**Transcript for Accessibility Insights with co-founders of GAAD, Jennison Asuncion and Joe Devon, May 2021**

ANNIE: Hello everyone.

Welcome to today's webinar.

It has gone 1pm.

I will give you all a chance to join.

Feel free to drop into the Q&A box to say hi.

We disabled the chat feature as we discovered it causes problems for some using screen readers.

I will give it a few more moments.

OK.

Then we will make a start.

Hi, everyone, welcome to the 11th session in our Accessibility Insights accessibility.

Where AbilityNet's Head of Digital Inclusion, Robin Christopherson, hosts a monthly online chat with

individuals who each work to improve digital accessibility and digital inclusion.

This month, he is chatting to the co-founders of Global Accessibility Awareness Day, AKA, GAAD, Jennison

Asuncion and Joe Devon.

I'm Annie Mannion.

I'm the Digital communication manager at AbilityNet running through the session.

To go through housekeeping, we have live captions provided by MyClearText.

You can turn on the captions using the CC option on the control panel.

We have additional captions available via Streamtext.

Slides are also available at Slideshare.

net/abilitynet.

And also on the website at: Www.abilitynet.org.uk/GAAD-webinar?

. If you have technical issues and you need to leave early, you will receive an email in a couple of days' time

with the recording, transcript and slides.

You will also find a Q&A window, if you would like to ask Jennison, Jo, or Robin question, drop them into the Q&A

areas to address, they will do that after today's session in the follow-up blog on the website.

That is at: Www.abilitynet.org.uk/GAAD-webinar?

. Finally, we have a feedback survey that you will be directed to at the end to invite you to tell us about

future topics to cover in the webinar.

That is all from me for now.

Over to Robin, Jennison and Jo.

ROBIN: Welcome, Jenon and Jo busy guys at this time of the year.

JENNISON: You set a good time.

But we are helping here.

ROBIN: Thank you both.

We always have, have you got a beverage of some description to help you through the ordeal?

I have in nice cup of tea, or in a mug that says "I love coffee"!

What do you have?

JENNISON: I have overpriced flavoured flat water, in a bottle!

ROBIN: That's good!

Jo?

JOE: In my LA King's mug.

I have a warm chicken soup!

ROBIN: Wow!

LA Kings?

Is that baseball, football?

Hockey?

JOE: We are from Canada, so that is in the blood!

ROBIN: That should have been a go-to.

Apologies.

That is a great start, isn't it?

!

So, the first proper question, so, GAAD, it has been around, this is the 10th anniversary now.

JENNISON: Is it?

ROBIN: I bet you had no idea it would take off in the way it has done.

So, before we go into more questions, can you give an idea now, the tenth year, what is the sort of number and

the scale of the events that are going on across the world?

GAAD day, and probably week?

JENNISON: Jo, can you take this one?

JOE: Sure.

I would say that a lot of GAAD happens on Twitter.

A good deal of it.

It happens all over, there is are lots of events but where you see lots of people post on social is particularly

Twitter.

We had been gathering statistics on it.

We stopped a couple of years ago when we reached 200 million Twitter users with, I believe, that what that means

by Twitter reach is the number of users seeing the post with the particular hashtag and since Twitter's active

user account is 2 million, we figured there is not much more to go from there.

So we stopped looking at the statistics you are on Twitter, you will see a post about GAAD on the day.

There are so many events happening.

I think that we are probably at about, 200 events last year?

On the website.

JENNISON: Even with the pandemic.

People got create I have.

got creative but like you said, Jo, over 200.

JOE: And that is the events that people posted on global accessibility

day or probably at least as never as many that are not internal.

I run into companies all the time that also say that they have been doing things internally.

So, I would say that the last guest mate is 400 events.

estimate is 400.

ROBIN: And I don't think we posted this one, so that is 401.

So, this is a week of events.

JENNISON: We know companies that make this is month.

A whole month.

What is neat about this, is that people use, people use the GAAD platform, if you will, as a reason or

an excuse to raise accessibility for the first time in companies or to launch a product or to start a

campaign, or to end something.

Or to make an announcement, so we are fine with all of that, as long as it involves digital access or inclusion.

At this point, Joe and I are standing to the side and watching it, things just happen ...

it is amazing.

ROBIN: Wow!

It really, the journey has been incredible we look back over the last 10 years, the life-span of GAAD, what

are the most significant changes?

There have been so many in technology, in general, and the takeup.

So what do you think that the significant changes in sect have been?

JENNISON: What we are seeing in terms of the perspective of the types of

tweets or companies and things that are really getting into it, into the GAAD spirit, gaming ...

it is huge.

So that whole area.

Accessibility and gaming, that is big.

And then the E learning companies are also really stepping up, doing stuff on GAAD.

So I would say that trendise we are seeing a lot more, I am I seeing a lot more on that front, the gaming-related

things and E learning.

Joe what about you?

JOE: I would say there is more awareness where there was nonwhen I

wrote the blog post that turned into GAAD.

Almost non.

And awareness, although, not nearly enough change but I agree with what you said, Jennison, for sure, we have

been doing, diamond, my company, we have been doing a status accessibility report in the last couple of years,

and partnered with Webbing and the numbers that they show is that 98% of the web is inaccessible.

So lots of work to be done.

But have done manual testing of the top 100 website, that is where we see improvement, the 40% of the top 100

websites are really accessible.

Then adding on another 20% or so, that are accessible with difficulties, so, I would say at the top tier, it is

really changed a lot.

The rest of the web, I hope it will follow with the leadership at the top.

JENNISON: Two things to add, I don't personally believe in a website or

anything being completely accessible, 100% accessible.

That is a move are tag get.

Just because of the way that stuff is developed.

A screen that is accessible today because of Prints and the way that we run things more in agile fashion --

sprints, that screen can be broken tomorrow and then fixed again.

So it is always a moving target.

It is one thing that I wanted to say on that front.

I will leave it there for the second.

ROBIN: I absolutely agree.

It is a journey.

You never arrive.

Despite that, despite people thinking or becoming more aware of the importance of it, and also the kind of

complexities of trying to achieve, to be in the ball park of an accessible, inclusive website ...

JENNISON: If I can ask one thing, this is just the web.

That Joe and I are talking about.

The world is mobile.

There is yet to be a similar undertaking to understand how we are doing with the top mobile apps.

That will be great if that were to be done.

We have to focus, to spend a lot of time talking about the web, I get it but GAAD is about all types of

knowledge.

We really, as in GAAD, we, I am looking at you, Joe, we have to do more on the mobile side of things to

ensure that the mobile app developers are doing exactly what the web folks have been doing for the last ten years

and maybe to create a mobile app in order for more interest in that.

But there so much more, kiosks and other technologies that we don't want any of that to get lost.

It all falls within the scope of GAAD.

JOE: Let me add one thing, if you don't mind, that I thought of ...

AR/VR, it is the next thing to change technology.

It will be the next big technology.

It touches wearables as well.

The top companies that are doing it, they are aware of accessibility.

I believe that they are going to be paying a lot of attention to it.

If you get it right with people with disabilities, you will have the best product.

So, I have a lot of hope for the future.

The next technology, finally bringing accessibility in right from the start.

JENNISON: To give props to an organisation called XR Access, if you

use a favourite search engine and look for XR Access, it is an organisation here, mainly in the US, that is to

Joe's point, tackling the issue of augmented reality, mixed reality, virtual reality.

People like Larry Goldberg and other leaders are involved in that.

So to give props to that end.

ROBIN: Brilliant.

So I was going to ask about how the changes that we have seen in the landscape of accessibility have been

accomplished over the last ten years but look, we are talking about mobile, this has been the time frame of the

rise of mobile, you are law school right.

absolutely right.

It offers choices for people to have a more disciplined, distilled, a consistent experience.

You mentioned tools earlier.

The tooling to help developers to create accessible products on mole, almost out of the box, without having

to worry too much about it, has played a massive part, as have tool ons the desktop, HTML5, as long as you are

native, it is half the battle.

JENNISON: I was to say, as long as you stay within the guard rails from

out of the box.

The mobile, they have all of the accessibility features built in.

So there is no excuse for an engineer or a designer or UX person to flip on a voice overor a talk back or to pick

up, to do a switch to voice or voice control or voice access.

There is no excuse, anyone within the voices now, they know that stuff is there, if you knowingly don't use the

stuff, if it is there or on the web, if you are not using tooling or the test automation ornative controls what you

are doing is introducing tech depth and bugs into the production for your product or future you are working on

in addition to excluding potentially more than 1 billion people!

ROBIN: Yes, you have to layer on accessibility if you don't stay native

or out of the box.

It is a good place for accessibility, particularly on mobile.

So, ...

JOE: Can I add to that too before the next question?

Facebook has taken the GAAD pledge to make React Native accessible ...

so, they have done ...

JENNISON: What is the GAAD pledge?

JOE: I knew you would ask.

The GAAD pledge started with open-source projects where the open-source project first and foremost

makes a commitment to making their open-source project accessible.

There is lots of other details but I don't want to go into all of those.

What we are trying to achieve with accessibility into an organisation is that it is a part of the culture, part

of the core values of the project or the organisation.

So the idea with the GAAD pledge is to really focus on the frameworks that people build technology in, because if

the frameworks are accessible, they include accessible documentation, they include accessible example, then the

developers that take up the project will do a better job with accessibility which can affect

millions of users downstream.

So, we are very happy that Facebook was the first one to take the pledge and we hope to see more open-source

projects and organisations taking the pledge.

ROBIN: Fantastic.

It has a parallel with another recent, relatively recent development in the area of accessibility.

The idea of a maturity model, embedding accessibility right across your organisation, in its processes

and practices, et cetera, tooling.

So, it just did not exist several years ago.

I think that really helps as well.

People are firefighting before.

They were reactive, talking about React.

And they were not embedding things throughout.

They are now thinking of shifting left.

Going to the beginning of a project.

Taking a more holistic, comprehensive approach to accessibility.

Have you seen that as well?

JOE: Definitely seeing organisations talking about shifting left.

Some of home to, most certainly, they have.

Absolutely.

I think, I love the concept of the accessibility maturity model.

I would love to see more documentation online that is really, really put together.

There was one put together years ago by Cherie Burn Haber but I think that something got lost in translation, as

I could not find it in Order.

So I think we have work to do in terms ofs documenting.

JENNISON: I believe that Microsoft has put out the maturity model.

I believe that I saw that online.

So, Jenny, don't shoot me, if it is not the case!

But I belief that that was the case.

But if you use your favourite search engine to type Accessibility Maturity Model, you will find stuff.

Having it in one place is great but lots of it is common sense when you get into it.

And part of it is about accountability, measurement, tracking the progress over time.

ROBIN: Absolutely.

We are optimising our own version of it as well.

There are a few out there, they are similar but also, they have maybe strengths and different areas of

challenge that they would bring to applying it to different organisations.

So we are on that journey as well.

There is a lot of interest there too.

It is really, really good.

So, let's bring the time frame closer to today, the last 12, 18 months with COVID, home working.

Jennison, you have a disability, haven't you?

JENNISON: I'm completely blind.

ROBIN: I say cool but it is, what it is.

Joe, do u have an impairment?

JOE: Great question.

I don't think of it as disability but I'm 53, so it comes with floaters in the eyes!

Clouds in the eyes!

I have surgery to fix my vision.

All it did was tell me that I have a bunch of stuff in my eyes and not my glasses that are smudged by my eyes.

JENNISON: Real quick, I know that we joke ed about this for a second but I

wanted to mention something that you, Robin, probably know well what I am about to say but GAAD is all about

making sure that the conversations that are happening around people with disabilities and access but the

reality is that sure, there is the 15% of us with disabilities or impairments but as a reminder to you all listening

out there, this are more than that, there are folks with situational disabilities, people with a temporary

disability, a broken arm, or like Joe!

Just getting older and acquiring a disability.

Fortunately, Joe was able to get surgery.

But the evaluate that all of us get older and stuff happens.

So there is always the focus on the 15th figure but it is a lot more.

There is more than just the average person disability that you see walking down the street who you are helping

with, to make stuff accessible.

It is one thing that has come out within GAAD, that we are seeing a lot more time spent talking about

invisible disabilities and accessibility.

It is not just all about blind people and screen readers.

ROBIN: Exactly.

Although we are tough customers.

But I agree.

JOE: So, I am glad you brought it up, Jennison.

I am working on a presentation to talk about how all of our stats are wrong.

They don't make sense even on the face of it.

The WHO talks about the 15% statistic but also mentioning that 2.

2 billion people have a visual impairment.

Which is 28% of the population so, taking that alone, you have almost doubled the 15 pest.

We don't know the real figure, maybe disability is the wrong word to apply to accessibility.

I'm beginning to think that ROBIN: I go further, I agree with you 100%.

But in all of my presentations and articles I go further to say: Everyone using a mobile slides up and down the

scale of impairment on the hour by hour, or a minute by minute basis.

Using the phone one handed, small sheets of signee glass on a sunny day, a bumpy bus, noisy cafe.

So such a broader audience than people used to think, accessibility, is it for the disabled people?

No, so absolutely, keep the message loud and clear, it really opens up the budgets.

JENNISON: A phrase that we use in the day job at LinkedIn, what we talk

about, is, you saw for one and extend to many.

JOE: I like that.

ROBIN: Exactly.

In this extreme commuting age.

So, we are running out of time, talking about home working and the rise of online, remote, collaborative

working, all of that, how has it impacted you guy, personally, and the organisations that you work for?

JENNISON: I want to say for me it has been fine, great.

One benefit.

I will keep it to one.

I work at a company which has lots of conference rooms spread over lots of buildings.

So, when we were pre-COVID I would have to check to see where a meeting was taking place.

If it was in a place that was unfamiliar, I would have to make arrangements to meet a colleague or to

walk over with a colleague.

Now ...

that's all been disappeared.

All I have to do is use a link.

Activate the link and be there.

I never thought of that as being anything but it is!

Now I can book meetings, it doesn't matter, I don't have to worry about the building it is in.

I can attend meetings, again, as I don't have to worry physically about where it is.

So for me, it has been a HUGE advantage.

That I only came to appreciate as people kept asking me, so what are the benefits for you ...

like you have asked me.

So, that's my big advantage.

Joe, do you have any?

Have you heard anything in terms of of advantages?

JOE: I've been running events for over a decade.

Most would be in person.

Worry being the accessibility, I think, the mistakes that have a bigger impact in a lot ofways when it is

physical.

of ways, when it is physical.

Now we ASL each event, close cannings the events.

Learn about what can go wrong with a captioner not showing up or having Wi-Fi, having it go down in the

middle, having the auto captions going fast as the backup.

I got a compliment you folks as the first slide that you have providing the alternative URL for the captions

is a lesson that we learned.

But I have learned a lot about captioning and AS will.

JENNISON: And the idea of not worry being, the venue that you want to use

for an event.

Is that physically accessible for a wheelchair user?

Or is it near transportation line for someone who may be blind, who then would have to depend on a car?

All of this stuff going virtual has been a game changer from that perspective.

ROBIN: Totally.

And we can be more productive.

You can be taking a whole day to travel to another city to have a client face-to-face, but now you click

a button and the meeting is done.

JENNISON: All of that said, I am so looking forward to getting back in

person, nothing will replace that.

Sure, this has opened up a lot.

I think it is going to cause a bit of friction to be honest in terms of I think that people will be demanding

more online or hybrid.

What I would caution people to understand is to someone who runs events, the level of complexity when

you have to layer on the fully hybrid approach to everything, is a lot.

So, I think that we will get to a point in the years to come, when we will get back to the way things were.

Stuff will be online but let's not forget the power of being in person, what it brings.

ROBIN: I have heard that hybrid is much harder than online or five.

face to to-to-face.

Joe?

JOE: It is complex.

I will toast those who make hybrid.

It makes if hard but it is cool too.

ROBIN: Great.

So, we have seen changes over the last decade, what needs to change next?

One big thing that we have not arrived at?

Still, 90% plus of websites are still not useable.

So what is the next big step to happen?

JENNISON: From my perspective, it is to get all of the companies that build

these web in a box or app in a box tools, that are used by the balance of people who know nothing about how to

create websites or mobile apps, for those companies to step up, to start to think about creating those tools so

that when someone presses a button and says: Create my app or website, that they will be accessible.

That it will be generating accessible code.

That is one thing to happen.

The other thing to happen is that we need to make sure that accessibility, I'm not talking about everything but

the concept of accessibility, the bear bones, it must be required learning at colleges and universities in science

design, engineering and as well as at boot camps that are popping up everywhere.

There is no excuse now.

Accessibility, it is not like it is a new thing.

The accessibility guidelines came out in the late 90s.

We are paying more attention to it but there is no reason why computer science and engineering design

programmes, where ever, at college or university, they should be teaching the bear basics of accessibility.

Joe?

JOE: You hit the nail on the head.

Where to begin?

There are so many angles.

But I would say that we have to change the culture of the digital product development life cycle in order to

include accessibility to understand that accessibility is userrability.

If you are unfamiliar with basic things if you are doing a Skype type app and doing an online/offline

indicator with a green or a Red Button that the folks that are colour blind, for them it is the exact same colour.

If you are unfamiliar with accessibility, I hate to say it but it is almost that you are a bad designer.

So I feel that has to be a part of the culture.

We have to stop talking about the statistics of the numbers of people with disabilities.

And to add from a personal basis, my company is a digital agency that builds typically B-C software for

enterprise.

We are building accessibility by default.

I just don't know of any real competitors that are doing that, going accessible by default.

You can ask them to do it but then you have to make sure that they even know how to do it right there.

Are some that know how but they will not do it unless you ask them for it.

That must change.

The enterprise companies want it for the most part, so, the service providers, the vendors have to do it,

rather than coming in after to do an audit or remediation only.

Start in the right spot.

JENNISON: As ultimately at that point you are cleaning up tech deck.

To sneak in one more, if I can.

If there are any angel investors or venture capitalists camping this or listening or watching or listening to

the webinar knows them, they should be making accessibility a requirement to receive finning for start-ups.

There is no reason.

If every start-up was obligated as part of the funding that they received to make sure that accessibility was

part of the MVP or the minimal viable product, we would be further ahead.

So the challenge is to venture capitalists to the Angel investors to the folks who are basically funding

the technology, we are all using in the future in the digital products, you own this ...

if you choose not to care about it, then you are a part of the problem.

ROBIN: We should make it clear for those not aware, this is a legal

requirement, it is not a nice to have optional extra.

So, absolutely.

The last part of the interview, thank you so much, it is to respond to a question from our previous month's

guest and to pass o something on to the next month.

So, last month, Emma Pratt Rich-months-old of the BBC.

She was complimentary about GAAD and how far it has come and the brilliant achievements, it being in existence,

raising awareness, so, congrats there, she says what about online events?

And when things return to normal will there be the appetite for online events?

JENNISON: I will take this one.

I think that there will be absolutely still be online events.

There are people who, will not be able to make the in-person one, for whatever reason.

They are far from location, there may not be anything happening in their country.

So, yes, there will be absolutely, online events and who knows, maybe in 5 years from now how we will be

meeting?

I know that the A11YVR, the virtual reality folks are hosting an event this year in the Virtual Reality

realm.

So, online is definitely not disappearing.

I think it will give us a broader reach, even.

ROBIN: Very democratic.

so, final comment, you mentioned Larry, Larry Goldberg, is the next guest, he is next month's guest.

So any comment or questions to pass tonne Larry?

JOE: Yes!

I would love to have, the question is: What are your thoughts on auto captioning technology and in

particular, the habit of sensorring out content like swear words!

I will add a little colour to this as well, because, when you are looking at it from the outside you may have a

strong opinion of it, and you may not think being it goes into building this but when thinking about it as a

developer, you are saying, "OK, here is a word that I have heard.

I have a certain percent confidence it is the S word or the F word,.

,.

" If you believe that somebody who is deaf should be allowed to hear the swear words, there may be a factor

that it is a wrong word, so turning it into a swear word, that may be hurting the company doing the auto captions,

so a trick question but what do you think of sensorring out content like swear words?

That is my question.

JENNISON: I want to shower the praise on to Larry for all he has done in

accessibility.

Just for being such an approachable leader.

I have fond memories of hanging out, going to a jazz concert with Larry at Tech Share two years ago.

That is a memory that will stay with me.

But Larry has his hands in all kinds of forward things things.

He is involved with the XR Access and Teach Access, trying to deal with the problem on education and accessibility

and making that a core requirement in curriculum, here in the US.

But he is just, you know, he has so much energy ...

he is doing so many great things over at Horizon and I wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge and to

thank him for his keen enthusiasm.

ROBIN: Brilliant.

I will pass it on.

I'm tempted to answer to your question, Joe for audio description for adult content.

That is really toned down.

If people with eyes see it, why don't we get it?

We don't get the audio description!

Or, hardly!

So, brilliant.

Thank you both.

That is so brilliant.

I am really appreciating.

It is such a busy time for you guys.

You have brought it on yourselves, you have yourselves to blame.

JENNISON: We should say, you can find me on Twitter @Jennison ...

Joe is @Joe Devon.

Easy to find on Twitter.

Follow the GAAD hashtag.

And on all social media.

We are everywhere.

I will get Joe on Tik-Tok, I think!

Let's see what we can do with that!

ROBIN: Brilliant.

Fantastic.

JOE: One more, submit your event!

Do a GAAD event and submit it at Global Accessibility Awareness Day.

org and find events there as well.

ROBIN: Brilliant.

I'm so glad you got that in at the end.

Thank you, guys.

Keep up the good work.

I will pass back to Annie to do the housekeeping and to finish up the event.

Thank you, Annie.

ANNIE: Thank you, so much, Jennison, Joe and Robin, lots of questions to

answer online.

You will receive the email with the link to access them.

So, a bit more information that maybe of interest.

We run online training sessions on digital accessibility.

There is more about them at: The training courses are available for various roles.

Coming up w this we can week we have how to do inclusive usability testing on Thursday, 6th of May.

And then how to begin your own accessibility testing on 13th of May.

Creating accessible graphics and social content on the 20th of May.

And then on the 26th of May, how to grow your accessibility maturity.

Then you can also sign up to our E news letter for the latest announcements about digital

accessibility.

Then we have a suite of accessibility services to suit all types of

organisations.

And don't forget about the next webinar at: Www.abilitynet.org.uk/GAAD-webinar?

. Next meant you can meet Larry Goldberg, from Verizon Media, joining us on Tuesday, the 8th of June.

Thank you, again, Jennison, Joe and Robin and all that joined us.

Please complete the feedback form you will be directed to at the end.

We will be in touch soon.

Thank you, everyone.

Goodbye.

JENNISON: Thank you, folk, I have to run.

ROBIN: Thank you, so much, Jennison and Joe.