

# PODCAST Episode 375

Sat, Apr 06, 2024 4:42PM 1:14:06

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

csun, braille, products, ai, braille display, camera, cctv, cool, braille displays, called, glasses, year, ipad, vision, interesting, built, steve, company, line, good

## SPEAKERS

Lis Malone, Steve Barclay, Rob Mineault, Ryan Fleury

---

**R** Rob Mineault 00:11  
Welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

**S** Steve Barclay 00:25  
Banter, banter.

**R** Rob Mineault 00:28  
Hey, 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. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault. Joining me today as you can tell from the sweet sweet tones of that banter, banter - hey, look who it is. He's back. It's Mr. Steve Barclay.

**S** Steve Barclay 00:49  
I'm mostly back.

**R** Rob Mineault 00:52  
And also joining us, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

**R** Ryan Fleury 00:57  
Hello again.

R Rob Mineault 00:59  
And speaking of our Savior,

R Ryan Fleury 01:01  
Crabby pants

R Rob Mineault 01:04  
It's Ms. Lis Malone.

L Lis Malone 01:06  
Apparently I cannot tell a lie.

R Ryan Fleury 01:09  
Well, not today anyway.

L Lis Malone 01:13  
Not today.

R Rob Mineault 01:14  
I love it. Every intro, everybody gets a free an inside joke that they will not get because the mics weren't on yet. How is everybody? This is a loaded question, I know.

R Ryan Fleury 01:29  
I'm good. Thanks. I bought a new guitar amp this weekend.

R Rob Mineault 01:38  
How many do you have now?

R Ryan Fleury 01:40  
Just got one guitar amp and one bass amp.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:44  
Oh, see you didn't have an amp before.

**R** Ryan Fleury 01:46  
I did. I traded one for a new one.

**R** Rob Mineault 01:49  
Musicians, man. Trading this for that. buying new stuff. Everyone have a good weekend?

**S** Steve Barclay 02:01  
Yeah, it was nice for a weekend.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:03  
Yeah, right. Oh, man. It's coming off the four day weekend. It's hard. It's hard. You're still in vacation land?

**S** Steve Barclay 02:15  
Yeah. Somebody told me it was Tuesday today. That was weird.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:20  
Yeah. All right. That's it feels like a Monday masquerading around as a Tuesday.

**L** Lis Malone 02:27  
So all my answers are lies.

**R** Rob Mineault 02:30  
Oh, stop it. See, what else would you be doing if you weren't here? What better things do you have to do in your life then than to come on this show every week?

—

L Lis Malone 02:51  
Nearly nothing. Actually, that was the truth.

S Steve Barclay 03:01  
I could. You could be in Hawaii.

L Lis Malone 03:04  
No, I couldn't. I just did my taxes. So I can assure you there's no money to go to Hawaii.

S Steve Barclay 03:11  
Well, you probably don't want to go there now with that new law that they're talking about anyway.

R Rob Mineault 03:15  
What are they doing in Hawaii?

S Steve Barclay 03:19  
This new law that they're introducing that you're not allowed to laugh in public.

R Rob Mineault 03:24  
What?

S Steve Barclay 03:25  
Yeah, from now on, you have to keep it "a low ha"

R Rob Mineault 03:35  
Nice Dad joke! I can feel the ratings going up as we speak. Well done. Even took all of us by surprise. We didn't even see it coming. Without further ado, why don't we get this show on the road? What do you say?

R Ryan Fleury 03:54

Sure.

**R** Rob Mineault 03:56  
Well, Ryan.

**R** Ryan Fleury 03:58  
Yeah. Rob?

**R** Rob Mineault 03:59  
What the heck are we doing today?

**R** Ryan Fleury 04:02  
Well, today we are talking with Steve Barclay from Canadian Assistive Technologies, who recently returned from CSUN and to share all the goodies he brought back with them. So Steve, welcome back.

**S** Steve Barclay 04:13  
Well, thanks. Good to be here. Wish I hadn't picked up a bug on the plane on the way back, that sucked. I was just so happy though because I was in Montreal the week before. I was just so happy that I didn't pick anything up coming back from that one. That would have sucked even more. I'm mostly better now.

**R** Rob Mineault 04:39  
French germs are a little bit more obnoxious than California ones.

**S** Steve Barclay 04:46  
They come with pretense.

**R** Ryan Fleury 04:48  
We just lost our French audience.

**R** Rob Mineault 04:52

Just kidding Quebec, we love you Quebec.

S Steve Barclay 05:01

We do indeed. And I gotta say, Humanware treated us famously, when we were in Montreal. They were very, very nice and showed us a very good time while we're out there. And that was cool.

R Rob Mineault 05:15

Excellent. Yeah, I hear it's a lovely province and a lovely city.

S Steve Barclay 05:22

It is a lovely city, they, it's just so you know, it historically, it's one of the few cities in Canada that is, well, by our considerations, old. So it's nice to see the old architecture and, and the mix of the new art because it's very artsy city too,. Like they any any construction project has to put a certain amount of its budget towards art. So it's, it's a cool city.

R Rob Mineault 05:53

Well, let's talk CSUN. So just for people out there who may not be familiar with what the heck CSUN is. Steve, can you kind of just like, give us a little bit of an overview of what we're we're talking about?

S Steve Barclay 06:09

CSUN is a huge conference that is put on by California State University, Northridge. That's what the CSUN stands for. You get people from all over the world coming to CSUN to see new products and vendors coming to show new products. And you can either go there and buy the conference package, which gets you into as many presentations as you can handle. Or you can go there as I do every year and just get the free exhibit hall pass, and then go around and schmooze with the the exhibitors. Well, so every year I go to CSUN. And look around to see what else is out there new, find new vendors or new manufacturers, new startups who are showing up and try and pick up new and interesting products. So this year, there were a startling number of new products that were being released at CSUN. And I got to say, after the last two years, it was so much better. It covers a lot of low vision and blindness stuff. There's tons and tons of low vision and blindness stuff. They used to have all of the augmentative communication companies there, but they seem to have dropped out of it over the past few years. They're not doing that conference anymore. But there there is still a fair bit of stuff for physical disability as well at the conference, but this year, I mean, it was overwhelmingly low vision and blindness. Lots and lots of stuff. So I've got a whole list of of different companies to talk about who had and new products that they were showing at the show.

R

Rob Mineault 08:08

Okay, well, that's cool. Let's, let's dive in. What are you going to tell us about first?

S

Steve Barclay 08:14

Okay, let's start with low vision. Okay, so in no particular order, we'll start with Low Vision International. This is a Swedish company that we've we've been handling their products for a number of years. Love their products, they make just some really nice, nice, large print systems - your conventional Closed Circuit Television Systems. But they've been more and more targeting education. And they've had for the last few years a product called the Magnilink Tab, which is a Microsoft Surface tablet in a stand with a camera attached to it. And that camera has a optical zoom on it. And very, very good magnification range. And that camera can rotate almost 360 degrees. So it can do distance viewing, it can do reading off your table, so magnifying typical printed documents, and it can also do self viewing for you. And of course, being attached to a Microsoft Surface tablet, it's a full blown computer so you can you know, load your ZoomText, your JAWS, whatever on that on that tablet, and, you know, Word, Offices, all of those sorts of things. And you've got an all in one solution that is very, very easy to take down carry about wandering the halls of a school university with so this year, they released the Magnilink Itab, essentially exactly the same sort of thing, but on an iPad. So they now have an iPad in the stand with the camera and you can get this a couple of different ways. First off, the software is free, the Magnilink software for the iPad is free. You can go on the Apple Store, download it any old time, it'll give you some basic functions through the camera of your your iPad itself. So you can make your iPad function like a like a CCTV to a certain extent. It also supports some of their older cameras. So if you have a Magnilink S camera, which is one of their fold up, portable cameras, you can plug that into your iPad, and it'll use that camera as well. But then, of course, you can also get it as a full blown package. Or you can get just a device which comes with a camera and a battery. And it'll Wi-Fi connect to your iPad as well. Lots of lots of options there. The other thing that they were showing was a 27 inch version of their Vision desktop CCTV. So this is a conventional CCTV that has, you know, an x-y table on the bottom that you put your document on, you slide it around, and it gets magnified up onto a screen. But now they've got a 27 inch screen. It's always surprised me that so few companies had 27 inches as an option for further screen size. For years, Enhanced Vision Systems with their Acrobat 27 stood alone in in having a 27 inch screen. And it never made any sense to me that other people weren't using these bigger screens. Because for a lot of people with central vision loss, that that extra width allows them a little bit more usage of their peripheral vision, and can be really, really useful. So that was cool to see. That one can also be purchased with a OCR option, so you can actually have it read documents to you as well. And then the other thing that they were showing, which was pretty cool was they have what they're calling a Magnilink Air Go Wireless. So they came up with a Magnilink Air a couple years ago, and it is a CCTV system that's designed to mount into the ceiling. So you you pop out one of your ceiling tiles and one of those drop ceilings, you drop this thing in, and you can get either a single camera or dual camera system. So you can have one camera that does everything. Or you can have one camera that's dedicated to pointing down directly below where that cameras installed. So like a desk, or something. And then the other camera can do close up viewing, but it can also do distance viewing. So you can pan around the room with it and you know, watch presentation at the front of the room. It's all done completely wirelessly, you can control it from your you connect up to its Wi Fi and you run the app, and you can control the camera through the app. And you can have multiple people attached to it. And then you can fight over who gets to control the camera, I guess. But, but you can have multiple people all sharing the same feed.

So the Magnilink Air Go is the newest addition to this line. And instead of being a ceiling mounted system, it's a round tube that you basically carry around and you plop down on a surface somewhere. And it gives you a 20 times optical zoom. And you can again remote control it from your computer, so you can watch a presentation. It doesn't have to be sitting at your desk, it could be halfway across the room from you, and you can just control it remotely.

R

Rob Mineault 13:57

What's the best use case scenario for that? Would that be something that sort of would be really good for students?

S

Steve Barclay 14:03

Yeah, if you were, you know, say you're a student that's going to a lecture or something where they're doing demonstrations at the front of the room. That's the use case scenario for it. You know, you want to be able to zoom in and out and, and see what's going on. So that was really cool. So yeah, Low Vision International, terrific company. People love working with them. Really neat products. And they just keep keep pounding away at them. So along those same lines, there's another company Zoomax. So they make a whole range of CCTVs. And we've never carried their products because a lot of their products were remarkably similar to other products that we already had. Or in some cases when they first started up they were pretty much direct knockoffs of the products that we had. But they were showing what they're calling now their Snowpad. And the Snowpad is another iPad stand with a distance camera attached to it. So you saw it in your iPad and you've got distance viewing through your iPad as well as their app for magnifying through the camera on the iPad itself does up to 32 times magnification also does OCR. The only part that I'm kind of dubious about is their camera is only two megapixel camera. So I don't know how good your OCR is gonna be through two megapixel camera. But it was an interesting product to see, people are starting to use the iPad more in these sorts of solutions, whereas before it was sort of an outlier. Like they didn't have a lot of stuff that interface through the iPad. So now they're starting to show up regularly.

R

Ryan Fleury 15:51

I think that might be though the new iPads have USB C now right, which has really opened the doors.

S

Steve Barclay 15:57

Yeah, it makes it a lot easier to connect certainly to them. And in a lot of these cases to like the LVI product, it probably the Zoomax product as well, you have to have an iPad that has a M2 chips in it to use it. Because that's that's the only level of iPad I guess that that they're supporting. So then I saw a company called Irie-AT. They're an Irish company. So I know these guys, because they have a product called the Cloverbook, which is a CCTV system that is very, very popular in schools. The CloverBook is, again, a fold up CCTV system. But they've got a tiny



little distance camera attached to it. So it's very small, very compact. And it also offers a dual display option. So you can have one display that is sitting there showing you your close up, and one display sitting there showing your far away. You can use I believe, you can use the second display for a computer monitor as well. So quite a flexible system. And so again, I know these guys because they've they've been doing very very well as my competition. So the other thing that they were showing there was a beautiful line of braille displays from a company called the EuroBraille. I looked at EuroBraille years ago, and they did have some gorgeous braille displays. They were very, very nice beautiful design, but because they were European built, they were bloody expensive compared to everything that was North American built, so we never bothered to pick up that that line. Well now, I guess they've developed a line called BNote braille displays. And it's their their latest generation and they've they've brought these back into the realm of affordability I guess you can say for the North American market. So their USB Bluetooth is screen reader compatible, Of course, cursor routing, keys, boat, 15 hour battery life. They've got bumpers built all around them, so they you know, sort of shock absorbers in case they get knocked off, Perkins keypad on on the top of them. And a built in speakers and earphone and a two year warranty. So really, really nice Braille display. So I'm going to be I'm going to be talking to those guys about that Braille display. I think that's that's pretty slick.

R

Ryan Fleury 19:06

Are they competitively priced with the Humanware and HIMS and Freedoms?

S

Steve Barclay 19:10

Yeah, I think they're a little bit cheaper than the Humanware display. Now that may not be true in Canada because I know Humanware does keep their prices a little bit lower in Canada than they do in the US market. So we'll we'll have to see. Well depending on the feature set too it might be right for somebody, whereas the Brailliant might not be. Yeah Fair enough. So I got to see two products from TrySight. TrySight is a Toronto based company that we've been dealing with for a while. They have been making a peer distance viewing camera called the Magnibot for a while. And I say, I shouldn't say pure distance viewing camera, they do have a stand you can get for it to do close up doing with it. But I don't think it performs particularly well as a close up viewing camera. But when I was at the Children's Low Vision Clinic, I used to get asked all the time for just a straight distance viewing option for students who didn't require close up support to read, because they could generally accommodate just by getting real close to what they had to read. But they wanted something that they could use as a distance camera to see what was going on on the blackboard. So the MagniBot filled that that role. But again, the close up view wasn't great, the distance view was great. And again, this is a Wireless product. This is entirely controlled through an app, you download the app or actually sorry, in their case, you join the Wi Fi for them through a particular URL. And you get your view through your browser. And you can you can control the camera through your browser, as well. But what they were what they were showing at the show was they were showing the next generation MagniBot camera. And the next generation MagniBot camera has two cameras, it's got one for doing the distance. And it's got a fold out camera for doing your close up. It's a very, very small package the close up camera, it was quite impressive, because it was only probably maybe seven or eight inches off the table surface. But it could still pick up an entire page of print and magnify it. So that was that was pretty neat. They were also showing, they're going after the the entry level market for CCTV desktops. So they have a 24 inch desktop CCTV. The same type that you

know, throw your document underneath it, it magnifies up onto the screen, but they did away with the XY table to keep it cheap. It's just got a platform, you just slide your paper around on the platform. But there's a market there for that there's a market for a less expensive, full size CCTV, right? You know, without all of the bells and whistles that people tend to pile into these things these days. I think they'll I think they'll do really well with that with that camera. And as soon as they are officially in production, I'll be getting one into put into the store. I will also I should mention the LVI one the big 27 inch, I've already ordered one of those to put in the store and the iPad solution I've ordered to put in the store as well. So they will be part of our demo pool and part of our store. Let's talk about QD Laser.

R

Rob Mineault 23:08

This sounds exotic.

S

Steve Barclay 23:10

Yes, there were there were frickin lasers at the show. I always like when there's lasers. Lasers make me happy. So QD Laser, what they're doing is they're making a laser based viewfinder. The way it works normally if you're looking through a viewfinder on a camera, for example, you're going to see a little tiny screen there. And that little screen is going to show you what the image is coming through the camera. In the case of this, you're doing exactly the same thing, only instead of looking at a screen a laser is drawing what you're seeing directly onto the back of your eye. Not kidding.

R

Rob Mineault 24:05

What?

S

Steve Barclay 24:06

Yeah, it's a very, very low power laser. It's uh, apparently, you know, completely harmless to the eye, but it's drawing directly to the back of the eye. So for somebody who has some sort of condition where their lens is messed up, it's basically bypassing the lens and it's going straight to the back of the eye. So you might have a cataract, for example, which is interfering with your vision. Not not no more, it's being drawn directly to the back of your eye. It's really cool.

L

Lis Malone 24:47

How is it that this laser can penetrate but not harm the retina?

S

Steve Barclay 24:58

I don't know. It's really funky and if you if you go onto their website, QDlaser.com, there's plenty of information there. Make sure you hit the English link at the top.

L Lis Malone 25:20  
I'd like to know which government says that this is harmless.

S Steve Barclay 25:24  
The US government. They've released a, they've released a package. They've released it in the States and it's basically a retina projection camera kit that you socket a Sony camera into and you have a camera with a laser viewfinder attached to it.

L Lis Malone 25:58  
The same government that said it was okay for us to eat red dye number three.

S Steve Barclay 26:04  
Right.

L Lis Malone 26:07  
Just making sure,

R Rob Mineault 26:30  
So literally, what you're saying is that for certain eye conditions, this would basically like not cure that condition by like, you would essentially be able to, like, see the images from this camera. Despite the fact that you've got cataracts.

R Ryan Fleury 26:53  
Yeah, that's wild. That's wild.

S Steve Barclay 26:55  
Yeah, yeah, it is. It is really wild. It's, it's pretty cool.

R Rob Mineault 27:00  
Wow.

**L** Lis Malone 27:02  
How much does this cost something like this cost? I'm just curious, do they say? Because I'm thinking the cataract surgery is cheaper.

**S** Steve Barclay 27:13  
I don't think you'd buy I get a lot of people who were cataract surgery eligible who are going to go out and buy one of these things. But I want to say it was around \$5,000.

**R** Rob Mineault 27:25  
So this sounds like this is a prototype. They don't have this product yet?

**S** Steve Barclay 27:32  
They do. They do they have it. They have it in that camera. They've they also were showing what they're calling Retisa OnHand, which is just the viewfinder.

**R** Rob Mineault 27:47  
So this technology works, this is gonna be something that other companies or these guys, whatever they they're involved in, develop.

**S** Steve Barclay 27:58  
So they're, they're adapting this in a number of different ways in different different models. So there's like a, you know, a handheld version of it. There's one that's built onto a pair of glasses so that you can look through it on a pair of glasses. They've got the one in the camera. But yeah, for certain for certain eye conditions. could be it could be quite powerful.

**R** Rob Mineault 28:24  
Something to keep an eye on for sure. That's definitely some emerging technology.

**S** Steve Barclay 28:28  
Yeah. I saw them first last year, I think and it was it was pretty cool then, but now they're starting to really kind of move forward with it and try and adapt in different ways. So very cool. Who else we got here? I don't even know how to how to pronounce this. Rebokeh. So this one

pretty straightforward. It's an app for your iPhone, turns your iPhone into a CCTV. There's a free version. And if he wants the more advanced version of it, you can pay for it. But you can get it free right now on the on the both for the iPad and the iPhone on the Apple store.

R

Rob Mineault 29:34

That's pretty cool too. I feel like there's been magnification software for for iOS.

S

Steve Barclay 29:46

There's a bunch of them out there. There's a whole bunch of different different magnification programs out there but most of them are paid. A lot of them are giving it to you for free and the ones that might be out there for free are pretty rudimentary. So this one, the basic version of it, it limits the number of different color contrasts that you can use. There's a couple of minor tweaks that you get when you upgrade. They also have a waitlist on their website to sign up for Android.

R

Ryan Fleury 30:20

I can see more and more apps focusing in on the tablets and phone market, you know, the phones, like my iPhone 15, I think it's got, I don't know, three or four different camera lenses built into it, right, macro lens, zoom lens, photographic lens, whatever, and massive zoom abilities. So they're getting so good. Yeah, that an app would for a lot of people might be all you need.

R

Rob Mineault 30:46

For sure. That must make a lot of manufacturers out there break out into a cold sweat, though.

S

Steve Barclay 30:50

Well, good, good. I mean, anything that challenges the manufacturers and makes them do something new. That's all good. If, if all of a sudden your iPhone can be a better CCTV than what's being manufactured for hundreds of dollars more, then, you know, you deserve to be pushed out of the marketplace, right? Yeah, you should have written the app yourself, you silly.

R

Rob Mineault 31:21

And hey, if it brings the price point down for some of this stuff, then it was great for the community too.

S

Steve Barclay 31:26

Yeah, along those lines, Orbit Research. And this is sort of crossing the line between the low vision and blindness because Orbit is now doing both. They have a new line of video magnifiers called the Magna line there and they're quite cheap by comparison to a lot of the stuff that's on the market. And they've gotten in three, four and five inch screen sizes. I might bring in the four and the five, I'm probably not bringing the three because my experience with three inch video magnifiers is that nobody wants them. But they had a quite a quite a nice and inexpensive line of little video magnifiers. So let's let's cross over with Orbit over to the blindness side, because they were showing a bunch of bunch of stuff there. They were showing the Orbit Slate 520. So five lines 20 cells wide of Braille. They were showing the Orbit Slate 340, which was three lines of 40 cells. And then they had their Graffiti Graphics Tablet, which has been out for a while, which is it's set up for graphics, I don't remember exactly what the resolution is of it. But it's interesting in that their, their pins on that graphics display can be at multiple different heights. So you can you can really tailor a tactile graphic with, you know, texture and depth. And then they were showing what they're calling the Graffiti Plus, which is the Graffiti tablet, but they've added a 40 cell braille display at the bottom of it as well. So you can have conventional Braille on it also. And then they were showing the Optima, which is a all in one Windows computer with a 40 cell Braille display. So it looks if anybody's familiar with it. It looks like a Mantis Braille display, but it's it's got a full blown Windows computer in there as well.

R

Ryan Fleury 33:37

Wasn't this going to be their modular one where you could swap out braille displays for the traditional pins?

S

Steve Barclay 33:44

Yeah, you can get it either with their Braille cells or you can get it with the more traditional piezoelectric Braille cells, right? Yeah, you can go you can go either direction on that. Yeah, and it looks it looks very nice. Yeah. You know, I'm still after after having been burned with my first orbit experience, bringing in the 40 cell Braille display. And then having just repeated failure after failure after failure after failure of that Braille display, to the point where I ended up refunding everybody who ever bought one from me with the exception of one person, my demo, which worked flawlessly and continues to work flawlessly, to this day. The production ones, not so much the demo perfect. I don't know why. Anyways, that's the only one that's out in the world these days. Yeah, I might give them another chance. But I'm gonna have to have a very serious conversation with the owner there about if if things go sideways - I'm not paying for it this time.

R

Ryan Fleury 34:54

They come up with the Orbit speak as well.

S

Steve Barclay 34:57

Yes, sorry. I forgot even to mention it. Yes. The Orbit Speak was there as well. I didn't I didn't play with it a lot. But yes, it was there. Okay

play with it a lot. But yes, it was there. Okay.

R

Rob Mineault 35:06

Well wait, what's the Orbit Speak?

S

Steve Barclay 35:08

It's basically a little small voice output only notetaker.

R

Rob Mineault 35:14

Oh, interesting. So now refresh my memory here. And so the Orbit, these are the guys that that are using the electronic Braille technology that is different from standard electronic braille displays, right?

S

Steve Barclay 35:31

Yeah, they have their own way of doing Braille. I'm not exactly sure how theirs works.

R

Rob Mineault 35:37

Is it something like magnets or something?

S

Steve Barclay 35:39

Could be magnets? Yeah. I mean, with the piezoelectric technology, you can actually, with certain displays, at least you can tune our firm, you want the braille to feel like you can make it soft, you can make it very rigid. They always refer to theirs as sign quality. So it's basically harder than hell. It is sharp dots. It is sharp, it is solid. And it doesn't have any sponginess to it at all. So I think it could be magnets could be something else. I'm not exactly sure how they're doing it.

R

Rob Mineault 36:16

But the way that they're doing it, though, it allows them to sort of bring the price point for their products down. Is that right?

S

Steve Barclay 36:23

Yeah, it is considerably cheaper than piezoelectric braille display technology.

R

Rob Mineault 36:28

Cool. Well, again, that's what that's what the market kind of needs, right? People need options.

S

Steve Barclay 36:32

So long, as they are so reliable, right? Because nobody wants an unreliable Braille display.

R

Rob Mineault 36:39

So a lot of these different orbits, then are they mainly just sort of bringing bringing like sort of creating like a sort of mid range and low range price points, just based on the number of cells?

S

Steve Barclay 36:53

Yeah, like you can buy their three line 40 cell display, for about what you would pay for a single line piezoelectric body cell display.

R

Ryan Fleury 37:02

Do you know if the screen reader manufacturers are working on driver support for those multi line displays? Because we're still waiting for that.

S

Steve Barclay 37:09

Yeah, I'm told that they are working on it, but it's not there yet. So I don't I don't know when that when that arrives. So then we saw our old friends at HIMS. HIMS is a South Korean manufacturer of assistive tech. Some people might know them, for their SensePlayer Talking Book player. Some people might know them for their QBraile Braille display, which is a 40 cell braille display that has a Braille keyboard on it. But it also has every function key that you would find on a keyboard on the surface of the of the Braille display, which is very cool, because you can completely control your computer from the Braille display. You don't have to be going back and forth between the keyboard and the the Braille display. So at this show, they were showing their latest product called Braille eMotion. And the Braille eMotion is once again, them and Humanware getting into a fight. Its features are very, very similar to the Humanware Brailliant 40X, which has been over a while. I can't tell you a whole lot more about it than than that right now. But it does have speech output, like the 40x. You know, it's got speakers on it ...

R

Ryan Fleury 38:40

Bluetooth, notepad,



S

Steve Barclay 38:42

All of that stuff. Now, interestingly, neither of these guys, either Humanware nor HIMS, has put email in on that device, which I think is really missing an opportunity. And Humanware heard about it from not just me from others at the meetings that I was at in Montreal. HIMS heard it from me at CSUN. Whether or not it gets heard and acted on or not, I don't know, but I really think they should include email, and web browsing on those things, you know. But then they start saying, well, what about our notetakers? It's like, well, okay, you got your notetakers, but those are primarily education products. Those are for people who want you know, a calculator, they want graphic processors, spreadsheets, all that stuff. You could put email in a browser into these braille displays right now, and you would increase your market share, I think, but that's just my thought.

R

Ryan Fleury 39:51

Is the eMotion available now?

S

Steve Barclay 39:53

No, it's still preorder right now. Okay. So let's talk about Envision AI. So Envision AI came to me a couple years back and said, hey, we want you to handle the product. But I went oh, sure I'll try it out. Send me one, and I'll play with it. So they sent me one. And I couldn't get it to work with my phone.

R

Rob Mineault 40:13

Wait, wait, what is it?

S

Steve Barclay 40:14

Okay, so So Envision AI, it's two things. It's an app. And it is also. Smart Glasses. So yeah, so it's Google Glasses that tie into your phone that run the app. And you can control everything through through the glasses as well. So you can, you can see the glasses have a camera on the front of it, they've got a little tiny visual display, which a lot of people wouldn't even be able to see. But, but you can swipe and tap on the side of the glasses to control them. And through the app, you can do things like OCR, so you can have it read text to you. So and that could be text in the distance, it could be text close up, you can have it recognize faces, bills, colors, barcodes, you can also use it with the Aira service. So you can connect to an Aira agent, they can see through your glasses that what you're looking at, and instructions. But the latest thing that they've added to it is the AI. And the AI is really cool.

R

Rob Mineault 41:45

This is great.

S

Steve Barclay 41:47

Okay, yeah, so this was one of the things that was all over the place at the show was people using AI in different ways. So in the case of the Envision glasses, the AI is taking the place of you know, maybe calling that Aira agent. And you can ask questions, and you can teach it to get to know you better as well. So you can tell it, for example, hey, you know, I'm allergic to seafood - read me this menu and tell me what I can eat. And it will look at that menu, it'll analyze it to figure out what's got seafood in it. And it'll tell you just the items that don't have seafood in it. So really, really cool to see how these guys are starting to bring AI into the picture here to do these sorts of tasks. And there are products that have used AI in the past, like the the Orcam, for example, has rudimentary AI built into it to describe scenes and things like that. But it's an offline AI model. It's not connecting to the internet and getting the full use of it. So the Orcam glasses are very quick to respond, but their response may not be entirely useful. The Envision glasses, they take a little bit longer to respond, but the responses that they give you are very detailed, much more accurate. Extremely interesting to see the direction this is taking. And with the rate that AI is progressing right now, this is only going to get better. So we now have the Envision glasses in the store. And we will be doing the moving moving forward here.

R

Rob Mineault 43:40

Wow, that's amazing. Wow, that's really cool. I guess maybe this is something that they eventually could do, but like stuff like object recognition.

S

Steve Barclay 43:50

They do. They do. You can you can tell things like find my keys.

R

Rob Mineault 43:55

So get to the point where you can like wear them while you're getting dressed and it can be like you're not going to wear that shirt, are you?

S

Steve Barclay 44:06

Would you like to disable wife mode? Yeah, so along those lines, there was a new company there that I'd never run across before called Seleste. And they also have smart glasses. But their smart glasses are going on a different kind of model. The glasses are \$149 US and they're offering a \$49 a month service to go alongside that. So the glasses themselves have an eight megapixel camera built into them. And they look like a pair of glasses. They don't look really all that different at all. They've got I believe it's bone conduction technology on the side for speech output, but you can do through them OCR. And they have an AI assistant called Ella and you can ask Ella different things. And again, Ella has got all of this intelligence built into it, which is very similar to what Envision AI is doing. So right now the Seleste is only working with iPhone

you have to have that data connection the same same as with the Envision glasses. You have to have that data collect connection for the AI features, but they're, they're based in Vancouver.

R

Rob Mineault 45:39

Wow, that's impressive. \$150.

S

Steve Barclay 45:43

Yeah, US.

R

Rob Mineault 45:45

It's still that's that's pretty cheaper for smart glasses, isn't it?

S

Steve Barclay 45:49

Yeah, exactly.

R

Ryan Fleury 45:51

Did you try them?

S

Steve Barclay 45:54

I wore them I asked a couple of questions. I asked him to describe the room to me. And it did a very good job of describing the room to me. I had read some print to me.

R

Rob Mineault 46:04

Oh, wow. Okay, that's pretty cool. Are you gonna pick those up?

S

Steve Barclay 46:07

I'm gonna have to have a conversation with them about., but yeah, I'd love to. I'd love to pick them up. So then, there were also in there a bunch of different mobility technologies. For some reason, somebody somewhere decided that every blind person needs to have shit vibrating on them. And I don't know why they keep coming back to this. There's, a lot of there's a lot of vibrator tech out there. There was a company called Ashirase. Now what these are, are, these are vibrators that attach to your shoes.

R Ryan Fleury 47:12  
Haptic shoes again?

S Steve Barclay 47:13  
Haptic shoes. Yep. This is you have this little insert that goes inside your shoe. There's a little vibrating thing that sits on the outside of it. It connects to your GPS, and it will vibrate left and right to tell you where to turn.

R Ryan Fleury 47:26  
How's it do in the snow?

S Steve Barclay 47:28  
No idea. Alright, yeah, I just looked at it. And good luck, buddy. It's not the dumbest idea that I've seen in this field. But it's, it's up there and closing in on it. I think what the problem is for a lot of these companies is that they, they roll these products out in front of people who have never seen products like that before. They don't they don't take them to, you know, people who've been been, you know, tossing about in this industry for 30 plus years. Yeah, they take them to, you know, a high school or a university or something. And people go, Wow, that's really cool. It's the neatest thing I've ever seen. Yeah, the vast number of haptic feedback products that has come before them. Yeah. But on the flip side of that, is a company called New Haptics. Now these guys were kind of interesting, because what they're doing isn't haptics, in the sense that we know haptics. What they're doing is a multi line braille display that is being pneumatically driven. So it's actually using air compressed air to power the Braille display. Now, it's not small, it's not particularly portable. But it is right now three lines of 20 cells wide of braille, and it functions pretty well. And if it can keep the cost low on a Braille device, more power to them.

R Ryan Fleury 49:26  
So what are they using to drive the Braille are these based on Android or Linux or they have a screen reader? Like what's what's driving the Braille?

S Steve Barclay 49:35  
Right now? I believe it's all standalone. It's like a standalone computer system. They haven't gotten any screen reading support at the moment so far as I know. But it was interesting. Yeah, it was interesting to see as a concept of okay, well, here's, here's a pneumatic Braille display, you know, it's like, nobody's nobody's done that that I've seen

R Ryan Fleury 49:59  
Was it quiet?

S Steve Barclay 50:01  
It was. Yeah, I would have I would have expected to hear, you know, some sound from a compressor or something. But there was none of that. There was a, there was a the braille display itself and then there was a line running off to a little box. And that box was the compressor. And I didn't hear anything from it. Now mind you, it was a noisy show, maybe you hear more when when, you know, it was quiet or something. But no, it was. It was working quite well. And just an interesting concept.

R Rob Mineault 50:34  
And where are they with it? Is all still just your prototype?

S Steve Barclay 50:39  
Yeah, I don't think got a commercial product at the at the moment. I think they're they're still in development phase right now. But you know, they're they're working on it.

R Rob Mineault 50:51  
Yeah, that's cool. I mean, listen, any, if they're busy trying some different different stuff to try to drive drive these devices, again, I think that that's, that's great. It's about time someone thought of some new stuff and new ways to do it.

S Steve Barclay 51:04  
Yeah. And, you know, if they're driving three lines of 20 cells, they're they're able to do 40 cells, no problem, they're able to do 60 cells, no problem. This could be a cheap way to have desktop Braille available to somebody if it gets fully developed. So it'll be it'll be really interesting to see how those guys move forward. Along the Braille lines again, there was a company there called PaigeBraille. What they're doing, and I found it kind of funny, because - oh, by the way, Ryan, Bobby Lee says hi.

R Ryan Fleury 51:49  
Bobby Lee?

S Steve Barclay 51:50

Used to work for Humanware he's now working down in down in Texas. I ran into him at the Humanware meetings. And then I ran into him again at CSUN. And when I ran into him at CSUN, we were chatting and he said, have you seen anything interesting? And I said, Well, yeah, you know, there's these guys just behind you here at this booth called Paige Connect. And what they're doing is they're making a little daughterboard that you stick underneath a Perkins classic braille. And it gives you a link to a computer. And he goes, oh, sort of like VTech was doing back in the day just like that? And that tweaked a barely alive brain cells that went, holy shit, yeah, that back in the day! Vtech made a little plate that you put on the bottom of Perkins Braille that had photo interrupters in it. And when you brailled on the Braille display, it would produce a print copy on a print printer, that was hooked up to a dot matrix printer. So when you filled the line, all of a sudden, it would print out on your dot matrix printer, a line of text corresponding to the Braille that you've just done. Or if you had entered twice, it would it would spit out the line that you were working on. These guys are doing exactly the same thing. They've got exactly the same concept. It's photo interrupters and a daughterboard that goes on the bottom of Perkins Braille The difference is of course, that now you can USB it to a computer and you can have training stuff there to teach people the basics of the Braille code, but you're actually teaching them the basics of the Braille code on the ubiquitous Perkins Braille. So it was it was both a blast from the past as well as an update to previous product. Now the one thing that that I kind of worry about for these guys is that would have been patented by Vtech back in the day. Vtech sold to Telesensory, Telesensory got sold to the Blaizes, the Blaizes got sold the Freedom Scientific and Freedom Scientific got sold to Vispero. Somewhere along this chain Vispero has a patent for that very technology. I believe they could potentially run afoul of a patent, unless that patent is expired or something. Yeah, I don't know. Not sure how all that works. But yeah, simple concept. And was was working very well. Couple of young guys fresh out of university, you know, heavy English accents at a conference in California. They were they were obviously exhausted and happy as hell. So that takes us to other other stuff. All right, how many smart canes did you see? Oh, sorry. I didn't even get into the canes. I got to see Glide at work. In the booth for Glide, they had a monitor that was hooked up to one of the Glides. And it was showing how this thing plots a route. Now at a conference, it was really interesting, because there's all these people standing around people moving around in this thing is sitting there actively trying to plot a path between all these idiots who are getting in his way. And it was really cool to just see it. You know, okay, we're gonna go this way. No, that guy just walked in front, okay, we're gonna go this way. Okay, there's a dog in the way there, we're gonna go that way. And it was constantly updating which way it was gonna go to take you through this crowd of people. It was really slick. I was so I was so impressed with it. You know, for I can see that having major applications in public spaces. Like, hey, you need to go to Gate 25 at the airport, grab onto this. It'll take you there. I can see that as as a future service in an airport, for example. I could see it in, you know, a big office space to navigate around inside an office space. It'll take me to Kathy's office. It's got a lot of potential I think the way that they're going about it is really smart. It's one of the few it's one of the only mobility prospects I've gotten excited about in the in the last while. I think it does have some some real potential. I saw the WeWalk cane guys at the show. I never got near them. I was swamped the entire time. People want to see that product. Yeah, people were always around their booth.

R

Ryan Fleury 56:39

Yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 57:16

I'm just going to jump in for some self promotion. So if people want to learn a little bit more about the Glide, we did have them on back in January. Episode 364, Amos Miller and Glide. So go check that out if you want to learn more about Glide, because it does sound really cool. It was really cool when he pitched it. And now that you've seen it. So Steve, would you sell it when that goes to market? Was that something that you would carry?

S

Steve Barclay 58:11

Yeah, yeah. 100%.

R

Rob Mineault 58:15

We got a big response after that, that episode. Actually, a lot of people reached out and was asking about it. So people seem to be excited about it.

S

Steve Barclay 58:25

So I got two companies left, that I saw there. And these are both in the other category. These aren't Low Vision, or Blindness companies, these are companies doing different things. One of them is a company called Audible Sight. And Audible Sight is doing video description using AI. And it was really interesting to see on a couple of points. One point was just to see how the AI dealt with different video things and how it broke down different video things. Because I've never seen a better example of what AI can do just just thrown in front of me. Like when you're when you're looking at some of the other AI or AI products, you say, okay, describe a room to me, and the room will get described to you. And it might say okay, there's a group of people over here, it looks like we're at a conference. There's people standing at a booth, there's a sign overhead that reads this. But when you throw a video at an AI, and you say, okay, AI describe this video, and you see the output from that, it's really a bigger test of what AI can describe, and it's getting pretty darn good. Now, on its own, you probably wouldn't want to take and just throw a video at it and say there you go, there's your described video, right? But what they do is they break down the description, they put it in a little sidebar, and you can go through the description, you can edit the description, you can tweak the description, but what it's doing is it's doing all of the heavy lifting for you. It's saying, okay, you know, here's the bulk of the description of that video, and you can tweak it however you want to. And then they run it through synthetic speech. the synthetic speech is unbelievable quality. This synthetic speech they're using, I'm not sure whose speech it is. But it sounds human, like, really, really human. And I was very impressed, I didn't expect to be impressed by it, I expected to be, you know, sort of meh. But no, it was pretty great. And they also have a free plan for for individuals. So you can get 10 free minutes when you create an account with them. And then you get an additional five free minutes every month, you get four voices that you can use out of their collection of voices. And, and that's it, you can get right now they've got an introductory special on their professional plan, which is 99 bucks a month, you have to pay for it annually. So you gotta sign up for a year that. So 12 times that for the year. And that gets you 15 voices gives you all the access to the the different editing tools and so forth. And then they have Enterprise and Government and Educational licenses on top of that. And then you've got to you've got to

work, you got to work all that stuff out with their I was I was very surprised to see just how well it did with with audio description. It really does give me hope that, you know, at some point in the future there, there will be a tool that people will be able to say that movie in 1944. Yeah, I want to I want to watch that movie from 1944 and have it audio described to me. Yeah.

L Lis Malone 1:02:23  
\$99 a year or a month?

S Steve Barclay 1:02:25  
A month.

R Ryan Fleury 1:02:27  
Yeah. Does it know what to describe? Or what you want described, because right now we're relying on script writers to decipher that for us.

S Steve Barclay 1:02:36  
Well, it's looking at the visual elements in the in the video itself ..

R Ryan Fleury 1:02:39  
And then deciding what it thinks is important to me.

S Steve Barclay 1:02:42  
Exactly. Yes.

R Rob Mineault 1:02:43  
Yeah. Well, and then you know, I wonder how it works if when the audio description, conflicts with a dialogue or something like it's kind of like timing. Yeah, the timing, but I imagine that that's all stuff that you could control when you're putting it all together. Because you said that you can edit the the audio description.

L Lis Malone 1:03:08  
it probably scans the file, though, if you're uploading a video, and then you want it described I'm sure that the technology is scanning the video, so it already knows where the pauses are.



S

Steve Barclay 1:03:18

Yeah, yeah, it does.

R

Rob Mineault 1:03:20

But at the very least, I mean, this might be something that could improve the speed of say, audio of producing audio description. So this is kind of where where we were talking with Colleen, where she was saying that, you know, audio description, or AI would have a place to work with audio description, companies that are producing it, and help make help streamline the process and maybe make it quicker. But also, this could have application for for this stuff that that nobody's going to audio describe or wants audio described, like Steve was saying, like, you know, some movies from the 40s.

L

Lis Malone 1:03:56

Well, you mentioned the education sector.

R

Rob Mineault 1:03:59

Yeah. Or even just a YouTube video, like just some stupid YouTube video. If you could throw this at it and have it described to you. Eventually, we could see audio description everywhere, which is what we want.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:04:13

Oh, e-learning is huge. A huge market there. Yeah. So that's exciting. Wow, that's really cool, too.

S

Steve Barclay 1:04:17

Yeah, yeah, it is. It is. Okay. Ready for the last one? All right. So the last one I'm going to mention is a company called Autonomous Living Technologies. And they were showing a single product. They were showing a product called the Cato. And what it is, is it is a mouse emulator that you wear. It's probably an inch and a half by an inch and a half wide, maybe half inch in depth. And you can connect it to a pair of glasses that, you could clip it on your ear if you wanted to. And what it does is it tracks movement. So as you move your head, it's emulating a mouse. So, in the past, we've had all kinds of different mouse pointing solutions. So some of the more popular ones were ones where you were a little silverized dot. And you could stick it to your forehead, you could stick it to your glasses, you could stick it to a hat, whatever, it didn't matter. But there was a tracker that was sitting on top of your computer, and it was looking for the little silver dot and what that little silver dot was doing. And then it would move the mouse on screen in coordination with that little silver dot. What this one is doing is it's doing Bluetooth mouse and keyboard input. But it's doing it entirely based on movement. As

you move your head, it's got a very, very sensitive sensor and a gyroscopic sensor in it that is incredibly detailed. And it just moves your mouse around and then for either do things like nods, or head shakes to do different mouse controls. Or you can get a little camera and do things like blinks and stuff along with it. But the level of detail that it provided. There was a guy who was who was using it with CAD. There was a guy who was using it with a with a programming thing, programming language. And it worked really, really well. The interesting part is they're targeting this to be about \$150. And that would be revolutionary for the head pointing industry because those head pointers that I mentioned before, they were all up around \$2,500. So this is this is a monumental shift, if they can, you know, finish it up and bring it to market. Yeah. So I was I was walking around the show, run into one of my suppliers and she says, hey, have you seen anything interesting? I said, yeah, you know, I saw this little mouse emulators that is really cool and they're looking at bringing it out super, super cheap. And she goes really? Because you know, I have I've neuropathy in my right arm. And I can't use a mouse very well. So I took her over to the booth. I found them a customer like immediately. But yeah, she could she could slap this on her glasses, and she would have a mouse solution that would be better than her using a mouse.

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:25

That's amazing. Yeah. Well, that was quite the round up, lots of new and interesting stuff.

S

Steve Barclay 1:08:32

Lots of enthusiasm, and I'm really looking forward to see some next year.

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:38

Yeah, I think next year it's gonna be it's gonna be the same because I think AI is really changing the game. People are working on loading in AI and revolutionising their products. And yeah, I think that's just gonna be more and more in the years to come.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:08:53

So Rob, I think you and I and Liz we all take that week off and we all do AT Banter and CanAsstech live deep dive.

R

Rob Mineault 1:09:01

Let's do it.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:09:03

Steve's like hell no,

**S** Steve Barclay 1:09:05  
No, no. 100%!

**R** Rob Mineault 1:09:10  
We just gonna get lists from North Carolina to California.

**L** Lis Malone 1:09:16  
We're gonna have to start the GoFundMe now, right. We will put you on a greyhound. It's fine. Oh, I I am not taking the bus.

**R** Rob Mineault 1:09:31  
It'll be Planes, Trains and Automobiles.

**L** Lis Malone 1:09:33  
No, I only fly and I fly direct.

**R** Rob Mineault 1:09:36  
What about a train? We're gonna roll gonna load up into Steve's car.

**L** Lis Malone 1:09:43  
You're on the west side.

**S** Steve Barclay 1:09:46  
We will fly you here and come with us. Oh, that would be so much fun. Oh, yeah, right. Road trip with Lis.

**R** Rob Mineault 1:09:55  
We will record every moment of torture.

**R** Ryan Fleury 1:10:01

It'll be a riot.

L

Lis Malone 1:10:04

Okay, well, we've got let's we got plans for the anniversary show. Now we got plans for next year's CSUN.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:10:32

So stay tuned.

L

Lis Malone 1:10:40

I'm not staying in a room with Rob.

S

Steve Barclay 1:10:53

None of us are.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:10:57

Steve, I appreciate that.

R

Rob Mineault 1:11:03

I'll be under one of the tables at the conference. That's where I'll be staying.

S

Steve Barclay 1:11:14

I have a new product that I will I will tease. I have a new product line coming. Oh, it is unrelated to low vision. It is unrelated to blindness. It is unrelated to physical access. And it's unrelated to augmentative communication.

R

Rob Mineault 1:11:30

What is left?

S

Steve Barclay 1:11:35

I'm getting into hearing.

R Rob Mineault 1:11:37  
Oh, interesting.

S Steve Barclay 1:11:40  
I ran into a company down there that is making some really, really cool hearing technologies for for people who are deaf and I am 100% going to pick them up.

R Rob Mineault 1:11:51  
Oh, nice. Okay. Well, we'll report on that news at a later date. Give everybody the full report.

R Ryan Fleury 1:12:02  
Excellent. Well done, Steve. Thanks.

R Rob Mineault 1:12:05  
Yeah, my pleasure. That was excellent. Well worth the trip. Hey Lis.

L Lis Malone 1:12:13  
Hey, Rob Multimedia.

R Rob Mineault 1:12:16  
Where can people find us?

L Lis Malone 1:12:19  
We are found [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com).

R Rob Mineault 1:12:22  
They can also drop us an email if they so desire at [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com). Who's next? Ryan?

R Ryan Fleury 1:12:33

Yes, Rob Multimedia?

R

Rob Mineault 1:12:37

Where else can people find us?

R

Ryan Fleury 1:12:39

They can find us on Facebook. X and mastodon.

S

Steve Barclay 1:12:46

Yeah, not Truth Social.

R

Rob Mineault 1:12:50

I'm buying stock on that boy.

S

Steve Barclay 1:12:52

Yeah. Hey, it was way up today. After losing \$4 billion dollars yesterday.

R

Rob Mineault 1:13:01

I love it. All right. Well, that is going to do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course to Steve for giving us a full report and we will see everybody next week.

S

Steve Barclay 1:13:19

This podcast has been brought to you by Canadian Assistive Technology, providing Low Vision and Blindness solutions as well as Physical Access solutions and Augmentative Communication aids across Canada. Find us online at [www.canasstech.com](http://www.canasstech.com) or if you're in the Vancouver Lower Mainland visit our storefront at #106-828 West Eighth Avenue in Vancouver. That's one block off Broadway at Willow. You can reach us by phone toll free at 1-844-795-8324 or by email at [sales@canasstech.com](mailto:sales@canasstech.com).