Putting King's Online podcast
Episode 7: Accessibility is design

Putting King's Online, a podcast exploring the process of designing online learning courses from the team which creates them.

I'm your host Rachele Wall and in each episode of Putting King's Online, I'll be talking to my colleagues about their roles here at King's College London, within the Online and Professional Executive Education team. We'll be delving into the processes of creating online courses. From ideation to delivery, inclusive design, accessibility and where we stand in the wider online learning community.

Rachele

Accessibility in higher education and online learning has been a hot topic since the government changed web accessibility laws in 2018, now requiring online creators to provide more equal access to their content for those with any disability.

For the King's Online team, making online learning more accessible has been a work in progress long before 2018 and continues to be a huge part of our development process now.

In this week's episode, I sat down with Danielle, our Front End Accessibility Developer and all around accessibility champion, to delve into the topic of accessibility within design.

We discuss her unique role and its function of looking at accessibility both from a technical and holistic perspective. We talk about accessible design being more than just an add on for disabled students and rather a more universal design approach intended to be more inclusive of everyone.

King's Online is still in the process of learning and improving our understanding of disability. We recognise that conversations like this one don't reflect the full diversity of experiences and opinions from disabled people, particularly given that we focus on the practical aspects of creating e-learning rather than the direct experiences of students studying online.

In this episode, we try to use language according to what is generally preferred by the disabled community, including identity-first phrasing, while also recognising that different people have different language preferences and that sometimes we might get things wrong. While we speak in broad strokes about disability, it is important to highlight that not all disabilities are the same and disabled students have diverse experiences, needs, and preferences.

Please do visit our website where you will find some links to resources mentioned in this episode, as well as a few extra that we hope you'll find interesting and informative.

Okay, I think that's plenty from me for now. Let's jump right into the episode.

Rachele

Today we are talking accessibility in design and to help unpack this topic with me today is Danielle, welcome to the podcast.

Danielle

Thank you.

Rachele

Your official job title is Front End Accessibility Developer, which sounds very technical and very fancy and probably not the type of role I've heard [LAUGHTER] anywhere else. So I just wondered if we could just kick off by talking about what this type of role entails in general, but also what that means within our team?

Danielle

Absolutely. I think university technology, it seems that the job titles are getting longer and more complicated every year [LAUGHTER] especially at King's. Yeah, my job title is Front end Accessibility Developer and that really can be split into two pieces, one is Front end Development and the other is Accessibility.

For the first, as a developer, I work on our e-learning platform, writing some of the code that makes it work. I'm focused on the front-end, which means that that's what seen by our students rather than the behind the scenes, that's like databases or even our bespoke content builder, which is a technical tool used during content development and is managed by Ephie, who is our Web Developer.

I'm also quite focused on the technical accessibility of our VLE, making sure that it works robustly for disabled students who use assistive technology like a screen reader. A lot of that is invisible work around structuring code correctly and that brings me to the accessibility side.

Some of that is very technical and focused on making our platform work for certain devices and tools, but accessibility as a whole is not just technical, it's about making sure that people aren't excluded from using something, in our case from using online learning on the basis of experiencing a disability.

So that of course involves other things besides technical details and involves all different people and roles on our team. Making a platform technically work for assistive technology is only a tiny portion of this. You could say really not even the most important aspect of it, so part of my job is also to help advise and improve people's ability to practice accessibility across all of the roles in our team.

Rachele

That was a very nice, succinct, what's the word, separation of those two things. I think in a role like this because it's kind of unheard of, well I certainly haven't really heard of something like this in other teams or maybe other organisations, it's really useful to have that clear distinction between accessibility as a sort of overall concept versus the process of making things technically accessible. I think hopefully that definition will be very useful for other people to know as well. What does it look like

to improve the accessibility practices on our team? You've unpacked a bit the technology, but what other things have you been doing to improve those practices in general?

Danielle

I think improving accessibility in an e-learning or online learning team is something that I think of in terms of three rough stages.

One is awareness. The reality is that we've all lived in a very ablest world for quite some time. The world around us is shaped to work for non-disabled people and it means that we don't necessarily see the ablism that's right in front of our noses. We often have a picture in our mind of who the student is we're creating a learning experience for and we've been conditioned to see that person as non-disabled. So we don't even recognise that we're building resources and experiences that exclude disabled people and this means that even then when we start building awareness and we have a team that knows about accessibility and disability, accessibility is often seen as a 'nice to have', it's only included when people have, time and resources and energy to think beyond that fictional average student.

That brings me to what I see as the next phase which his strategy. Luckily at King's Online recently we've move past this idea that accessibility is nice to have an add on feature if you like and started seeing it as a vital aspect of how we work. It's something we want to ensure as far as we can from the get-go. We've moved past being just aware of it to taking it seriously and being strategic about it and that means actually planning how and when we do it. This year we released our first accessibility strategy ever, where we actually look at that and say how can we make this make sense in the work we're doing and how can we make it core to how we do work?

That brings me to the final stage, which is professional development of a team. Having a plan and having awareness is obviously really important, but as I said at the beginning, a lot of us have loads of things that we've learned and been conditioned to think. We need help to unlearn some of the ablism we've unconsciously built into the way we do things and we also need access to approaches and knowledge and resources that can help us create inclusive online learning intentionally.

I think this is where the more of the practice piece comes in, in terms of helping individuals develop their practice and improve it. In many ways, we're really lucky in the online space because there are evidence-based standards for web content, we call them WCAG, the web content accessibility guidelines and they really explicitly tell us how did design and build accessible web pages, and they're developed from massive bodies of research and input from disabled users as disabled creators.

When we follow this, it means we're including all that research and those voices into our products and our approach and it also means that we can count on sort of a foundation of accessibility on a web page. But WCAG, is a massive list of guidance and standards. Reading and processing the whole of WCAG is not really practical for every member of our team, it can be dense, be technical, somethings might be really relevant for your particular role, so we have quite specialist roles in our team.

If for instance you're a Visual Designer, they may be technical aspects that just don't really matter to you. Sometimes it's really unclear how to apply these things to what you are doing, so for example, if you're a Project Manager, knowing the intricate standards might not feel relevant to your role in the moment, so that's

where I come in. Some of the things I've been working on to improve practice include, writing up our own set of standards, accessible production standards that are based on WCAG and all of that best practice, and guidance and research that's in there but translated to the specifics of our context.

Using language that we understand in online learning and that we understand specifically in King's Online, that is typical to the way we talk and work. I've also been providing advice and guidance at a more adhoc basis about how to apply these standards. So for example, WCAG has a standard for colour contrasts, you want text to have enough contrast against the background colour that it's placed on. That's great, we have that standard, but someone might need more advice on how they can test that, what tools can they use or even if there are existing colour combinations that we use and that meet our internal brand requirements that also fit the standard for contrast. That's much more adhoc direct advice and guidance.

Finally, what I've been working on recently is a workshop series, which I've called the 'Accessibility is...' series and it looks at accessibility from various perspectives that may map onto your work and your role. So for example, maybe if you went to an 'Accessibility is process' workshop that would make particular sense to you if you are a Project Manager or 'Accessibility is design' workshop may make particular sentence, and be relevant to you if you're a UX Designer. We started out with 'Accessibility is design' in fact, because it felt most relevant to most people on our team and because it felt like possibly the most important perspective to cover.

Rachele

As you were talking there, I was thinking a lot about the wealth of information, and research, and there's so much out there, it's just what struck me over the years in questions around making certain types of content more accessible, is just really how we pick that information out, how we unpack it, how we apply it. I think what the series that you've just talked about, the 'Accessibility is...' series has done for our team is just really segmented, and chunked all of these things into like you said, bite-sized, and easy enough to understand concepts that hopefully make the approach to accessibility so much easier, and feel less daunting, and intimidating which I feel is the general feeling around accessibility overall.

I just wondered if you had any thoughts on applying that information?

Danielle

Yeah. I think that's a really good point, one of the things I did when I was quite new to this role immediately is I wanted to get a sense of how people on the team felt about accessibility already, and how confident they felt in practicing it. And so I sent out a survey questionnaire, and I'm going to send out another basically a duplicate one at the end of March to see if there has been any shift.

But one of the things that really struck me is that I included a variety of statements about accessibility, and asked people how far they agreed with it, and what they thought. One of the most overwhelming responses I got is that most people thought that accessibility is really complicated. That struck me because it was across the board. People who thought they had had some experience with accessibility, people who felt that they hadn't, different roles.

Most people agreed that they felt that accessibility is pretty complicated. I think there's an extent to which that's true, especially once you start digging into the really technical side, and you're trying to think about how to structure code, and

balance different things. But there's also an extent to which accessibility is, in some ways quite straightforward. It's just about creating really understandable, and easy to use interfaces. I think it's important to recognise that maybe accessibility feels complicated because it's complex, if that makes any sense at all.

I was reading an article about this [LAUGHTER] the other day. A problem that's really difficult to solve, but there is a solution, a single solution, and it's just hard to get to that solution. You have to do a lot. Whereas something that's complex, it has so many different layers of things into it. It might not have a single solution; it might have different pieces of solutions for different things. But none of those pieces necessarily have to be really difficult. But there's just so many of them, and you're trying to balance nuance. I think it's useful to think about that because particularly when we're trying to productionise something like accessibility, when we think about something as been complicated, we just think that we have to put our heads down, and work really hard until we find that final solution. Whereas when we acknowledge that something is complex, it's more about taking the time to think, and make thoughtful decisions, and investigate and listen. I think that doesn't have to be harder than dealing with something complicated, but it is different. The aspect of seeing that there's different nuances, and each role in our team might approach different things, is part of that, is part of recognising the complexity of the space, while it not necessarily being complicated.

Rachele

Yeah, that's a really good point about the idea of taking the time to really think about something, to really unpack it, and to think around a topic. Because I think often, not just in an online learning or higher education in general, when we're confronted with the problem, the general approach is, here is a problem, what's the solution, and how can we just solve it now, and then move on.

The thing I think with accessibility, and we talked a bit about this in a previous episode about diversity and inclusion is the fact that, that is so much more complicated, and nuanced when you think that the problem that you're trying to solve rather is a very human problem. Human beings are complex, and we're very different. Everyone has a slightly varying sets of needs, and approaches, and is never really a one-size-fits-all solution. But if you're approaching something from this mindset that, if I try and be as thoughtful as possible, and appreciate that this process is going to change, and it's going to need revision, and it's going to need coming back to, and it's going to need tweaking, then it's something that is more able to become ingrained in our processes, and more ingrained in the way we think going forward.

Danielle

Absolutely. I think that's a really good point about some of the agility, and being able to absorb new data, and listen to new voices, and make adjustments while also, I guess not freezing at the beginning, and saying, "Well, I don't have the full understanding of everything that is involved in being a disabled student," and every impairment that a student might have, every kind of access need that they might have, and feeling that moment of just being well, I'm frozen than this, I don't have enough data so just brush it aside, and leave it for now. Instead say, well, how can we get access to the information that we really need? What can we use to just really to get started, and make the best informed decisions that we can right now?

Rachele

Definitely. I think I've seen that evolution of a different way of thinking, in our team gradually progressing in that direction, the more we start to have these conversations.

I just wondered if you could talk a little bit about what are some of the things that are important to think about in terms of accessibility in design.

Danielle

I guess I'll just first of all run through why I think accessibility is important to frame as design. As part of the workshop series, I've been using basically a working definition of accessibility that I feel just speaks to the whole series. It came from Alistair Duggin, who wrote a blog post about defining accessibility when he was the head of accessibility at Government Digital Services. He said,

> "When I talk about accessibility, I'm using it to mean that people are not excluded from using something on the basis of experiencing a disability. Accessibility means that people can do what they need to do in a similar amount of time, and effort as someone that does not have a disability. It means that people are empowered, can be independent, and will not be frustrated by something that is poorly designed or implemented."

I think you can see that, that definition has a few different facets, which is why it's been useful in the workshop series. But in a lot of ways, it is quite design focused. It's about creating something that intentionally includes rather than excludes. It's about making something with a clear user experience in mind, and a clear user pathway. It also really clearly lays out inaccessibility or frustration for a disabled user as poor design or implementation. It is really designed focused, its about whether we're actually meeting the design brief, and intentionally including accessibility, and disabled people in that design brief, and in who we think of our user being.

Then Alistair goes on in the same post to say something that I also think is particularly important, which is that it's incredibly easy to introduce barriers into a product or a service. I think that's something that's really important to remember. In the 'Accessibility is design' workshop, we look at some of the tenets of design thinking, which is a methodology that goes into a lot of UX design or general Experience Design, service design.

One of the really core aspects of design thinking is questioning. Design thinking is basically premised on the idea that good questions lead to good design. This of course, it means asking questions of your stakeholders, and your uses, and your testers. But it also means asking questions of your design. Looking at your design and asking if it's doing what it should do, and asking if its doing other things that you didn't expect. It's really easy to just not interrogate the accessibility of your design. If you don't do that, you're going to introduce barriers.

If you introduce barriers during design stages, they're really hard to fix later on. During build or implementation, testing, delivery, it's incredibly hard to fix access barriers that were created during design. It's very expensive. Sometimes it requires a redesign because it's only been dealt with right at the end, or sometimes it just requires us to jump through a lot of hoops to get there. Often means that we just don't have as good a final product because we didn't think about it from the outset. But yeah, I think in the end what this really comes down to is that there's no neutral ground when it comes to accessibility, and inclusivity. So we can either intentionally

design to include disabled students or we can carelessly design to exclude them. I think it's really important to lay that out as a choice, that's really a core part of design. To remember that we're making decisions during design whether we are doing it intentionally or not, and I think inclusion and exclusion is one of those things that we can sometimes, just not ask the questions about, not be intentional about it, and by doing that, we're basically making a decision to exclude.

Rachele

We've talked about accessibility. We've pulled it out of all of these conversations, and out of all of these processes. But ultimately, I think from the work that you've done with our team, it's very clear that we are trying to move towards this idea of ingraining it into the way that we think in all aspects of the work that we do not just in design.

We've touched on other different roles, and their relationships with accessibility. I just wondered if you had any thoughts on how we can look at accessibility a bit more, I guess holistically in terms of that whole process.

Danielle

Yeah. I think one of the things I said earlier was that the reason that we started with 'Accessibility is design' is that it is the starting point and it touches everybody. But I also think that a lot of us do design related tasks even if we don't have the job title of designer. I think there's an extent to which giving people a clear way to think about design and to embed accessibility into that does touch a lot of different spaces of work.

Even if your job title is a Video Producer, you're not explicitly thought of as being a designer, but you are making design decisions all the time and they might just be different in size or different where they're falling in the process. But you are maybe making a decision about what colours to use. You're making a decision about what to prioritise in the way you're producing something. I think it is important to also recognise that almost everyone on our team is making some kind of design decision at some point, even a Project Manager, for instance, is still doing some process design. I think that's one way.

Design is useful because it does provide a more holistic view what accessibility means for different people. I think, yeah, this like question aspect is useful for that. So actually recently, we're talking about 'Accessibility is design', but we recently ran the second workshop in this areas which was 'Accessibility is quality'.

In that workshop, I asked people what they thought defined the quality of our online courses, and one of the responses really stuck with me. It was that thoughtful decisions were made on how content was produced. So that thoughtful and informed decision-making was like the cornerstone of what we thought of as being essential to quality of what we're producing. Part of that has making sure that people have the information to be informed in their decision-making, but also that we're equipping them to be thoughtful in the right ways.

Actually one of the things I've been encouraging people to do in that question asking that I was talking about, where we're asking questions about design, or I guess asking questions of the decisions we're making more broadly, is to think about how to make that question more useful. So the most common one that we often ask when we're designing something and we're trying to be intentional about accessibility, is that we might say, how can we make this accessible? I have this

design or this thing, how can I make it accessible? I've been encouraging people to try and shift their thinking and start asking what barriers are we erecting with this? I think that's really core to design and it forces us to confront design and probably change it.

But again, I think it also comes back to that thing of being accountable and active and recognising that it's not just about making something accessible, it's about making sure that we aren't creating barriers. I think it's been really interesting because I've been seeing, I think people on our team really embracing that towards the latter end of the process where you might not expect it. So where you're seeing, quality testing in editing or like final build. You might not expect people at that point to be asking, are we erecting barriers here? But they are and I think that's really exciting, and is really showing a holistic view.

I think it also forces you to think about what are barriers? What would a barrier look like for a different person and being really empathetic with what those people need? I'm not sure if that answered your question. [LAUGHTER]

Rachele

No. It definitely did. I'm thinking of something that you shared in one of our workshops which was an example of someone building, I think like a football stadium or something like that. Different examples of constructing this wall and then not really realising when you add a different set of people and what the barriers to them would be in being able to be able to watch a sporting event, whatever it may be.

I just think, yeah. There's definitely a shift in the way that we question something. I guess in terms of saying rather than like you said, what is accessible. It's just about changing the way that you asked that question and the way that you question and think about your own decisions in whatever role that you're doing.

Danielle

I'm really glad you brought up the example of the stadium because I think for us working in online spaces, sometimes we can lose perspective of what design looks like. I find it really helpful to look back at the built environment and what people do in terms of designing built environments and so that the stadium example you talk about is a fictional example that's used quite a bit to explain inequalities.

It basically is premised on the idea that an architect has asked to design a stadium, and they designed the whole stadium, but they put a big fence up. Then they start having users come in and they see that only the tallest people can look over the fence. So that designer really didn't think to ask a question early on about what barrier this fence was creating.

Now the stadium is built so the stadium owners then have to do all of these weird add on things to try and address the inequality. They start by just giving everyone a small crate to stand on. That means that people who are medium height can now see over the fence, but still the shortest people and the children can't.

Then they think, okay, well, we'll give the shortest people as many crates as they want, and just everyone can choose and that works, but in reality, we know in the world that we live in, those crates are probably going to cost money. For people to get extra tools to access something, they are going to have to pay money, and so there's then like another financial inequality that's introduced. Then finally maybe

the stadium owners says, okay, we're just going to allow everyone to have the maximum number of crates. We'll just give everyone two crates and that should mean that, sure, the tallest person is way above everyone else. But even the shortest person can see over the fence and then at that point they introduce a wheelchair user and they obviously cannot use a crate.

It's just that idea of, I guess going back to that fictional average use or average student and that sometimes we design based on that and we fail to think about the full spectrum of human ability. But also that we're just not thinking from the start, what does this look like? What is this introducing? What is this creating? Who could this exclude? Then when we get to the end, we have to do all of these weird, expensive things to try and overcome it.

The built environment is just really useful for thinking about things like that. The stadium was one, as I say, it's an example that's used I think a lot in sociology of inequalities, to explain different ways that we think about inequality, but we can also think about so many aspects of the built environment.

There was a media buzz a while ago about someone who invented this stair climbing wheelchair. It got loads and loads of media attention and it was really flashy and interesting, but then when disabled people and wheelchair users started looking at the design and they were like, well, clearly no one ever spoke to a wheelchair user because there are so many aspects of this that wouldn't work. It required core strength or it looked scary and so there was saying, well, fine, you created this thing to get upstairs, but in the end, why don't you just put a ramp there?

I think this is one of the things that comes back to with the built environment. Is that, often the simplest solutions are very inclusive and if we just started from the approach of how can we make this as universal as possible from the get-go, then we wouldn't have to build stair climbing wheelchairs later.

So yeah, I like to say that, inaccessibility is failed design completely, but add on accessibility is really inelegant design and ultimately we do want elegant design too.

Rachele

I like the comparison of those two different examples. The first approach is creating all of these add-ons to try and address all of these problems. Then the second one really highlights the importance of actually including people with any form of accessibility needs into those conversations rather than just deciding, I think this is a really cool idea, or if I was in a wheelchair, wouldn't it be cool if I had this fancy stair climbing thing? But actually, yeah, like you said, there's often a simpler solution, but also just including the people who are going to need something like that into those conversations seems like such an obvious thing but a lot of the time it's the thing that gets forgotten about the most.

Danielle

Absolutely, and I think this is something that we as a team still need to work on. Right now, as I said, we've got a really robust set of standards that have been provided for us from WCAG, that has been really been informed by disabled people and research, and that's great and that's useful. It means that we are indirectly using disabled people's voices to define how we're building things. But right now, we're doing very little of speaking directly to disabled users. I think that is one of the things that's our next big step that we need to find a useful way of engaging disabled

students and listening to what they need and listening to their experiences. I still think, yeah, we have a ways to go there.

King's College as a whole has a ways to go here, but I'm part of a college wide piece of work that's happening on trying to help academics who are creating their own online content, do that in accessible ways. Part of that included focus grouping with students. It was incredibly valuable to hear from these students and they were unbelievably helpful but I also found the process of recruiting students and focus grouping them really interesting and it helped me learn a lot from people who are much more experienced in this space, so that's people who work in disability support or people who've been engaged in disability advocacy.

Some of the things that sometimes I think we forget when it comes to working with disabled users, things like, how to recruit disabled users without forcing them to disclose their disabilities. That was a big thing for students who participated in our focus groups, is that they wanted to be assured that they were going to be anonymous and that they wouldn't have to disclose their impairments. That is a big aspect.

Obviously, sometimes we need people to disclose their impairments if we need to think about particular disabilities. But that was really interesting to see and know and to think about how we can still create systems to get feedback from students without forcing disclosure.

The other thing we did was that we paid students for their time. We had massive interest in this, which was really unexpected, but students really want it to be involved in helping consult about accessibility in online content for the college. So we did end up, we had limited funding for certain number of students to be involved in focus groups. Then we sent out a questionnaire, that we said, we can't pay you for this, but clearly there is a level of investment from students in this, and if you do want to fill in this questionnaire, that would be great, no pressure either way.

But I think it was really important that we acknowledged that students were performing a service for us. I think that's often forgotten when we work with disabled users, is that we tend to have a paternalistic approach. We think like, "Oh, well, we're doing this for you, so you should be grateful that we're listening to your voice." I really appreciated that we had a really strong student advocate in our group who spoke up and said, "We need to pay students for their time if we're expecting them to spend 90 minutes looking at accessibility standards with us and sharing their experiences."

Rachele

Yeah, that's definitely opened my eyes certainly to that process, I think as somebody who is able-bodied, who doesn't have any accessibility needs, you do tend to forget that's the process of filling in surveys and questionnaires can feel really intrusive and can feel like you're exposing a part of yourself that is a very real thing for you that you have to live with every single day.

Danielle

Yeah, and I think we tend to forget that there's so much invisible work that disabled students do just to exist as students basically in a fair space.

So, if you're a UK resident, you can get something called the Disabled Students Allowance, which is basically funding to get you access to the things that you need to

study. That could be money to buy something like JAWS, which is a screen reader, or Dragon, which is a speech recognition software, or private tutoring if you have a learning disability. But getting this Disabled Students Allowance involves a lot of bureaucracy and filling in forms. All of these things are work and effort that you're doing on top of just your normal schoolwork.

I think one of the things that's really important about the approach that we're taking as King's Online or trying to approach is that, we're dramatically shifting away from the idea of waiting for students to apply for adjustments and saying, let's look at this from the outset. How could we create something that works in a way that would basically require that at least approve adjustments for students, or they'll be able to adjust for themselves.

So we don't want, for a student who is a screen reader user to then have to fight for us to provide screen reader accessible content because they're already doing enough fighting for the other adjustments they need like exam time, etc.

I think it's also worth remembering that there's all of this invisible work that we don't see happening and anything we can do to create as universal a learning experience up front, will benefit those students and minimize some of that work. Also, it means that the students who cannot do those things or will not, or don't even have, I guess, disability, that's registerable, so they don't have a diagnosis, that they can still get access to these aspects of accessibility that they might not have had access to if we required a diagnosis.

Rachele

Yeah, absolutely and I guess the other thing as well, like you were saying about all this extra work that they're already having to do to make their studying work with whatever disability they may have, is just the idea of online content being a space where, you know we rerun the courses that we do, we make tweaks and changes along the way.

But the importance of that universal approach, like you said, means that, a, we're not having to change things will make significant changes to people who are coming forward and saying actually, this is inaccessible for me or I can't access this, but it means that it's less work for our team, so we can put more time and energy into developing practices rather than just playing defense in some ways and thinking, right, we've got more time now. What more can we do? How can we make this even more accessible? What new things can we try this time rather than that constant like, "Okay, well we've done the base level or we've done as much as we think we can." We can claw back some of that time to think even bigger, which hopefully in the long run, would be more inclusive, not only for students who have accessible needs, but for everyone, really.

Danielle

Absolutely. I think accessibility has a really strong business case. It is much more sustainable, as you say, to design in as accessible a way as possible from the outset instead of making changes later, which is always expensive and always frustrating I think, but also incredibly difficult to do quickly enough to be useful for students who need accommodations.

But yeah, also, it tends to create a better product for all. It gives us a marketing edge, I would say. When we're able to recruit students with access needs, that's like a whole additional market. In business, they call this the 'purple pound', so they

talk about how if you have inaccessible businesses, you're losing out on a massive customer segment. I think that's true. When we're thinking about business in universities, that's still true. We need to be able to access that segment of customers and recruit them as students, and particularly because online learning should be in some ways really attractive to disabled students.

One of the reasons that I got into online learning and I wanted to work in online learning is that I felt like it really opened the doors for different people to be able to access higher education. You didn't have to have like a very specific lifestyle to be able to do it. If you could learn online, you could be living anywhere and you could be working at the same time and you could have caregiving responsibilities.

It was just all of these kinds of flexibilities. One of those things is that, if you're disabled, then it is more difficult because of your disabilities to go on to campus or to work on campus effectively. Online education is a really good option or should be a really good option from a business case point of view, as well as, I guess, from my own sense of passion about what online learning is and should be. You know, we should be reaching out to disabled students and recognising that this is something that might be particularly appealing to people with certain disabilities.

Rachele

Yeah, definitely 100 percent.

I think that that is a very nice place to end it.

Thank you so much for giving up some of your time today to have a chat with me.

Danielle

Thank you so much for having me.

[MUSIC]

Rachele

You've been listening to Putting Kings Online. Subscribe, rate and share us wherever you get your podcasts. Putting Kings Online is hosted, produced and edited by me, Rachele Wall, and is a production brought to you by the Online and Professional Executive Education Team here at King's College London.