COVID-19 and the Hidden Pandemic

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COVID-19 and the Hidden Pandemic (Slide 1)

Figure 1 Map of the world

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Definition of Pandemic (Slide 2)

"A pandemic (from Greek πᾶν pan "all" and δῆμος demos "people") is a disease epidemic that has spread across a large region, for instance multiple continents, or worldwide."

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandemic

What is the "Disease"? (Slide 3)

The "disease" is the sheer amount of inaccessible content that covers all continents, affects all people and is going unchecked combined with the high level of apathy.

All people are affected because those of us with disabilities can't independently access education, employment, online shopping, social, religious or civic activities.

In 2015 the UN estimated that 1 billion people in the world have a disability.

In 2020 the total population of India is 1.3 billion people.

For some countries like New Zealand, the estimate is 1 in 4; in Canada it is 1 in 5 or 20% of the population.

"Unintentional Barriers" (Slide 4)

For the past few years, in an effort to ease people into inclusion, we've talked about unintentional barriers.

It is like when I typed "in an effort to" and PowerPoint suggested just saying "to."

We should have just said "do it"!

Since we've had the ability to work in Windows 3.1 and Office applications, those of us with disabilities have been told that:

We can't force document authors to make accessible content.

We can't add obvious hints and reminders to make digital content accessible.

"Everyone has the right to create inaccessible content."

Time for "Excuses" is Over! (Slide 5)

The current COVID-19 pandemic has "ripped the band aid off of the digital accessibility wound".

Students with disabilities can't access digital content required to study and learn in online learning environments.

Employees with disabilities can't access the tools they have at workstations in order to work from home.

Educational assistants and Disabilities Services/Alternate Text Production Centres can't access the tools they need to support students AND students don't have access to those intervention tools between inaccessible digital content and academic success.

As with COVID – 19… (Slide 6)

One of the talking points about COVID-19 is that we've seen this coming, to some extent have unintentionally encouraged it and haven't adequately prepared for its possibility.

It is the same with digital accessibility.

We've known for over 20 years that the Internet, the digital world offered both opportunity and significant barriers for people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, we've accepted the traditional standard mantras in a new socio economic environment.

"We can't…" (Slide 7)

We can't force people to create accessible content."

"Everyone has the right to create inaccessible content."

"If we can't see the business case for this, then why would we do it?"

Even now, within the standards community, a community that does not have adequate representation of those of us with disabilities, standards are devolving because:

"We can't force people to create accessible content."

People with disabilities only have the right to the same inaccessible content that everyone else has."

Give our Collective Heads a Shake! (Slide 8)

Figure 2 Person in front of a computer, frustrated, screaming, hands on head.

COVID-19 Information Barriers (Slide 9)
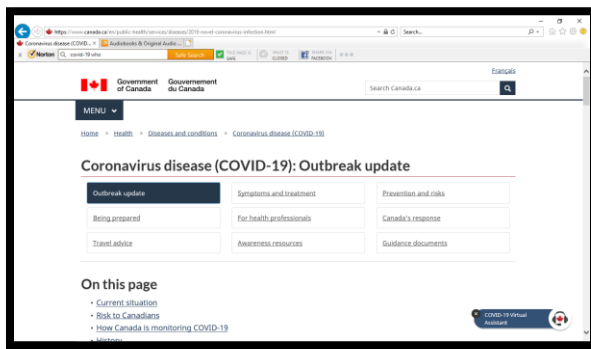
Figure 3 Government of Canada website with COVID-19 updates.

Websites: Too Much Bling! (Slide 10)

Most website have links to "Go to main content" but...

When you activate them, they take you to a list of social media links for you to share the information.

There are often ads or links to other related stories in the middle of what you are reading.

Advertising that takes you through a multimedia player and its controls or keeps taking your focus once you land on it.

PDF Documents: Untagged (Slide 11)

Many international and national health organizations publish updates, symptoms, strategies and other COVID-19 information in untagged PDF format.

While we can ask for alternate format, why should we have to?

Many organizations for people with disabilities are also publishing information in untagged, inaccessible PDF format.

Those that are tagged are not remediated and there has been no QA.

No document structure, no logical reading order, no headings/means of navigation.

UN COVID-19 Planning Guide (Slide 12)
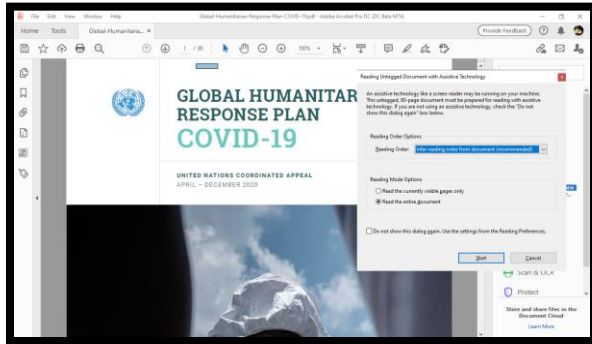
Figure 4 UN COVID-19 Planning Guide in inaccessible PDF format.

Disability Australia COVID-19 Info (Slide 13)
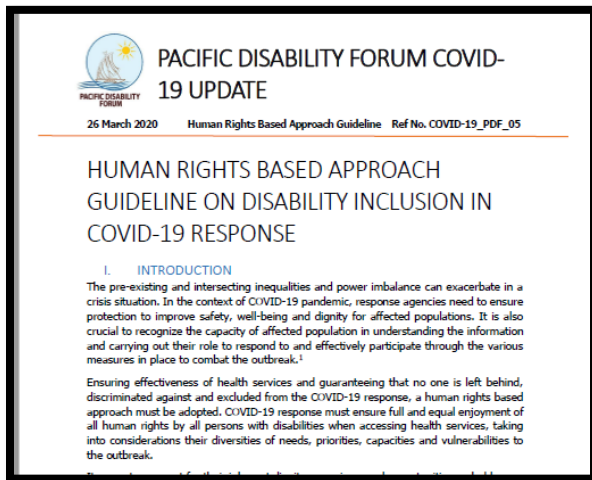
Figure 5 A Human Rights Approach to COVID-19 in inaccessible tagged PDF format.

Halfway there! (Slide 14)

CBC had a wonderful video on how to wash your hands, descried in plain language detail and very thorough …BUT not captioned!

The twitter ID @ONThealth had a tweet inviting you to look at the following if you are worried about COVID-19…but it was a short slide show with NO audio!

We are finding half measures of accessibility even from companies and organizations that come under the AODA/Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and its subsequent Bill 191/11 with the Information and Communication Standards.

COVID-19 and Online Education (Slide 15)

Figure 6 Person sitting in front of a laptop with books and notebook covering the keyboard.

Bandwidth and Data Plans (Slide 16)

Internationally, we've been talking about the lack of bandwidth related to education for years.

This is a global problem for everyone but significantly affects those of us with disabilities.

Data plans have also been talked about as a barrier to online learning/education for years.

The data plans that come with cell phone packages are not sufficient to support online learning.

Many students don't know this and when surveyed by teachers or educational institutions who are trying to take stock of what is available for students, may be counted as having sufficient data plan access when they actually don't.

Home Computers (Slide 17)

With most of the people with disabilities living at or below poverty line/low income level:

There may not b a computer at home.

The computer at home may be old and not able to support the applications needed for online learning.

The student or teacher with a disability may not have up to date adaptive technology on a computer at home.

May only have access to smaller devices such as cell phones or iPads.

As with Mohawk College and the "Apps" deployment of software for course completion on campus only computers, students and teachers may not have access to the software they need to complete or access assignments.

Educational Assistants/Disability Services (Slide 18)

When there is a plethora of inaccessible content produced by teachers/faculty educational assistants and disability services/student support centres usually bridge that divide.

With students and teachers with disabilities confined to their homes, they don't have access to those bridging solutions.

Educational assistants and disability services staff would not have access to the same tools such as copying machines, OCR/Text Recognition software and other document remediation tools that they have at work.

For example, Adobe Acrobat Pro DC which has a high monthly cost even at an academic pricing model.

Library Services (Slide 18)

It is during this time of isolation and adaptation that we discover not only how much educational content created by teachers/faculty is inaccessible; but,

How much online library material is also inaccessible.

The response from most online journals is that students with disabilities compose such a small number of the student population that it isn't worth "the trouble" to make online resources accessible.

In 2015, the Obama government, through the US access Board stated that just the purchase of LMS's was $79B in the US.

Primary, secondary, and tertiary academic institutions MUST leverage their procurement dollars.

COVID-19 and Telecommuting (slide 20)

Figure 7 Bistro patio set with woods in background, computer on the table and dog walking around.

Home Computers for Work (Slide 21)

This story is like the stories of students and teachers with disabilities.

The home computer may not be an up to date one capable of having work software installed.

There are the similar problems of bandwidth and data plans.

Software may not be available for use outside of the physical office footprint.

This affects an organizations ability to post accessible content while employees without disabilities are working at home who have this task.

Employees may not have adaptive technology on their home computers or the "home computer" may be an iPad or tablet only.

COVID-19 and Online Shopping (Slide 22)

Figure 8 A laptop showing a shopping web page someone typing in credit card information with one hand while holding the credit card with the other.

Online Shopping as a Panacea (Slide 23)

Back in 1999 and 2000 when the Internet and the whole .com universe was unfolding, we were told:

You don't have to leave your house…you can work from home.

You don't have to leave your house….you can learn online!

You don't have to leave your house…you can shop online!

From my perspective, the Internet seemed to be a way of keeping us hidden from society so society didn't have to deal with us. ⍰

Shopping online is NOT the panacea it was promoted to be, even 20 years after our sequestering from everyone else!

The First Barrier: Choice & Delivery Options (Slide 24)

I live in what is described as a rural area of Ontario Canada.

About an hour and a half from Toronto.

Town of about 14,000 surrounded by farms and agricultural area that spans 326 square miles.

Only two grocery stores in my area deliver: one in my town which I don't usually shop at and therefore are not familiar with their products; and one in the city that is centrally located within the County that I do shop at.

I can order from many items that I would normally choose from…BUT for pick-up only…or I could order from a smaller choice of items for delivery.

The Second Barrier: Delivery Times (Slide 25)

My first online delivery took one day to be delivered.

My second online delivery was supposed to be here in a week.

At the time my order was to be prepared I got a notification that they were running behind, then I got a notification that my order wouldn't be there at all on that day and I had to choose another time.

I followed the link to choose another time and it was a week from my original date/first shopper available.

Then I got an e-mail from the Instacart people asking if my new time was OK…I double checked my time and it said "within an hour" which I thought was great. Three hours later it still said within the hour and I wrote back to the Instacart people and am still waiting for a response.

This time I told them I have a disability and just wanted to know when they were going to deliver my groceries since choosing a time doesn't seem to matter…good think I'm in isolation and not going anywhere!

The Third Barrier: Protective Equipment (Slide 26)

Since none of my local stores/I live about two blocks from downtown, have any hand sanitizer, masks or even disinfectant cleaners/sprays, I began searching online from companies I know deliver to my area because I've had them deliver to me before.

Staples, Lowes, Home Depot, Home Hardware and Costco had no sanitizer, masks, disinfectant wipes, disinfectant cleaners, or masks despite most of these items (only exception was masks) being listed on their websites…everyone was out.

I monitored the Costco.ca site as they had a large package of Lysol wipes that were out of stock. The race was on. Checked four times a day! They are available again! Oder the limit of 1! Within 5 minutes I get an e-mail that this product is not available in my area.

The Most Important Barrier (Slide 27)

The most important barrier to online shopping that exists on EVERY online shopping website is its accessibility if you are using a screen reader.

If you can't use a monitor or a mouse…forget it unless you have someone you can call on to order for you.

There is always one part of the process you can't confirm with your adaptive technology which means you end up with an item or items you don't want at a cost you can't afford.

I am fortunate in that with my visual disability, although my primary adaptive technology is a screen reader, I can use my magnifying glasses.

Even screen magnification jerks around the ordering pages so you lose focus and concentration on what you are looking for or adding to your cart.

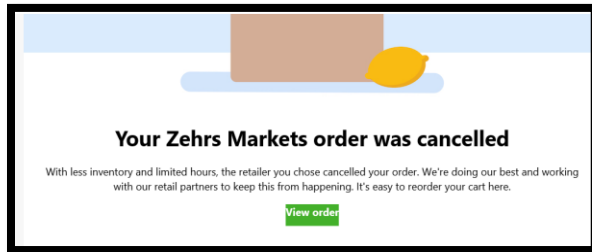## Your Order has been Cancelled… (Slide 28)

Figure 9 E-mail from grocery store saying my order had been cancelled.

Summary (Slide 29)

Figure 10 Hands holding the world with small icons for things. Internet of Things MUST be Internet of Everyone.

We haven't talked about Healthcare (Slide 30)

NO PPE for personal attendants.

Move from home to home or institution to institution.

No mobile testing for people with disabilities.

No access to personal attendants in hospital.

No thought of how we are supposed to move from hospital to other facilities.

Where are the supports for children with behavioural issues?

Where are the supports for their parents?

Anonymous Parents Help Line?

Government Triage Protocol.

Seniors left in residence with no option for transport to hospital.

The Good News! (Slide 31)

The good news for those of us with disabilities is that because online activities are so inaccessible, we can't effectively or efficiently use them, we won't be hidden in our homes which seemed the goal in 1999/2000!

Many of us have been ringing this alarm demanding action!

I'm a glass half full kin of gal!

Figure 11 A drawing of the sun saying "Good News"

The Bad News... (Slide 32)

Despite moving from a medical model to a social model and now to a human rights model of inclusion for those of us with disabilities, this medical pandemic has exposed the pandemic of inaccessible digital content and lack of digital accessibility in general and it is going unnoticed in the global community.
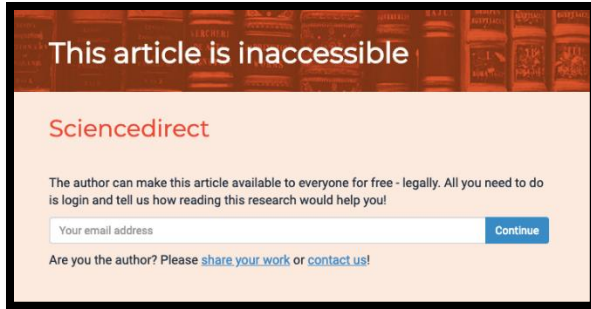
Figure 12 A notification that this article is not accessible.

Planning for the Return of COVID-19 (Slide 33)

It is anticipated that COVID-19 will return with a vengeance in the fall.

If not COVID-19 other pandemics and disasters ARE coming.

We can use the summer/down time to start making progress on the digital infrastructure for those of us with disabilities.

Figure 13 Laptop with Microsoft Project on the screen...plan now!

NO MORE EXCUSES!

Make the Right Real!

Resources! (Slide 34)

Figure 14 The word "Teach" in building blocks in front of two stacks of binders.

Accessible Media Production Program (Slide 35)

Mohawk College in Hamilton Ontario has a one year post graduate program in Accessible Media Production.

Accessible Word, PowerPoint, PDF, and PDF Forms.

Captioning and video description.

Legislation, inclusive writing, adaptive technology, diversity, entrepreneurship/intrapraneurship

[Accessible Media Production Program, Mohawk College, Hamilton ON](#)[1]

Figure 15 Logo of the accessible Media Production Program at Mohawk College.

COVID-19 Related Resources by Karen (Slide 36)

[CTV News: Disabled Canadians feel Excluded from COVID-19 Information](#)[2]

[Protect the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19](#)[3]

[Navigating COVID19 for the Visually Impaired](#)[4]

[Disability, Access to Education and the Pandemic](#)[5]

Be an Advocate! Share your Experiences! (Slide 37)

[Ontario Autism Coalition/AODA Alliance forum on the impact of COVID-19:](#)[6]

Karen interviewed by the Paciello Group:

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[1] Accessible Media Production Program, Mohawk College:
https://www.mohawkcollege.ca/programs/graduate-studies/accessible-media-production-390
[2] CTV News, Disabled Canadians feel Excluded from COVID-19 Information:
https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/disabled-canadians-feel-excluded-from-covid-19-messaging-1.4857691
[3] Protect the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19, Human rights Watch:
https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/26/protect-rights-people-disabilities-during-covid-19
[4] Navigating COVID-19 for the Visually Impaired, Open Access Technologies Blog:
https://www.openaccesstech.com/2020/03/18/navigating-covid-19-for-the-visually-impaired/
[5] Disability, Access to Education and the Pandemic, Karlen Communications:
https://www.karlencommunications.com/adobe/PandemicAndDisability.pdf
[6] Public Forum on COVID-19 and its Impact on Persons with Disabilities, Autism Coalition and the aODA
Alliance: https://www.youtube.com/c/OntarioAutismCoalition

Figure 16 Be an Advocate!

Karen McCall School on Teachable (Slide 38)

Styles in Word: A Primer for Accessible Document Design

- Self-paced online course + book.

- Book only.

Accessible Fillable PDF Forms:

- Self-paced online course + book.

- Book only.

Accessible and Usable PDF Documents: Techniques for Document Authors, Fourth Edition

- Book only.

- You get a copy of the Accessible PdF Forms book with this purchase

Karen McCall School on Teachable[7]

Microsoft Office Resources and Tutorials (Slide 39)

Also available at the Karen McCall School on Teachable.

Access to this "course" is free.

Updates to the tutorials currently on the Karlen Communications website.

Microsoft Office Resources and Tutorials[8]

Accessible and Usable PDF Documents (Slide 40)

Accessible and Usable PDF Documents: Techniques for Document Authors, Fourth Edition.

First published in 2005, this edition of Karen's book continues to provide tips, techniques and "why are we doing this" information about the accessibility of PDF documents.

If you are remediating PDF documents to be accessible, this is a "must have" for your reference library!

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[7] Karen McCall School on Teachable: https://karen-mccall.teachable.com/
[8] Microsoft Office Resources and Tutorials, Karen McCall School on Teachable: https://karen-mccall.teachable.com/p/microsoft-office-tutorials-and-resource-documents

[Accessible and Usable PDF Documents: Techniques for Document Authors, fourth Edition](#)[9]

Webinars on Inclusive Education (Slide 41)

I've been advocating for a global inclusive education standard since 2009 when I published a white paper on the topic.

Actually, I've been an advocate for inclusive education during my own educational experiences.

In the late 1990's with the advent of the Internet, the need for a global inclusive education standard became more urgent.

[Learn about the issues and barriers around disability and education](#)[10]

Contributions to Other Books (Slide 42)

Disability at the University: A Disabled Students' Manifesto, published by Peter Lang International, expected publication date: August 2019.

Since the 1960's students with disabilities have demanded a place at the table. Now, almost 60 years later, they say 'enough is enough.' Disability at the University: A Disabled Students' Manifesto contains twenty chapters on the student experience in today's universities, from all over the globe. To the university they say, this is what you should be providing (and how). To the student they say, this is what you should expect (and demand). Manifesto will prove to be a clarion call, as well as an essential resource, for both students and institutions.

Contact! (Slide 43)

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There are free tutorials on the Karlen Communications website:

http://www.karlencommunications.com

@KarlenInfo

Consulting and training on accessible document design (Word, PowerPoint, Excel and PDF).

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[9] Accessible and Usable PDF Documents: Techniques for Document Authors, Fourth Edition, Karen McCall School on Teachable: https://karen-mccall.teachable.com/p/accessible-and-usable-pdf-documents
[10] Webinars on Inclusive Education: http://www.karlencommunications.com/handouts.html