

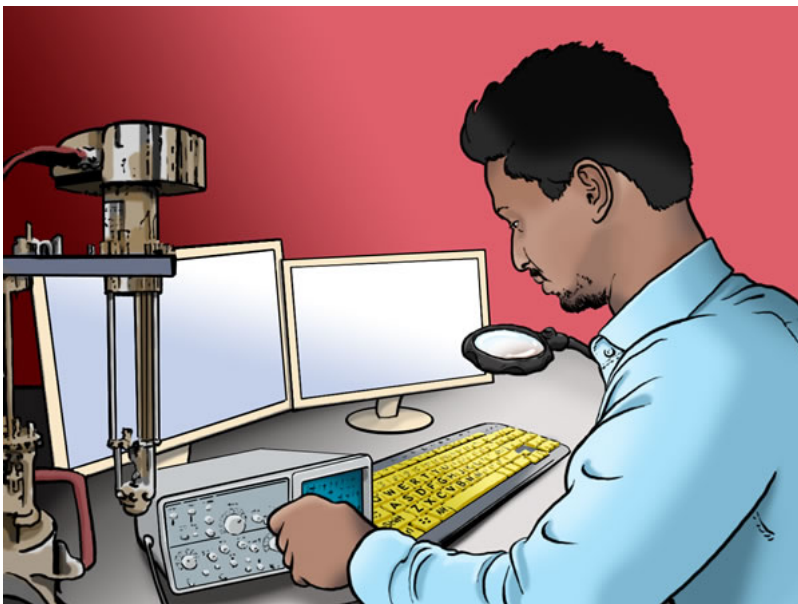
## Meet Vishnu

Posted on February 25, 2014 by [Whitney Quesenbery \(http://rosenfeldmedia.com/author/whitneyq/\)](http://rosenfeldmedia.com/author/whitneyq/) | [Leave a comment](#)

Vishnu is one of the personas from our book, *A Web for Everyone* (<http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/>). Personas have names and personal characteristics and abilities, along with aptitudes for using technology, and attitudes about their experiences. And, they have stories that provide details about their life.

You can download an overview of all the personas from our [Resources page \(http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/resources/\)](http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/a-web-for-everyone/resources/). The personas images, created by Tom Biby, [twofinechaps.com \(http://twofinechaps.com/\)](http://twofinechaps.com/), are available on Flickr. Tune in for a new persona every Tuesday until all eight are posted.

### Vishnu: Engineer, global citizen with low vision



I want to be on the same level as everyone else.

These days, Singapore is a center of the world, and Vishnu is one of its global citizens. After graduating from one of India's technology colleges, he went to a postgraduate program at the National University of Malaysia. His work on visualizing data landed him a job with a multinational medical technology company.

Vishnu was diagnosed with glaucoma and his eyes have been getting steadily worse, despite treatment. He can adjust his monitor and his phone, but many of the technical programs he uses don't have many options, so he has started using a screen magnifier and high-contrast mode.

Like everyone in Singapore, he has several mobile phones. One connects him to his family in India, one is for work, and one is for personal use.

He's lucky to have good bandwidth at home and at work. Some of his colleagues from the university live in places with much more erratic connections. Even so, downloading large pages from European or U.S. servers can be slow.

But, if he had one wish, it would be that people would write technical papers and websites more clearly. His English is good, but

idiomatic expressions can still be hard.

## If I can adjust my screen, I can read comfortably

The flexibility of the web helps Vishnu read more easily, especially when the site adjusts (Chapter 7) to his preferences. “I use a smaller window than I used to, because my vision kind of fades out at the edges. When I can, I make the whole page larger, so I can see the details in images better, too. Once I find a site that I can set up to read well, I stick with it—the BBC for international news, a cricket site. What I really want is for the web to look the way I need it to, not just a few favorite sites.”

## Translating in my head is easier with simpler sentences.

In a global world, Vishnu is often reading in English, a task easier when the content is written clearly (Chapter 7). “In my field—we’re working on medical imaging for diagnostic testing—the professional papers are in English. No matter what language we speak in our daily lives, everyone in my company reads two other languages: software mathematics and English. It’s the international language. The concepts are complicated, so I really appreciate it when I find a paper where they are presented in clear language. It’s not just reading the paper itself—searching and navigating in English can be harder than reading the technical papers, where at least I know the jargon.”

## Snapshot of Vishnu

- 48 years old
- Engineering degree
- Works for a medical software company on projects for international use
- Born in India, finished graduate school in Malaysia, lives in Singapore
- High tech all the way at work; two mobile phones and a laptop for personal use

## The A’s: Ability, Aptitude, Attitude

- **Ability:** Speaks three languages: Gujarati, Hindi, English, and a little spoken Mandarin. Uses contrast adjustment to see the screen clearly
- **Aptitude:** Expert user of technical tools; frustrated searching across languages
- **Attitude:** Sees himself as a world citizen, and wants to be able to use any site

## Assistive Technology

- Contrast adjustments
- Screen magnification software
- Personalized stylesheets for colors that make it easier to read text

## The Bigger Picture

Source: *The Lighthouse/WHO*

- An estimated 135 million people have partial sight.
- Many people in south Asia speak at least three languages: their regional language, Hindi or Mandarin, and English.

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