HUMBER
Humber Institute of Technology
& Advanced Learning
ACCESSIBLE MEDIA DEPT.
205 Humber College Blvd.
Room MB104
Toronto, ON M9W 5L7
mediaarts.humber.ca/accessiblemedia
Faculty of Media and Creative Arts

May 21, 2021

01 - Introduction

01 - Introduction.mpg

10:41

STEVE SAYLOR: I'm Steve Saylor and I'm going to be your instructor for the Gaming Accessibility course as part of the Accessible Design in Digital Media online course here at Humber College. To describe myself, I am a white male with blond hair and a beard, along with wearing dark, black-rimmed glasses. I am currently wearing a grey hoodie, and am currently sitting in my home office with a bunch of gaming knick-knacks that are on shelves that are lit up behind me, as well as a four-foot-tall statue of Leonardo from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles with a bunch of lanyards hanging around his neck. I like to call him "Lanyanardo." I am a part-time instructor here at Humber. I actually teach the New Broadcast Media course as part of the Radio program, as well as I teach Online Presence in the Game Programming program here at Humber College. I am a Humber

alumni. I graduated here in 2010 from the Radio program, and I'm very honoured to be able to teach this course for you today, and hopefully be able to teach you some things about how to be able to make games as accessible as possible. A little bit about myself. Outside of Humber, I am an accessibility advocate and consultant within the video game industry. I am a Twitch streamer as well as a YouTuber, and I create content basically surrounding the idea and kind of providing education for accessibility within the video game media space. About the consultancy side, if you're not sure what an accessibility consultant can do, is that there are studios and developers that will actually hire consultants to be able to help provide feedback and advice on how to be able to make their games as accessible as possible. My particular sort of subject matter that I focus in on is in regards to blind and low-vision. To basically describe myself, I do have a condition that's called nystagmus, which basically means that my eyes move back and forth involuntarily, and it makes my vision extremely blurry, and I do have sensitivity to extremely bright lights. Essentially, I do fall into the legally blind category, according to the government, where, with glasses on, I have a vision

acuity of 20/200. With glasses off, it's more like 20/1700. And I do fall into, like I said, the sort of low vision-slash-blind disability spectrum, as it were. And I generally get asked to be able to consult with studios on the particular subject matter. If you're in the video game space, you might recognize some of these titles that I've worked on but... I've helped provide consultancy for games such as Assassin's Creed Valhalla, and Watch Dogs: Legion from Ubisoft, and as well as Naughty Dog's The Last of Us Part II. Speaking of The Last of Us Part II, we'll actually be using that game as the example on showcasing some of the accessibility guidelines that we'll be providing throughout this entire course. So I'll be talking about some certain aspects and certain best practices for accessibility for each disability type, and I'll be using The Last of Us Part II as an example of how to be able to sort of showcase that and actually be able to sort of at least give a visual/audio example of how to be able to utilize these best practices in game because, as of this recording, The Last of Us Part II is the most accessible game that we have had to this point. In the future, if there are future games that actually do surpass The Last of Us Part II as far as its accessibility, hopefully we'll be able to be

updating this course to basically keep moving forward with the future of accessibility. But as of this recording, we'll be using The Last of Us Part II for that. Now, what is… Basically, the introduction to this course, and this is what this video is about, is essentially, what is accessibility with the video game industry? You might have already taken a lot of the accessibility courses here at Humber College, so I won't go through a lot of things that you have already covered in past courses. But essentially, when it comes to video games, we generally focus on... The aspect of accessibility is very human. As you probably have learned, essentially, disability is part of the human condition. It's not… But it's not something that, at least within the video game side of things, that we haven't really touched on a lot. At least, within the past ten years, we have sort of had a much bigger upswing within the past few years, but it's been a long road to be able to try to make games as accessible as possible. We actually use a phrase within the industry, "When everybody plays, we all win," and that was coined by Microsoft in their Superbowl commercial for the Microsoft adaptive controller, which we will be talking about in this course. I'll be showcasing that in a future video and in a future

module. Essentially, what that means is that... Essentially, within video games is that, when everybody has equal access to a game and be able to play a game as they're able to, then that means that everybody can be able to play, and everybody can be able to win. That falls under not only people with disabilities, but people who are of a much older age or a younger age, or just people that want to be able to connect with other people around the world. Essentially, this kind of falls into that category, when everybody plays. Yes, of course, we'll be focusing on the disability side of things when it comes to that phrase in this particular course, but essentially, the main purpose of that phrase is that when everyone has equal access to a game and they can be able to play it and have some barriers removed, that allows them to be able to have a more comfortable and enjoyable experience in playing a video game. That's when we all win. Now, throughout this course, we're going to be sort of going through each disability type… We'll be sort of… We'll be kind of covering in detail, as far as best practices, for those disability types. And for sort of reference purposes, we'll be covering essentially four disability types, at least in the video game side. The first off will be talking about

vision. That's anything that deals with the visual aspects of a game that can help low-vision or blind players. Options may include larger text size, high contrast text and gameplay features, alternate colour palettes for colour blind players, or text-to-speech support. We'll also be covering hearing, which is games that convey interaction via sound will need a visual component to help deaf or hard of hearing players. Options may include subtitles for spoken dialogue or visual indicators of sound effects when the player requires a sound cue to react. Another disability type is motor. How the players interact with the game is important, whether that's through a controller or a mouse and keyboard. Those with a motor disability may have difficulty using those input devices. Options to help those players may include remapping of controls, ability to use different control devices, or one-handed control schemes. And lastly, the cognitive disability type. This comes in different forms, but for most cognitive players, anything that is too visually stimulated can have an adverse effect on a player with a cognitive disability. Options that can help those players may include options to turn off flashing lights, a simple-to-use user interface, or reducing camera shake. Now, there are

going to be three different types of scenarios as to how... like, that will tie into each of these disability types, and this is where I… As I mentioned before, regardless if you have a disability, accessibility is for all players because, essentially, everyone falls into at least these three types of scenarios. There is the permanent disability, which are those who are either born with or diagnosed with a disability that affects an entire lifetime, and that there is no cure for or there is no ability to be able to... to be able to fix that particular disability. There's also temporary, those who, through injury or genetics within a person's lifetime, have a temporary disability. For example, a broken arm or a concussion. And then there's also situational scenarios. These are scenarios when a player may not have a disability, however their surroundings prohibit their ideal gaming environment, such as only having a small mobile screen or living in a space that doesn't allow the placement of a larger TV, or if you have a child that you want to be able to play the video game around but the child's trying to sleep. You want to play a game that's a little quiet so it's a little bit quiet so as not to wake the baby. Stuff like that, essentially, all falls into situational. And I believe that actually

everyone kind of falls into those three categories. Yes, there are definitely a certain amount of players that will fall into permanent and temporary accessibility scenarios. But situational, that kind of covers everyone because, at some point, everyone is going to need accessibility options if they're playing video games because as the video game industry and the video game hobby grows, so do the players. And players, when they… as we grow, we're going to get older and our bodies are not going to be able to react fast enough as we were when we were kids or in our teens or even in our early twenties, and there are going to be certain options that we will need in future games that will essentially help them and be able to allow us to be able to play video games. And essentially, like I said, we'll be kind of going through each disability type, and we'll break down into more detail. But that is it for the introduction of this course. The next video, we'll be talking about is actually a little bit of the past 10-year history of accessibility within the video game industry, and we'll be touching on some certain key moments within that history that kind of led up to, essentially, where we are now as of this recording in 2021. So thank you so much and, I'll see you in the next module.

Transcript provided by
The FMCA Accessible Media Department
mediaarts.humber.ca/accessiblemedia