



E-BUZZ ON “ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE”

Information around the world for persons with vision loss

February 2018 (21st 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 sports to music, from government policy to government initiative from the world around us.

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

- **Be My Eyes and Moovit join forces to make public transit more accessible**

Public transit is an integral part of metropolitan areas and relied upon by millions of citizens. Transit riders with vision loss are frequently uncertain that they've caught the right train or the bus that they're waiting for will take them where they need to be. Now Be My Eyes and Moovit have partnered together and want to challenge obstacles relating to vision and access to make travelling individually on public transport more accessible for persons with vision loss. Moovit is the world's largest transit data and analytics company and the number 1 transit app worldwide. Using Be My Eyes app, volunteers assist users with vision loss through a live video connection and work together to tackle a range of tasks and challenges. With the addition of the live directions feature on Moovit, users with vision loss can get step-by-step GPS-style guidance for their journey and even receive alerts when their bus is arriving or when their desired stop is approaching. As part of the partnership, Moovit users will be able to easily navigate to Be My Eyes through its menu which means that if they require any additional help during their journey like finding their seat for example, it's even easier to access and will make the journey even smoother.

Source: <http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2018/02/02/be-my-eyes-and-moovit-join-forces-to-make-public-transit-more-accessible/>

- **Steps to make information and communication technology accessible in India**

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) releasing its latest consultation paper on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has sought industry views on whether handset makers should

be mandated to manufacture at least one model for persons with disabilities (PWDs) with assistive technology features such as hearing, visual aids and emergency buttons. The consultation paper has also sought the industry's comments on disabilities that need to be included in the enabling framework and reasons for benefits not reaching the PWDs and corrective measures that need to be undertaken. It has also asked if information on billing and pricing needs to be provided in a form that is accessible by PWDs. TRAI expressed concern that PWDs were "often not able to access these ICT services on account of lack of necessary accessibility features or unaffordable prices of the equipment or due to unavailability of required services."

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/trai-begins-discussions-on-making-ict-accessible-for-disabled/articleshow/62182842.cms>

- **16-year-old pianist with vision loss hailed as the next Stevie Wonder**

Matthew Whitaker from Hackensack, New Jersey, was born blind but took to playing music when he was just 3 years old. Soon enough, he was tinkling the ivories in front of enraptured audiences who couldn't believe the pure talent pouring out of such a young man. As a 9-year-old, he won amateur night at the Apollo which proved to be his big break. At age 13, he became the youngest artist to be endorsed by Hammond and later also gained an endorsement from Yamaha and at 15 released his debut album *Outta the Box* to critical acclaim. While

the piano and organ are his main instruments, Matthew has also displayed impressive skills on the drums.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-5251237/16-year-old-blind-pianist-hailed-Stevie-Wonder.html>

- **Google makes Sheets, Slides and Drawings more accessible**

Google announced recently that the G-Suite team is adding new accessibility features to Google Sheets, Slides and Drawings. Specifically, Google Sheets is getting Braille support and Google Slides and Drawings are getting screen magnifier support. Braille displays can already be used to read and edit text in Docs, Slides and Drawings. With the added support for Sheets, users will now be able to read and edit cell contents as well as navigate between cells on a sheet. According to Google's blog post, this will only be available on Chrome OS with a Chrome Vox screen reader for now. The company says it is working to add support for other platforms and screen readers.

Source: <https://venturebeat.com/2018/01/09/google-adds-braille-support-to-sheets-magnifier-tool-to-slides-and-drawings/>

- **India does it again by winning the Blind Cricket World Cup 2018!**

Defending champions India defeated Pakistan in the final of Blind Cricket World Cup by chasing 308 in 38.2 overs. India won the match by 2 wickets. India had defeated Bangladesh by 7 wickets in the semi-finals. Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, PM Narendra Modi,

Harbhajan Singh, Mithali Raj, VVS Laxman and others congratulated the team on twitter.

Source: <http://www.cricketcountry.com/news/pm-narendra-modi-mithali-raj-harbhajan-singh-and-others-congratulate-india-on-winning-blind-cricket-world-cup-679586>

- **100 accessible websites launched by the Central Government of India**

In a path breaking initiative to empower persons with disabilities, 100 accessible websites of various state governments and union territories under Accessible India Campaign were launched by the Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot on the occasion of 'National Conference on Improving Accessibility' on the 19th of January, 2018. Accessible websites are those websites into which persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the web. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) initiated a "Website Accessibility Project" for State Government/Union Territories under Accessible India Campaign to make total 917 websites accessible and providing funds for the same. The 100 websites that are made accessible are a part of this project.

Source: <http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1517187>

- **Techpedia India... a new mailing list for users with vision loss**

SayEverything E-Group has introduced a new mailing list to enable technical discussion for users with vision loss. Techpedia India is a

technical discussion Board of SayEverything forum in India to provide its subscribers with an inclusive platform to learn and share the latest technology and digital development happening across the globe. Users may discuss all technical topics including computers, mobile phones, electronic gazettes, assistive technology, any device and its accessibility and all independent living appliances on this mailing list.

Source: <https://lists.sayeverything.org/mailman/listinfo/techpediaindia>

- **Here's proof that blindness is no barrier to app-making!**

Can persons with vision loss write programming codes? The answer would be a firm yes as you watch them clustered around tables, putting their heads down and discussing what kind of apps to create in a 24-hour period at the hackathon held at the International Institute for Information Technology-Bangalore this year. The sighted people were not present to help them but to partner with them in the effort. Organized by I-Stem, a self-advocacy group with 10 students with vision loss pursuing BTech in IITs, IIITs and NITs, the hackathon is to demonstrate the ability of persons with vision loss to work in an inclusive team. The 10 work with a zeal of an evangelist in persuading teachers, special educators and even students to make science, engineering and math learning accessible to persons with vision loss.

Source: <http://m.deccanherald.com/?name=http://www.deccanherald.com/content/655203/heres-proof-blindness-no-barrier.html>

Disclaimer: The information shared in this newsletter is a collection of updates and happenings from various sources as reported by them and does not solely reflect the view of our organization.

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