fair diagnosis and prognosis of a disease as it depended upon colour detection. The committee, whose report was placed before the court, said CVD should not be an absolute bar in the medical profession as it was a common problem. “There are many reasons why doctors with CVD may perform as well as those with normal colour vision. Firstly, the diagnostic and treatment process is not solely reliant on the ability to perceive colours. There are many other cues from history of illness and examination that might be utilized to compensate the handicaps resulting from CVD. Doctors with CVD can also overcome their difficulties by carrying out a more thorough diagnostic assessment and taking the help of other colleagues,” the panel said.

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/mci-agrees-to-allow-colour-blind-students-in-medical-colleges/articleshow/59850459.cms>

- **Android app lets persons with vision loss in India listen to text in native languages**

Millions of people with vision loss in India may benefit from free open-source software for Android devices that converts electronic text written in Indian languages into messages they can hear. The text-to-speech (TTS) software, developed by Carnegie Mellon University in collaboration with the Hear2Read project can now be downloaded free of charge from Google Play Store. Tamil is the first language offered, with subsequent releases of 7 major languages – Hindi,

Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Punjabi and Telugu, expected over the remainder of the year.

Source: <http://www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2016/august/hear2read.html>

Disclaimer: The information shared in this newsletter is a collection of updates and happenings from various sources.

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