

# AT Banter Podcast Episode 279 - CSUN 2022 Roundup

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

csun, braille, people, called, headset, devices, vision, steve, technology, product, orbit, big, podcast, braille display, banter, canadian, cowbell, worn, devils, communication

## SPEAKERS

Lis Malone, Steve Barclay, Ryan Fleury, Rob Mineault

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**L** Lis Malone 00:35  
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

**S** Steve Barclay 00:40  
Banter, banter.

**R** Rob Mineault 00:42  
Oh listen to those velvety tones of a "banter, banter". Oh, hey, my name is Rob Mineault. Oh, and this is of course the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Joining me today, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

**R** Ryan Fleury 01:05  
I think you need to stop the liquid lunches.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:09  
Why?

**S** Steve Barclay 01:10  
Because you didn't invite us, you dick.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:15  
Well, and now, as you can hear, - spoilers, spoilers - also joining us back, making his triumphant return to the show, Mr. Steve Barclay.

**S** Steve Barclay 01:24  
That would be me.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:27  
And look who it is ... Lis Malone.

**L** Lis Malone 01:32  
I don't put the banter in banter banter.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:37  
Is that not a double negative banter? Isn't that I don't put the banter and banter?

**L** Lis Malone 01:43  
I don't put the banter, banter, banter.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:48  
Yeah, there's a song in that.

**R** Ryan Fleury 01:50  
That's right.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:52  
Uh, how's everybody?

**S** Steve Barclay 01:57

 Steve Barclay 01:57  
Scale of one to 10?

 Rob Mineault 01:58  
Yeah, sure.

 Steve Barclay 01:59  
14.7. Wow.

 Ryan Fleury 02:01  
Wow.

 Rob Mineault 02:03  
Shot out of a cannon.

 Lis Malone 02:05  
Crap.

 Rob Mineault 02:07  
Okay, well, what about everyone else?

 Ryan Fleury 02:10  
7, 8.

 Lis Malone 02:14  
Okay, I think I am 7.5.

 Rob Mineault 02:18  
Wow, everyone's really high today.



- L** Lis Malone 02:20  
The Russian judges really strict.
- S** Steve Barclay 02:22  
So that means that we're only down by point 8%. Overall, it's pretty good.
- R** Rob Mineault 02:35  
It's pretty good for us.
- S** Steve Barclay 02:36  
Our average is spectacular.
- R** Ryan Fleury 02:39  
We still got a week to go until the end of the month, so we might make it.
- R** Rob Mineault 02:46  
Excellent. Well, listen, we're all gathered here. Despite some technical issues that we had earlier. We won't mention any names Lis.
- R** Ryan Fleury 02:55  
Holy cow, so much for the bro code.
- R** Rob Mineault 03:01  
Does not exist in this show. So opening it up, opening it all up out there to the general public.
- L** Lis Malone 03:10  
Yeah, well with the gang all here. We're excited. Because why are we excited? Ryan?
- R** Ryan Fleury 03:16  
We are excited because we are doing another news show with a little bit of additional information from Mr. Barclay who just returned from CSUN.

**S** Steve Barclay 03:26  
Yeah, me. Yeah, some palm trees and blue sky. You wouldn't believe it.

**L** Lis Malone 03:30  
I know. You're a 14.5

**S** Steve Barclay 03:34  
Yeah, pretty much. Once Once you give me a little dose of vitamin D, I'm over the top.

**L** Lis Malone 03:40  
Oh, lucky man.

**R** Rob Mineault 03:45  
Yeah, that must have been nice. I mean, we're here in Vancouver. We've been it's been two weeks of nothing but grey drizzle.

**L** Lis Malone 03:51  
So anyway, I guess the long story short, we're very jealous of Steve and his vitamin D overload.

**S** Steve Barclay 04:00  
No guilt here. None.

**R** Rob Mineault 04:02  
Well, you know what, though, you know, you missed you missed a really good show. You would have actually really liked last week's show. It was shockingly good.

**S** Steve Barclay 04:09  
It was I wasn't there.



R Rob Mineault 04:14

It was about comics, which was was fun. But we apparently we learned we learned that the Wichita State University - What is it a football team?

R Ryan Fleury 04:29

I think all their teams they're called Shockers. Yeah, they're they're called shockers because I guess Their mascot is called The Shocker

R Rob Mineault 04:37

Yeah. And he's he looks like a like a shock of wheat. That's what I guess the name is from his gotcha from a shock of wheat.

S Steve Barclay 04:45

Okay. Entirely different picture there.

R Ryan Fleury 04:47

Well listen to the show.

R Rob Mineault 04:48

So apparently, that's that's where we that's where half our minds went as well. And when we asked them about it, ask the professor about it. Apparently they're their team has really leaned into this and they actually do the the hand gesture is there. It looks like they're making a gang sign, but really they're making a shocker. Yeah, the shocker hand. I had to I had to google pictures of their cheerleaders after the show last time just to confirm that and yeah, sure enough, the internet is full of all these people in you know, yellow yellow uniforms doing the shocker in the air, so that's hilarious.

S Steve Barclay 05:33

Is one of their chants, you know? \*\*\*\*\*

R Ryan Fleury 05:39

Oh my goodness.

R Rob Mineault 05:42

Possibly, possibly. I mean, that could very well be Yeah, no, it's yeah, it was great. So ...

L

Lis Malone 05:50

There's so many variations. There's the there's the shark. There's the six pack there's ... Yeah. So see, Steve and I were we kind of got this mind meld thing. He knows exactly what

R

Ryan Fleury 06:04

I'm smelling a topic for a show

S

Steve Barclay 06:13

Right, just we'll just pull out Urban Dictionary and horrify people.

R

Rob Mineault 06:19

Anyways, I just wanted to follow up on that because and I wanted to confirm that just so in case any of our listeners were dubious of that, because I was dubious. I was like, There's no way but No, clearly, clearly there's a lot of the administration at the school has no idea what the shocker is either otherwise, I can't see them. Having allowed this to happen, but I think it's hilarious.

L

Lis Malone 06:40

Hey, there, we're all adults.

R

Rob Mineault 06:42

True. Hey, listen, whatever floats your boat. No judgment here are an inclusive podcast. So what are we going to start with? Shall we start with some CSUN report?

S

Steve Barclay 06:58

Could do.

R

Rob Mineault 07:00

Okay, well, once you set this up for Steve, where did you go? And what did you do?

S

**Steve Barclay 07:07**

Okay, so I went to the CSUN conference. CSUN stands for California State University Northridge. And that's who hosts the the the show. This year's show was held in Anaheim, right beside the Anaheim Conference Center. And in one of the hotels there. And to be honest, it was a little disappointing. You know, I've been to CSUN a number of times in the past, and it was always a huge conference with lots and lots of exhibitors, everybody released new products at it. And, you know, it was it wasn't busy this time. You know, there were there were empty booths. Some people had reserved booths and then never showed, there were a lot of just ones that were plain empty had obviously never been never been sold. And the you know, the attendance wasn't great. So for some of the exhibitors, it was, it was kind of disappointing. And for some of the attendees, it was kind of disappointing. You know, I don't I don't go for the presentations, which a lot of people do. So I can't comment too much on the on the quality of the presentations. You know, but I'm mostly there to see new technologies and see what, what people have come out with and also to reconnect with, you know, people I haven't seen in a while. And there were a lot fewer people that I hadn't seen in a while. And yeah, very, very little in the way of new technologies. But but there were some standouts, there were some some things that were kind of interesting. There's a lot of people who are working on Graphics Tablets right now. You know, I learned of well I saw two different products that that are out there now one from Orbit Research and one from Dot Corporation. Orbit Research seems well out in front right now in terms of, you know, having a physical product that they can sell to the market. Dot Corporation, I asked them how much it cost and they said, "Oh, we don't really know we're going to you know, put together a focus group and sort of bandy around that idea and see what the market wills" so there was like zero commitment to even a range of what it might cost. And in confidence, I was told by another company that they were working on a Graphics Tablet as well but I'm not at liberty to say too much more about it but they are they are plugging away at it as well so there's gonna be there's gonna be some competition in that arena for sure. And we'll see where the where the chips fall at the end of the day.

R

**Rob Mineault 09:53**

What do you mean when you when you say graphics tablet?

S

**Steve Barclay 09:59**

So we're all in our group here familiar with Braille cells, refreshable Braille cells, where you have dots that are popping up and down. And basically, with a Graphics Tablet, you increase the density of dots, and you put many, many more of them. So you know, it could be, you know, like, you look at something like the canoes, for example, which it's not exactly a graphics tablet, but it's, what 360 Braille cells. So you're basically mashing these dots together and then trying to present tactile graphics on them in one way, way, shape, or form. I'm not sure what the what the resolution of the orbit product is, I can probably look it up.

R

**Ryan Fleury 10:40**

But yeah, the Graffiti from Orbit Research actually has - and I forget how cells it is too- but different, separate motors for each of the pins and cells. And you can actually increase or decrease, like Steve said, the pin height. So you can actually get almost a shading effect in

your Braille or in your tactile image. And they say, it will allow you to read charts, graphs, topographical maps. That's kind of detail we've never had access to before, through through tactile anyway.

R Rob Mineault 11:13

What and what's the price point like? I guess in some cases, you're you we don't know yet. But in general, like, what, are these going to be a lot more expensive?

R Ryan Fleury 11:23

Yes. The graffiti is \$20,000.

S Steve Barclay 11:28

Is that Canadian or US?

R Ryan Fleury 11:30

On our website? That's Canadian. That's Canadian \$20,420, I believe was the price I quoted today.

R Rob Mineault 11:39

Who's the market for that?

R Ryan Fleury 11:42

Universities, colleges.

S Steve Barclay 11:46

Yeah, anybody who's trying to provide research access to to graphical information for for education is probably the number one application for it, you know, scientific diagrams, and, and math, mathematical diagrams and things like that. graphs, charts, you know, could be stuff used in a marketing department, just so you can see a progression or something. But, yeah, there's, there's definitely going to be a lot more on this for sure. And we'll, we'll see how it all comes out.

R Ryan Fleury 12:21

Fxcitina.

...ing.

S

Steve Barclay 12:23

Yeah. And I just looked up the Graffiti Tablet, it's 60 by 40. 60 Dots by 40 dots.

R

Rob Mineault 12:29

So nothing else in terms of any sort of other Braille devices that caught your eye.

S

Steve Barclay 12:35

Yeah, there were there were, you know, we've been we've been looking at a Braille tablet for a while called the, the Inside One. We had a, we had a demo of it here. I actually delivered it back to the company when I when I went down there. And the next generation of it has been announced. It's not out yet. But it deals with a lot of the critiques that we had of the original tablet that we were, we were handled, which were much of it was it's just, you know, a lot of money for a pretty underpowered computer system. So the the new one is gonna, this a refreshable braille computer with a touchscreen on it. It's got 32 cells Braille with cursor routing, and then it's got a big touchscreen, which has the the keys etched onto the surface, so they're actually indented into the glass on the surface, and you can Braille through that keyboard. That part, you know, the feedback that we've had is it takes some getting used to because you've got to get used to this idea that that you're entering when you pull away instead of when you're pressing down. So that's that's an interesting kind of shift that people have to make to use this. But anyways, the new one is going to be a 10th Gen i7 processor with 16 gigs of RAM. It's going to run Windows 11. It's got Wi Fi 5, it's got Bluetooth 4.1. Dimensions of it are in inches 11 and a half inches by 7.9 inches by point seven inches. Total way to three pounds. Oh SSD hard drive between 256 gigs up to a terabyte supports microSD up to a terabyte. It's got built in stereo speakers, microphone 16 megapixel rear camera with autofocus. Which you can use for OCR as well as a five megapixel front camera for apparently high resolution zooming or something. I don't know why you would have that high resolution front camera, interesting. Has USBC USB three micro HDMI 3.5 millimeter audio jack and mini USB on it up to eight hours of usage time. So really, for somebody who wants a small compact Windows machine to carry around with them, it's it's a pretty cool little note taker. Same company that distributes that is inside vision down in the US and we distribute for Inside Vision, we Canadian Assistive Technologies distributes inside Vision Products in Canada, they have also just released a new braille display called the Vario 40. It is a dead basic braille display like could not be simpler. It's got 40 Braille cells 40, cursor routing keys, it's got six navigation buttons on the on the top face of it, it only connects through USB, it's got a USB C port on the side, you plug it into your computer, it uses a human interface, interface driver, no mucking around with, you know, specialized drivers, no mucking around with, you know, any kind of Bluetooth connection or anything because it doesn't do that. It's just a very, very simple Braille display. But it's it's really small, very lightweight. And I think it could have some pretty, pretty good application for places like, like government, where government doesn't like devices that have memory in them, because somebody could, you know, take documents out of places, they're supposed to have documents on a device like that. So this, this might have some application.

R

Rob Mineault 16:43

Also does that is that do you feel like that's really dialed down in terms of features in order to make it a more attractive price point?

S

Steve Barclay 16:54

Well, unfortunately, the flip side of this is, this is another European made product, you know, made in in Germany, I believe. And they tend to be on the high side of of pricing. So this is actually more money than you would pay for, say, a Focus 40 Or a Brilliant 40. Even though it doesn't have a lot of the functionality that those ones have. But at the same time, it also has less points of failure. So you got to balance one versus the other.

R

Rob Mineault 17:32

I don't know if you can answer this, but, have other sources other than what you found at CSUN. But I'm just curious to know, like, has like this whole whole global supply chain issues that we've seen over the past few years because of, you know, whatever, pick your global crisis. Have you seen like it like, do you think development and R&D and stuff has really started to slow down because of those supply chains or production in general?

S

Steve Barclay 18:04

I think it's impacted production more than development. The development side has been impacted, because people can't get together as easily to collaborate on technical projects like this, which I think is you know, fairly important, it's hard to do a lot of design work through Zoom, right? But where, where we've really been clobbered in our in our industry is on the supply side, and the actual production side. And that's been, you know, people being out with COVID supply chains being disrupted. But because this industry is so small, when it comes to component shortages, a manufacturer is going to address the component needs of their bigger customer before they're going to deal with their their smaller customer who might only order you know, 100 to 1000 have a particular processor, say for example. So it's been very hard for the the producers to get certain components, you know. In talking to one of the guys from Humanware at the conference, you know, he said they had, you know, just dozens of different issues where, you know, components, you know, manufacturers decided, well, we've got a big COVID epidemic going on, we'll phase out that product that they were relying on. So they've had to go and do you know board redesigns or, you know, work with chips that that are substitutions for the ones that they originally started out with. So yeah, there's been a lot of disruptions that way.

R

Rob Mineault 19:39

Does that affect price at all? Like when when you have these supply chain disruptions?



S

Steve Barclay 19:47

Well, there's already been some price increases in the industry. And you know, I'm sure there's probably going to be more to come but you it hasn't been extreme at this point. You know, they've been fairly minor price updates, and most in most cases. So that one where I think we're gonna have to wait and see. Because yeah, you know, we've gotten largely through COVID. And now we're hovering on the brink of WWII.

R

Rob Mineault 20:20

It's true. Yeah. Was there a lot of headworn stuff there at all?

S

Steve Barclay 20:26

There were a few headworn things that I saw that I hadn't seen before, there was, there was a product product called the Vision Buddy, which is a head worn. Very similar. If you're familiar with the IrisVision, you know, that head worn virtual reality headset type of type of product. But this one is primarily meant for watching TV. It has, it does have a camera in the front. So you can use it for magnification up to 10 times. But they're what they really honed in on with this one is they really honed in on TV and streaming directly into the headset for people. And it's, it's a pretty good headset, it's a 4k headset. And so it's very high resolution, and it's got 101 degree field of view. So that's in comparison to the iris vision, the IrisVision has a 70 degree field of view. And that's been so far as I've seen so far the widest field of view for any of the vision aids, the virtual reality, GLASS based vision aids. So this is quite a bit wider, which means for people with things like macular degeneration, it will serve them longer than you know, other other devices might. So yeah, that was that was pretty cool. There was also I'm just looking through my through the brochures that I grabbed here, there was another head worn there it is one that I saw, the ArcSight Onyx. It also has a 70 degree field of view, only goes up to eight times magnification. And it's a purely digital magnification. So when you're up at eight times magnification, it's really quite blurry. But it's considerably cheaper than a lot of the other stuff on the market. So if you were somebody who didn't need a whole lot of magnification, but you wanted one of those virtual reality type headset worn glasses, it might be a it might be a viable contender for some people. So I'd from that, I mean, I saw, you know, a couple of companies that are using the same Gear VR platform saying Samsung phone has the IrisVision does. You know, there's probably three different companies that are using that same platform. But there were also people who weren't, weren't at that show, you know, Iris vision wasn't at the show. They they have a new product that I would have liked to have seen but but I couldn't because they weren't their new eyes wasn't at the show. They also have a new product I wouldn't mind seeing, but they weren't there. So, you know, this is what I what I mean, when I talk about you know, there were there were people that you know, just didn't show.

R

Rob Mineault 23:28

How are the how the actual headsets themselves progressing? Are they making them lighter and less bulky or they pretty much have stayed standard over the past say five years?

S

Steve Barclay 23:41

**S** Steve Barclay 23:41

They they haven't progressed as much as I would have liked to have seen I guess is the best I can put it you know, I talked to another manufacturer who I'd heard was coming up with a new headworn system asked them about it and they said "yeah, we had a prototype but there was so much heat thrown off the the glasses part of it that we couldn't release it as a as a consumer product." So you know, it looks like if you if you want to get a you know, a better performance a high performance headset that seems to be the balancing point right now, you know, it'll use more power it'll generate more heat and it might not be appropriate as a as a vision aid. You know, what, what the market wants and what the market constantly what people with vision loss constantly tell me is they want a pair of sunglasses, something that's just a pair of sunglasses, it's got a discreet camera, and so, you know, people might not even have any idea that they're wearing a vision aid. That's still I think a long way off.

**R** Rob Mineault 24:53

I agree and but I almost think that, like by the time the technology with these headsets gets to the point where they can make the screens and the unit itself light enough to make people happy. I feel like we'll actually have the technology to lean into something like a pair of those glasses where it's where it's like augmented reality as opposed to an actual virtual reality environment.

**S** Steve Barclay 25:21

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, the, that whole AR push that I see going on in in, you know, big tech right now. I think that's going to drive this kind of technology forward faster than certainly anything our industry could ever do.

**R** Rob Mineault 25:41

Yeah, which is typical, right?

**S** Steve Barclay 25:43

Yeah. Yeah. On the on the headset topic, though, there was a another interesting headset type product. This one is not a vision aid. This is a communication aid for people who are non verbal, it's a speech generating device. So it's from this company called Cognixion. It's called Cognixion 1 Axon. And the the model that they have right now, you you wear this headset, and you've got this visor in front of you. And you can see through the visor, so you can see stuff in the distance, and it kind of is that AR type of type of interface. And what it's displaying on the visor is it's displaying, you know, words and phrases that you might that you might want to say. And you can access them just by turning your head and selecting them. They were also talking about a device that they have in in production, well, sorry, not production in prototype right now. Which is using wireless EEG to you know, they've got a number of sensors on the back of the, the back of the headset, which are monitoring brainwave activity, and you can control it through brainwave activity. That was that was kind of slick. Yeah, but it's, you know, not not ready for primetime yet, as I understand it.

R

Rob Mineault 27:11

Well, and that's interesting, too, because, you know, I know that that on the show, you know, and, you know, I know that you with you guys, you guys mainly deal in low vision and blindness, but I'm just curious if, like those communication aids have really progressed at all, or if they're kind of just still making them much the same way that they have for 20 years?

S

Steve Barclay 27:41

You know, with the advent of touchscreens, they've changed fairly significant around touchscreen interfaces. But yeah, they are still using a lot of the same strategies for communication that have been used for, you know, a long period of time, sadly, for this conference, and that was, that was a big area that I wanted to see, I wanted to see, you know, what, what's going on with the comm devices? And you know, who's new out there, that's doing stuff in odd calm. But aside from this Cognixion company that was there, the there were no, no companies that specialized in that communication technology.

R

Rob Mineault 28:18

Yeah, that's surprising, you know, because I really feel like that's another industry that if somebody could crack the code and figure out how to make really effective communication aids, cheaper, that would really be a game changer for that particular niche.

S

Steve Barclay 28:36

It's already happened, you know, the, the tablet revolution, you can get Augmentative Communication software for on either the Android or the iOS platforms. There's already much cheaper options out there. Now, oftentimes, you're balancing that cheaper with less sophisticated communication strategies. So, you know, you, you might never gain the kind of efficiency of communication that you might achieve through, you know, a developed system like, you know, Minspeak, what do they call Minspeak by now, I can't remember they changed the phrase, but but Minspeak was, you know, a communication system developed by by Bruce Baker down in the States. And it allows use of symbols to represent parts of language and to by by following different combinations of symbols, you can construct speech extremely quickly, and then, you know, obviously speak it out. You know, you don't, you don't get that same level of, of complexity in, you know, the cheap solutions. But, again, And you know, not everybody can use that level of complexity either, you know, Minspeak really can be an extremely powerful system for somebody who who's a good communicator. But you know, there's some people that might never achieve that that level of communication through even even using min speak.

R

Rob Mineault 30:21

Nothing that really super wowed you, though, like nothing that you're just came away with like, Yes, I need to pick this up. This is going to be a game changer.

S

Steve Barclay 30:31

Well, I already ordered one of those Vario 40 braille displays, because I just I really liked it. I think it's a nice little display. The big question will be whether whether whether the market will pay the price for because I think it's going to come out to about \$4400 Canadian if I recall.

R

Rob Mineault 30:53

I mean, that's often the case when, especially when you have European manufacturers, right? Generally, there's a, there's a cost involved in a lot of those products, whether that's because they're they tend to be a little bit higher quality, or just use you're paying for, you know, shipment and that kind of thing.

R

Ryan Fleury 31:12

But there's that higher quality like and just playing devil's advocate, of course, but that Braille technology is the same Braille technology is not that has been used for the last 10/15 years. Like, R&D is done, like, so they're charging a premium because they can?

S

Steve Barclay 31:31

Yeah, or their production costs in Germany are higher than could be utilizing a manufacturer in China or something..

R

Ryan Fleury 31:38

But let's even even look at, you know, Canadian, or even North American manufacturers, you know, the Freedom Scientifics, the Humanwares, the Alvas, are still in Braille technology that's been used for 10/15 years. And they're still three \$4,000. Yep. So yeah. Makes no sense to me.

R

Rob Mineault 31:58

I mean, I guess it's, because, you know, despite the fact that the the technology is old, it's still it still costs the same for them to manufacture that, using that technology? Is that sort of the case?

S

Steve Barclay 32:13

Yeah, it's I think it's as much that you know, the fact that they've never reached an economy of scale on that type of thing. It's just, you know, it's it's such a specialized market. It'll, it'll take a shift in technology to do it. But yeah. Well, you're right, Ryan, we saw we've seen manufacturers come out with other Braille technologies. And how's that experience been?

R Ryan Fleury 32:43  
Not super fantastic. So far.

S Steve Barclay 32:46  
Exactly. Yeah. You know, we, we, when when, you know, companies like, you know, Vision and Orbit Research comes out with, with cheap Braille products were all over it. But when they proved to not be reliable, that is kind of tough, right? You know, we, we can't leave our customer saddled with something that's going to break down all the time. It's just not right.

R Ryan Fleury 33:10  
So bugs are still being worked out. So hopefully, it will evolve sooner rather than later.

S Steve Barclay 33:17  
Yeah, that's my hope. That's my hope.

R Rob Mineault 33:20  
And I'm just curious about that. So I mean, in general, what kind of failures? Like what are the source of the failures? Is it is it because of this actual other Braille technology that's, that's still kind of flaky? Or is it in the manufacturing? What sense do you have that that is the sort of the core of the problem?

S Steve Barclay 33:44  
Well, it's hard, it's hard for us to say for sure. I mean, we can, you know, we can certainly point to, you know, the the units that we have sold that we've had trouble with and say, Okay, well, you know, we've had numerous displays that have had dot problems, you know, dots stuck up, or dots stuck down. But then we've also had units that have failed entirely, you know, unit that will be, you know, plugging along one day working just fine. All of a sudden, next day, it's done. And, you know, we have we've had, we've had cases where we have sent multiple units to a customer, and they've all failed in one one way, shape or form and not after a long period of time, either. It's within, you know, in some cases has been within days, in some cases has been within a week or two. And, you know, in some cases, it's been, you know, a month but, but it's just failure after failure, you know. Orbit themselves, f you if you listen to to, you know, what they say in their public statements, they say they've got about a 5% failure rate. Well, honestly, we've had multiple failures of units that we have bought for clients, and I would say that we probably closer to 200% failure rate, because we've had to repeatedly fix the same devices

over and over. So, you know, obviously, it's not, it's not aligned. I lead with these very frank discussions with customers, because it's stuff they need to know, before deciding, okay, I'm gonna buy a, you know, a \$2,000 braille display instead of a \$4,000.

R

Rob Mineault 35:27

I mean, which is a big savings, sure, but still two grand is still a lot of money, especially if you're going to be buying something that isn't reliable, because that's the real key to it. When these devices, they, they're so important for day to day living, that, you know, just having it bust, and not being able to have a device for three weeks would be a huge impact for you if you're a student, or if you need it for work, right?

R

Ryan Fleury 35:54

Think if you're a deafblind client, right, that braille display is integral to probably everything you do all day long. Yeah. If you're without it for a week or two, what do you do? You hope hopefully, you have a loaner that you might be able to lend to them in the meantime, while it's being repaired. But not everybody does that.

S

Steve Barclay 36:15

Yeah, yeah. And we've, you know, we've we've had that example, just in the in the last two weeks, we had a client who is deafblind, who got a Orbit 20. And they're on their second Orbit 20. Because the first one failed, and this one just failed. So they're now getting a Brilliant 20. Is that, you know, it's a fair bit more expensive, but they they want something that's going to be reliable. So we're refunding them the Orbit, you know, give them a full refund and applying it towards the the other unit.

R

Rob Mineault 36:56

And that's got to be frustrating, though, because we're so close, we're so close to, you know, having these devices that maybe are a little bit more palatable price wise, but, you know, if the technology is just not there yet, maybe it's too soon.

S

Steve Barclay 37:12

Yeah, yeah. You know, I, I don't mind working with Orbit, because at least they've always kept the lines of communication open. You know, a while ago, we, we threw ourselves behind InnoVision. And we couldn't get answers from them. We couldn't get responses from them, they didn't seem to be on top of of the development cycle, you know, things like, you know, updating drivers and stuff for screen readers. And out of frustration, and the fact that we had units that were failing, we finally told our customers, right, well, we'll give you complete refunds on these things. And, you know, you can apply it to something else, if you like, or, you know, we'll just give you your money back. But we had to do that. And unfortunately, you know, they're, they're distributed through master distributor in the States, they agreed to take the

units back and pay us back for them. So we didn't lose a lot of money doing it, but we lost some, you know, with Orbit. I know we've lost money selling Orbit at this point. They're not high margin products, they are low margin products. They're, they're less expensive. And we spent a lot of money shipping them back and forth, and repairing them going across the border. We've now you know, bought a repair kit for Rick at Chaos, Technical Services so that he can do repairs in Canada rather than then ship them across the line all the time. But it's just been expense after expense to try and keep this line going. And, you know, I don't know how long I can keep keep that up.

**L** Lis Malone 38:47

Oh, Steve, you're a glutton for punishment.

**S** Steve Barclay 38:50

I am but I want these guys to succeed. We need those less expensive options, but we need them to be reliable. Yep. So you know, I'll, I'll support them as long as you know, they are working diligently to address the problem and, and God love the folks at Orbit Research. Like I said, they keep the lines of communication open and you know, they're always willing to talk. So, you know, I'll I'll keep plugging away.

**R** Rob Mineault 39:17

I'm like they're making sort of, like a next gen version of these devices. Are they just trying to keep up with are they just trying to keep their heads above water with with all of these issues that are coming up with the current generation?

**S** Steve Barclay 39:32

Well, again, to talk to them, their their experience is that they have about a 5% failure rate and they question things like, you know, what the hell are you guys doing up in Canada to devices? So, you know, I can't I can't tell him what the big differences are, you know, maybe it's just because we're cold and snowy and you know, get static more than they might in other parts of, you know, down in the States or something. But, you know, I can't, I can't put my finger on exactly why we would have a higher failure rate than anywhere else.

**R** Rob Mineault 40:08

It's all that chocolate from Tim Hortons Boston Creme Doughnuts and maple syrup. It's getting stuck in the Braille devices.

**S** Steve Barclay 40:16

Well, yeah, if you're doing that, then yeah, that's probably an issue. Also not covered by

warranty.

R

Rob Mineault 40:26

But it's delicious.

S

Steve Barclay 40:27

I saw, I saw a really cool little phone project company out of Australia. It's called the RealSam Pocket. And what they, what they've, what they're doing with this phone, is they're trying to make it entirely voice operated, and accessible to people who have who have vision loss. So they're targeting kind of a different market. Other than, you know, the folks who might learn a smartphone, and you know, all the swiping and stuff. So what they're targeting is they're targeting more the seniors market that wants something fairly simple. So they've got this, this phone, it's just a Samsung Galaxy 32 At this point, and you, you know, hook it up to whoever your mobile provider is. And this phone just has a big button on the bottom part of it that says 'tap to talk', you tap on that button, and you give it voice commands. And you can say things like, you know, send a message to so and so, call so and so, add a contact for so and so. And it will do this all entirely off voice and voice prompts. So it was pretty slick. It's not it's it's in the US now. Because of you know, all the regulations around cell phones, you've got to jump through all the hoops and stuff to to establish these things. So I'm not entirely sure what what it would take to get this into into Canada. But yeah, it was it was a really interesting take on on a cell phone and one that I think would be quite well adopted by an elderly crowd particular. Oh, another another one I should mention, too, that I didn't mention from from Orbit Research again, they've just come out with a product called the Orbit Speak. Which is essentially the same as their Orbit Writer, which was just a a Bluetooth Braille keyboard. But it's a little bit thicker, and it has speech output and note taking apps, clock and alarm, calendar, address book, calculator, book reader. And it's all speech output. So that was a neat little neat little device reminded me a lot of the of the old Braille & Speak from back in the day.

R

Ryan Fleury 43:00

Which I still have in my desk drawer. That works just fine.

S

Steve Barclay 43:04

Excellent.

R

Ryan Fleury 43:06

You betcha.

S

Steve Barclay 43:06

Five. Best engineering engineering

fine. Bias engineering engineering.

R

Rob Mineault 43:10

Man, they don't make them like that anymore, huh?

R

Ryan Fleury 43:12

No. No, they don't.

R

Rob Mineault 43:17

It's funny. Like not not to sound like old man yelling at clouds, but I was having this conversation with somebody before is that, you know, part of the problem is that a lot of devices these days are overly complicated, just to have like bells and whistles, but it makes them a lot more prone to breaking and like not being able to be able to be fixed easily. Even like appliances, like stoves, and stuff with a when everything's digital. And the thing has, you know, a motherboard inside when something like a you know, a burner goes out, it's much harder to fix than like on an old fashioned stove. Because I was thinking about that the the Braille device that you were mentioning before that has the etched buttons as opposed to like, the physical buttons, and I'm just wondering, like that decision to to make them that way. I wonder was that is that an aesthetic choice? Or is it a practical one?

S

Steve Barclay 44:15

I think it's meant to be a practical one. You know, it's it's one less moving component. And as such, you know, you don't have to worry about sheering keys off or anything like that. But, you know, it is it is a design choice and people will either I think love it or hate it.

R

Ryan Fleury 44:37

It is very different. Someone who has a Braille & Speak, is used to a Braille & Speak, is used to physical keys on a notetaker it like Steve mentioned earlier, there is a learning curve to it. And it is a very different sensation trying to Braille on a flat surface than it is you know, with physical body So it's unique, you know, but it is very usable, functional. And we'll just have to wait and see how it's received.

R

Rob Mineault 45:08

And I guess so the community will decide.

R

Ryan Fleury 45:11

waiting for the Orbit Speak to get more information about to because there's a lot of interest in

waiting for the Orbit Speak to get more information about it because there's a lot of interest in that little device. But you know, we don't have pricing yet. Supposedly, it's gonna support 40 languages, but we don't know which speech synthesizer they're using yet. I don't think, you know, they're working on licensing agreements and stuff. So I think you, Steve, I think you said they're hoping to come in under what, \$500 or \$800?

S Steve Barclay 45:36

I did not say one way or the other. I don't know.

R Ryan Fleury 45:38

Yeah, I heard it on another podcast. So it's gonna be pretty low cost.

S Steve Barclay 45:43

Yeah, that'd be cool. Is that we put it around. Well, if it was 800 US, that would put it just over 1000 Canadian.

R Ryan Fleury 45:53

Yeah. And I don't even think it would be that much. It'll be interesting to see when it comes out. Because like you said, it's gonna have Wi-Fi. SD cards. I think there are plans I heard as well for to be able to connect to online library services.

S Steve Barclay 46:06

Yes, yeah.

R Ryan Fleury 46:07

Yeah. Exciting. You might see more at the Summer shows like the NFP and ACB shows as well.

S Steve Barclay 46:15

Yeah. Yeah, I understand that it's starting to become more and more common for new for blindness products to be at those shows instead of CSUN. And it sounds like ATIA has really become more of the predominant show in North America now than than CSUN. Oh, interesting. Yeah. But it's in Florida, which is a long ways away.

R Ryan Fleury 46:42

It is. Yeah. But it's so sunny in Florida.

**S** Steve Barclay 46:45  
No, because they do it in January. That's true, too. It's no warmer.

**L** Lis Malone 46:51  
Oh, no, Florida is amazing. In January.

**R** Ryan Fleury 46:54  
I've only been there once.

**S** Steve Barclay 46:55  
Oh, the last time I was there. It was pretty chilly. There were oranges dropping off trees.

**R** Rob Mineault 47:03  
Alright, well, time for the most important CSUN question. How were the parties?

**S** Steve Barclay 47:11  
I never went to one.

**R** Rob Mineault 47:13  
What?

**S** Steve Barclay 47:14  
I did not go to a single party. Nobody invited me to one.

**R** Rob Mineault 47:18  
Wow. I thought you were party guy down there.

**S** Steve Barclay 47:22

I had I had one dinner out with the fabulous Kimberly from Low Vision International. And that was it. Had had to entertain myself otherwise.

R

Rob Mineault 47:36

Wow. I'm I'm disappointed.

L

Lis Malone 47:39

Do you think there just were not a lot of parties?

S

Steve Barclay 47:42

No, I think I'm just not invited.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:45

They just kind of I will be totally still kind of on the fence with a lot of people.

L

Lis Malone 47:54

That's just that's just rude. I'm sorry. That's rude. Absolutely. Totally rude. I think we need to start calling out these people.

R

Rob Mineault 48:02

Names. Yeah.

L

Lis Malone 48:03

We want to know who had the parties.

R

Rob Mineault 48:05

Yeah.

S

Steve Barclay 48:06

I know that there was there was a big group that went out for St. Patty's Day. I didn't didn't get an invite to that one. There was a company that ran an Escape Room.

R Ryan Fleury 48:17  
Don't get me started on that one.

L Lis Malone 48:19  
Yeah, that's weird. Yeah. So just start crashing.

R Rob Mineault 48:27  
Did you happen to wear your AT Banter Podcast hockey jersey? You know, maybe that would help.

S Steve Barclay 48:36  
I totally forgot to even take it with me.

R Ryan Fleury 48:38  
I forgot we had those. Yes.

L Lis Malone 48:42  
There's an AT Banter hockey jersey, which I don't have??

R Rob Mineault 48:46  
Oh no.

S Steve Barclay 48:49  
There there was a limited run of at manator hockey jerseys. The company that did them for us now has a minimum order considerably larger than the budget of AT Banter.

L Lis Malone 49:00  
I'm missing a Devils game right now for the show. And I don't have a jersey that's just that's harsh.

**S** Steve Barclay 49:08  
Well, it's okay. It is the Devils

**L** Lis Malone 49:09  
No I love my Devils. Don't be slamming my Devils. We will not be bashing my hockey team. Right. Well, I know that by the time this podcast drops, it'll be old news. But right now my my Devils are winning. They're beating the Leafs. No, they're not. Wait, that that score just changed. No, they're tied.

**R** Ryan Fleury 49:16  
Well, I think we're gonna have to try and get her Jersey some way some somehow.

**R** Rob Mineault 49:43  
All right. Well, I mean, actually, to be honest, are the it's the old logo, which

**S** Steve Barclay 49:47  
Oh, that's right. Oh, we need to do a whole hockey jersey redo.

**L** Lis Malone 49:52  
Yeah, we need. We need a new budget we need for the next next round of budgeting.

**R** Rob Mineault 49:57  
All right. Well, does. Anybody else have any questions? Steve, it sounds like it was a good time, Steve.

**S** Steve Barclay 50:03  
It wasn't. It was probably a CSUN I could have missed.

**R** Ryan Fleury 50:08  
But you didn't know that before you went.

**S** Steve Barclay 50:10  
I didn't. But did I mentioned the palm trees and blue sky?

**R** Rob Mineault 50:14  
It is worth it for that, sir. I was trying to put a positive spin on it. But all right, CSUN sucked. It's terrible. Steve not get invited to any parties. That's not cool, everybody. So are you going to go next year?

**S** Steve Barclay 50:29  
I might try ATIA next year. Is the Technology Industry Association Conference in Florida.

**R** Rob Mineault 50:36  
Well, there you go. So, so long CSUN.

**S** Steve Barclay 50:41  
Yuppers.

**L** Lis Malone 50:42  
Till next year?

**R** Rob Mineault 50:44  
Well, maybe maybe maybe sounds like Steve's heading for Florida.

**L** Lis Malone 50:48  
If they're lucky, and someone invites him to a damn party.

**R** Rob Mineault 50:51  
Nerds in Paradise.

**S** Steve Barclay 50:53  
Right. I'm not going unless I have a party invite.

**L** Lis Malone 50:58

You got to secure them before the conference. But that's just me.

**R** Rob Mineault 51:05

All right. Well, let's move on. I think we're almost ready to close this out. But before we do, guys, I saw this you actually, Ryan, you sent this to me. And I thought that we should maybe give it a plug and talk a little bit about it. But there's a concert coming up on April 16. Do you guys set this set this up and tell folks, what it's about?

**L** Lis Malone 51:30

Well, if you don't mind, right, I'll just jump in a little bit. So it's my understanding it's this concert that the the name of it is "We're with U" and that U is for Ukraine. And it's a it's a basically a performance to support Ukrainians and those who are blind and being affected by the the war that's taking place right now. And it is sponsored by it's the global blind community, which is comprised of the the World Blind Union in partnership with the NFB, and it's being aired through Mushroom FM. I don't have any a lot of information about Mushroom FM, this is my first time hearing about them. But it's a fully accessible tool that where you can actually access the concert itself. On April 16. So I think it's a it's a pretty exciting thing, because it's these blind performers that are all coming together and sort of virtually doing these performances from around the world.

**R** Ryan Fleury 52:41

Yeah, it's blind and partially sighted musicians that are singing along to backing tracks or, you know, pre recorded stuff that they've already recorded and have submitted. There is a an email address you can submit your presentations to. Also Mushroom FM is run by our friend of the show, Jonathan Mohsen, who most of audience will know it's been around a long time. It will also be available on other streaming avenues as well. We're just not sure yet because those details haven't been worked out.

**L** Lis Malone 53:12

So what Ryan doesn't know is that I actually submitted him he's gonna be playing the cowbell.

**R** Ryan Fleury 53:16

I submitted one of my songs. I did I submit "Make a Difference".



**R** Rob Mineault 53:21

Oh, that's so cool. Awesome.

**L** Lis Malone 53:23

I still want to kind of want you in a Spider Man costume playing the cowbell.

**R** Ryan Fleury 53:29

That's gonna be on my Tik Tok.

**L** Lis Malone 53:31

Okay, damn. Okay. Right.

**R** Rob Mineault 53:35

The amazing No, this is a really this is actually a really cool event.

**R** Ryan Fleury 53:39

Yeah, and it's a fundraiser so there will be methods of donations whether it's Visa or credit cards. They are working on also a phone line that you could call in to make donations to as well.

**R** Rob Mineault 53:50

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, so for right now. You know, we will check the show notes we'll leave a link to the mushroom FM page information page about this. But if anybody is out there and wants the address, it's mushroom FM. All one word.com/with you all one word?

**R** Ryan Fleury 54:15

Looking forward to it. Be very cool. Yep.

**L** Lis Malone 54:18

I want to go watch my Devils lose.

**R** Rob Mineault 54:21

Oh, how the tide has turned. You're not so confident now.

L

Lis Malone 54:25

Well you know I still love them.

R

Rob Mineault 54:28

Hey, listen, we live in Vancouver, we know full well what it's like to love losers.

S

Steve Barclay 54:37

Sadly true. And it's Yeah, and we're playing Colorado tonight. So that's not good. And we're starting our backup goalie.

R

Rob Mineault 54:47

So and every time we get really close to the winning the Stanley Cup we seem to riot, a riot. So it's a weird city. Are we two for two?

S

Steve Barclay 55:04

Yeah, yeah, two riots for two losses in the Cup.

R

Rob Mineault 55:11

I've never understood that. I don't hear that in any other city in North America where they just they burned down their own city because they lost the hockey game. actually

S

Steve Barclay 55:21

You'd be surprised how many times it's happened with different sports but yeah, in Vancouver, you know, it's it's a little bit more obvious because it's been 100% of the time.

R

Rob Mineault 55:37

No, that is true. The Europeans can get pretty crazy right about soccer.

R

Ryan Fleury 55:41

That's true.

**S** Steve Barclay 55:42

Oh, yeah, I was. I was in England, when you're when the UK lost to Germany in the Euro Cup. I don't think it was the finals. I think it was at one of the earlier rounds. But as they were losing the game, my wife and I started looking at each other going, we should probably go. And by the time we got home, we turned on the news and Piccadilly where we had just left was a riot.

**R** Rob Mineault 56:13

Okay, well, then. Hey, Lis. Yes? Where can people find us?

**L** Lis Malone 56:20

They can certainly find us on the web at [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com)

**R** Rob Mineault 56:25

Hey, did you know you can also reach us by email if you so desire at [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com)

**S** Steve Barclay 56:37

That was a little lightly struck there could have been more enthusiasm.

**R** Rob Mineault 56:41

That sounded like a glancing blow off the cowbell.

**L** Lis Malone 56:45

Oh, okay. That one came right through. Thank you. Okay.

**R** Rob Mineault 56:51

Linda heardthat one upstairs? Yeah.

**S** Steve Barclay 56:53

And on top of that, if people want to find us they can find us on social media because we are on both Facebook and Twitter. both toxic platforms. but we're there. So suck it up people.

R Ryan Fleury 57:05

And they can listen to us on Apple podcast, Google podcasts or wherever they listen to podcasts.

R Rob Mineault 57:11

Ah, okay. Well, listen, Steve, thanks so much for giving us that CSUN wrap round up. Interesting to hear what's what's going on there. I feel like we haven't had an actual tech a show we geek out about technology for quite a while so it's kind of it's kind of cool. Kind of kind of nice to revisit the old days

R Ryan Fleury 57:33

It's been you know, two years since it's been a tech show right due to COVID So yeah, glad to be back.

R Rob Mineault 57:40

Yeah, too bad it sucked. Just like the Devils. Were the Jersey Devils at CSUN? Did they have a booth?

R Ryan Fleury 57:55

They were recruiting new players. Sorry Lis.

L Lis Malone 58:04

I can take it. sorry

R Rob Mineault 58:07

Are you low vision? you'll be a perfect center!

S Steve Barclay 58:15

How much field of view? 4%? You can be a goalie

L Lis Malone 58:19



ES MATHS 00:10

Sorry you guys you guys can all go shock yourself!



Rob Mineault 58:29

All right. Well, that was fun. That was that was better than the actual show. enjoyed that. Thanks, everybody for listening in. And we will see everybody next week.