

What Universal Design of ICT means to me

My understanding

The way I would define universal design is as a tool for designers to create technologies that are accessible to *most* people. I say most, because no solution can be a one-size-fits-all. Compromises must be made somewhere, but effort on our part as designers, who can leverage principles of universal design, brings forth technologies that accommodate many more people than if we did not design with users in mind. Universal design is not just about making things work for people with disabilities; it is about recognizing that all individuals, at some point, experience limitations. Be it aging, a temporary injury or even ambient sensory "noise", technology should be functional and accessible in these situations.

Experience with Universal Design

I took a bachelor's in interactive design where I learnt the broad strokes of universal design, but we were focused more on the practical part of designing, and I did not study it as much as I wish I did. I honestly feel a bit incompetent in the subject, and I wish to mend that starting now. When I work on projects, I often think systems-first. I tend to forget that what I am creating is going to be used by other people. My wish is to realign my priorities and design process to put universal design and accessibility at the forefront or, at the very least, higher up on the priority list.

One of my pastimes is game development, and games are a *highly* interactive medium, which means I not only have to design good systems, but I also need to make them usable by and accessible to as many individuals as possible. That is why following universal design principles is extremely important to me now. Over the years I came to realize that creating interactive media is hopeless if no one is going to end up engaging with it.

So, I recognize that there is a gap between my current knowledge and where I want to be. The gap isn't technical, it's also a shift in mindset. Universal design requires me to empathize and to see beyond just my own experiences. It requires me to acknowledge that what feels entirely natural and intuitive to me, could be extremely frustrating or even outright impossible for another person. This shift also means moving beyond the idea of accessibility options as "add-ons" or afterthoughts, instead integrating them from the beginning of the process.

In conclusion, I wish to become a better designer, one who can incorporate universal design principles to his solutions effectively. I strive to create interactive experiences that are not only enjoyable, but also accessible to as many people as possible. My goal is to integrate universal design into my processes, as a natural part of them. By doing so, I hope to contribute to a more inclusive digital world.