RS Rachel Stein

Narrative & Digital Accessibility Intro

(i) **The author, Rachel Stein, made a deliberate effort to ensure accuracy. However, she is not an expert, and the content was not reviewed by one.**

Next Monday (Dec. 4, 2023), Rachel will discuss *Narrative and Digital Accessibility*. This microlesson is intended to help build a common understanding and set the stage for the class.

Accessibility

What Is Accessibility?

"Accessible" means a <mark>person with a disability is afforded</mark> the opportunity to acquire <mark>the same information</mark>, engage in the same <mark>interactions</mark>, and enjoy the same <mark>services</mark> as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability **must** be able to obtain the information as fully, equally and independently as a person without a disability.

[source]

Abilities

A wide range of circumstances can affect how a person interacts with the physical or digital world. Some are permanent, others temporary, situational, or age-related. The examples on the flashcards below illustrate this. They are not formal categories, and not all examples meet the legal definitions of disabilities.
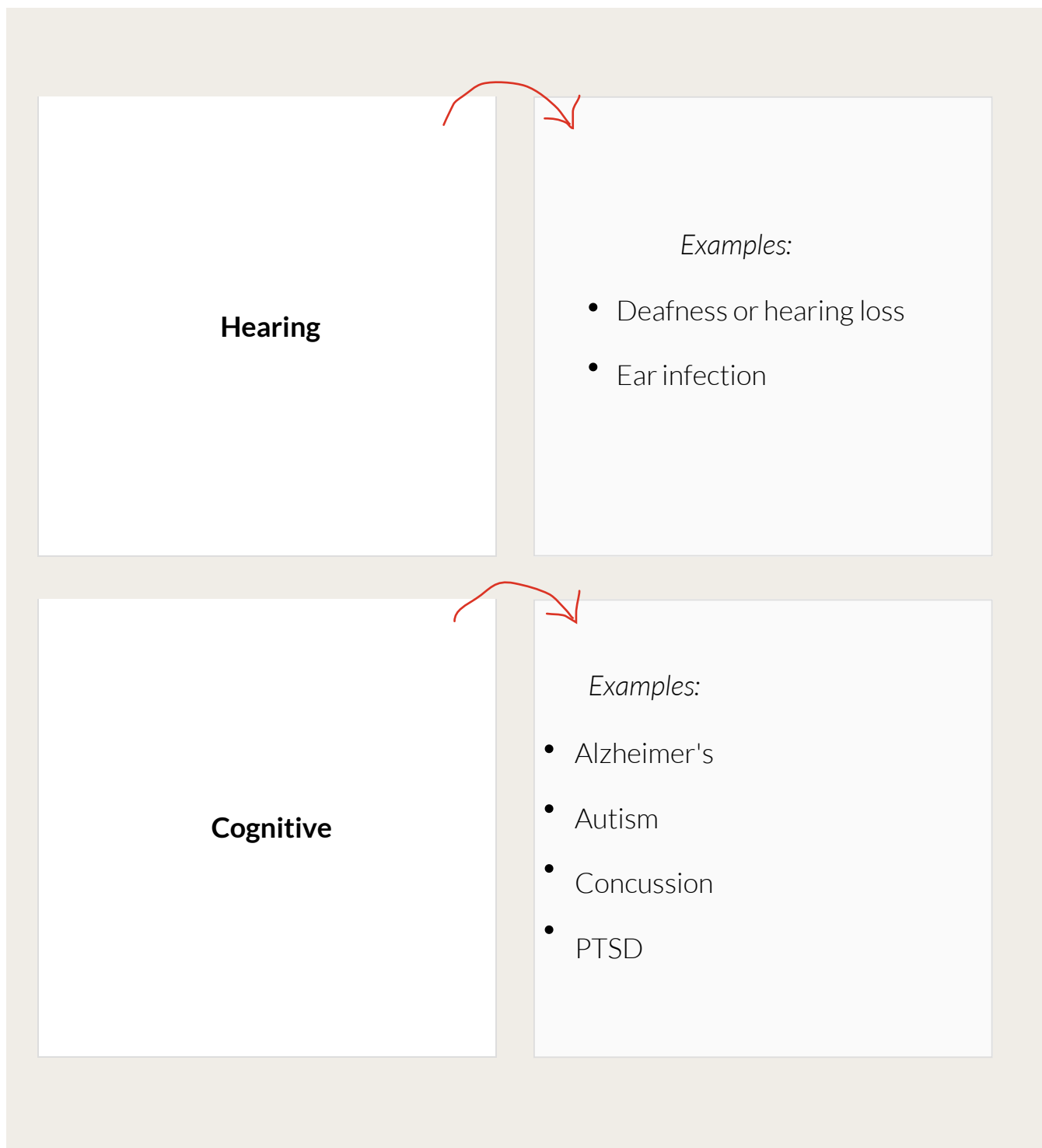
Physical

Examples:

- Wheelchair use
- Height
- ALS
- Broken arm

Visual

Examples:

- Blindness or low vision
- Red-green colorblindness
- Cataracts

Hearing

Examples:

- Deafness or hearing loss

- Ear infection

Cognitive

Examples:

- Alzheimer's

- Autism

- Concussion

- PTSD

Note: The flashcards are formatted differently in the live version. Only one side (front or back) of each is visible. When clicked, that card is flipped to its other side.

Why Does Accessibility Matter?

1   Human right

2   Legal right

3   Accessible design benefits everyone.

1

Human Right

Disability rights are human rights.

Human rights are fundamental rights and freedoms that are intrinsic to every person by virtue of their status as a human being.

[source]

Legal Right

U.S. —

The most important U.S. law related to accessibility is the 1990 **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**[*].

"The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications and access to state and local government' programs and services." [source]

*Note: The ADA does not explicitly mention digital accessibility, but amendments to another U.S. law do.

Other Countries —

Most countries have similar laws or treaties. Examples:

- Nearly all countries signed and ratified the 2017 **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.** *(The U.S. is unusual, as it signed but has yet to ratify the treaty.)* [source]

- The EU also created the **European Accessibility Act (EAA)** of 2019. [source]

Accessible Design Benefits Everyone.

Example: The Curb-Cut Effect

What is a curb cut?

A **curb cut** is "a place where the curb (= edge of a raised sidewalk next to the road) is made to slope down to the level of the road" [quote source]


Above is a simple curb cut [image source]. The illustration below shows one with more features, including tactile paving.

Note:

* alt text of the image above: *Narrow curb cut. The raised sidewalk edge (painted yellow) slopes down to the middle of a crosswalk.*

* alt text of the next image (p. 8): *An illustration of a curb cut surrounded by people, including someone in a wheelchair, one pushing a stroller, and two riding bicycles. Near the bottom, it says, "When we design for disabilities… we make things better for everyone."*

THE CURB-CUT EFFECT

WHEN WE DESIGN
FOR DISABILITIES

... WE MAKE THINGS
BETTER FOR EVERYONE

sketchplanations
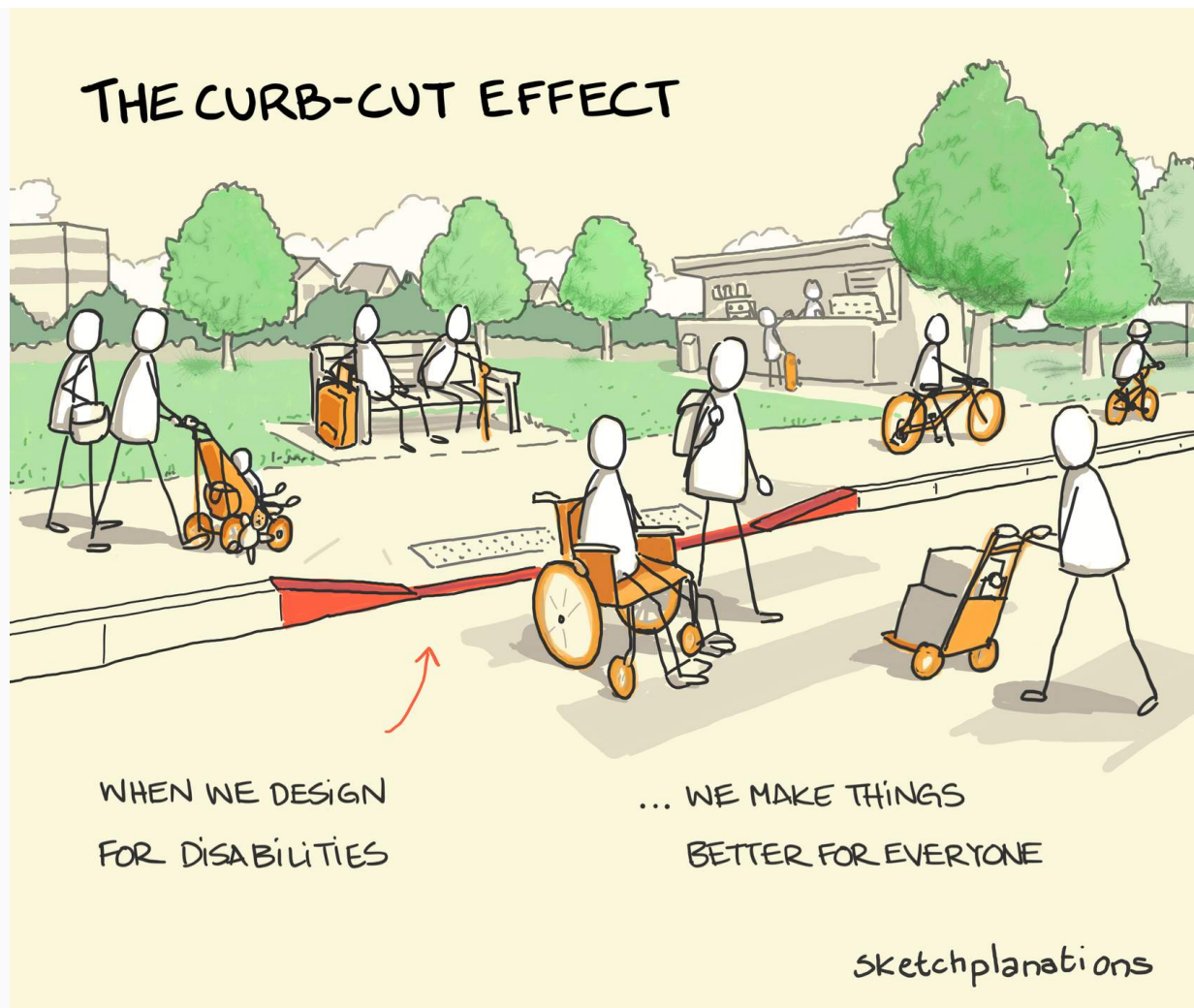
[image and quote source]

What is the Curb-Cut Effect?

"The curb-cut effect illustrates how when we design to benefit disadvantaged or vulnerable groups we end up helping society as a whole"

Who benefits from curb cuts?

☑ People in wheelchairs

☑ People with blindness or low vision

☑ Toddlers

☑ People pushing strollers and suitcases

☑ Dog walkers

☑ Cyclists, skateboarders, and runners

☑ Everyone!

SUBMIT

Digital Accessibility

Don't worry, you're almost done!

What Is <u>Digital</u> Accessibility?

Digital accessibility is the process of ==making digital products==, such as websites, mobile apps, learning management systems, administrative software and other online tools, services ==accessible to everyone==. It is about ==ensuring all users can access the same information==, regardless of the impairments they may have.

[source]

Preview **Digital Accessibility** *Discussion*

Click on the plus signs below to explore common aspects of digital accessibility.
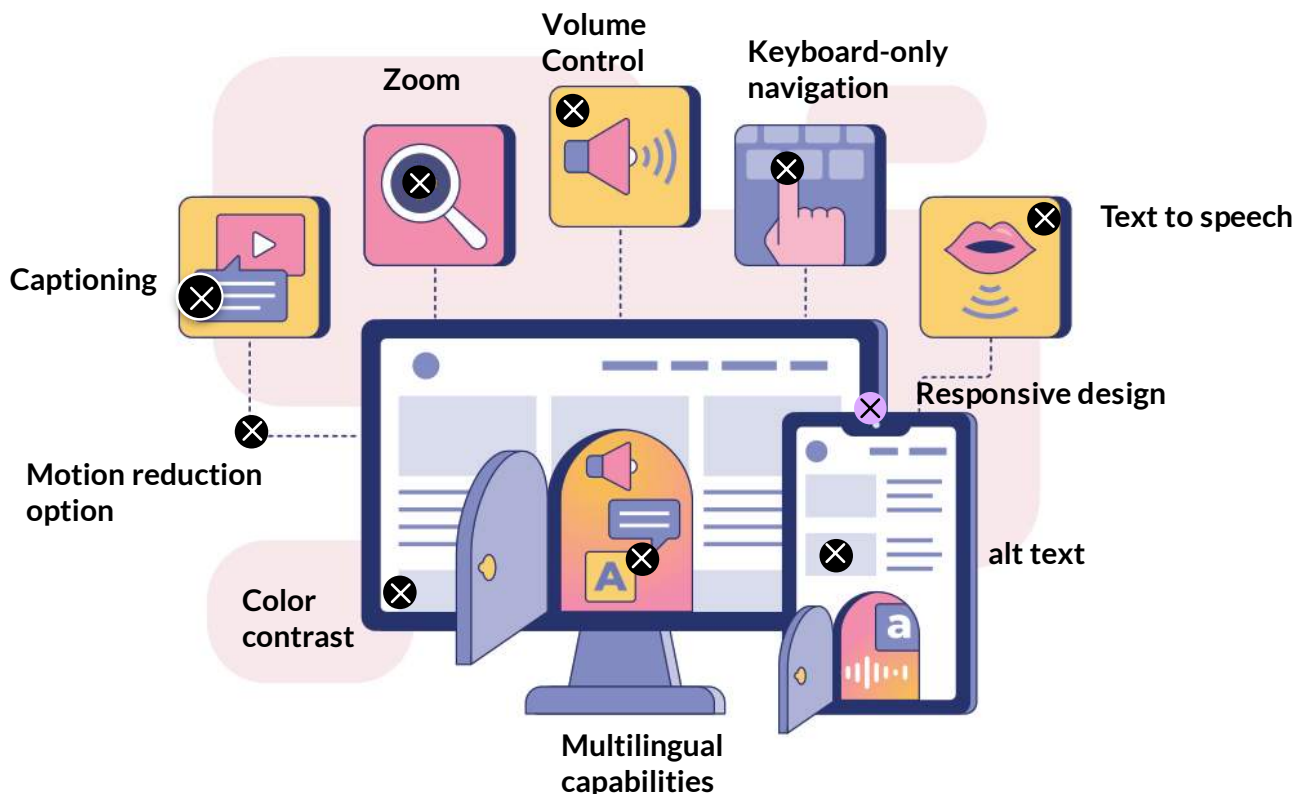
Note:

* The buttons and labels are styled differently in the live version. The 'x's in the PDF are plus signs in the live version. At most, only one text label (the last one clicked on) would be displayed at a time.

* The image does not have alt text because I did not know how to add it (possibly because the feature was not yet supported).

Final Thought
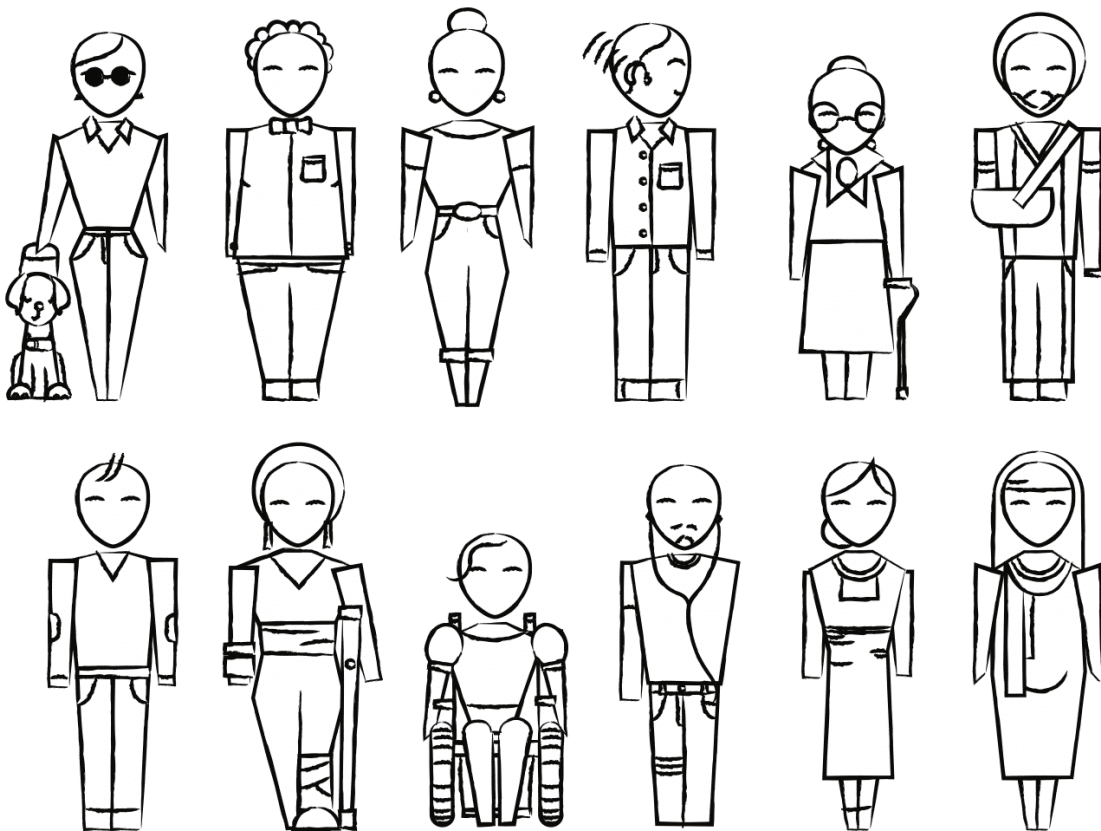
The illustration's caption reads, "Designing with our own abilities as a baseline can lead to solutions that work well for people with similar abilities, but can end up excluding many more people" (p. 55).

[Source: Holmes, K. (2020). *Mismatch: How inclusion shapes design.* MIT Press.]

The End! 🎉