CONNECT
s p e c i a l

Editor's Desk

Dear friends,

An edition which is very close to my heart as I compile the work of this wonderful team which is driven by passion and focus on access to technology .

Excellence is never an accident, it is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, skillful execution and the vision to see obstacles as opportunities.

Happy Reading!!

Regards,

Bhavna Botta

connectspecial.in

From The Heart

An inspiring work by a group of activists to make sure technology meets the needs of people with disability. **BAPSI-Bidirectional Access Promotion Society** which works towards increasing public awareness on the potential of telecommunications, broadcasting and internet technology and to enable maximum access to the public of such technologies at the lowest costs

This unique society has strong belief in making low technology solutions available to all. The work of the society in finding solutions like eLocutor: Single Button Typing and Speaking Software, The skid Software a communication solutions, VIBRATIONS is a series of mobile apps, that enables the deafblind to receive and produce information to communicate using a smart phone are all pioneering works.

BAPSI organizes training programmes on cutting-edge technologies which promotes participation of persons with disabilities .By involving the siblings in the programme the activity becomes sustainable.

This sustained work reflects the effort, work and mentoring by Prof Arun Mehta, a software writer , disability and human right activist , Vickram Crishna, a technologist, Ashok Agarwal, practicing lawyer and Jagdeep S. Chhokar, professor,manager and engineer .

Another interesting feature of BAPSI is how it is keeping a track of the limited communication support tools available for people with disabilities in the country. Vickram Crishna explains the need for such work.

Sir, Why this initiative

Access is a very big problem, the lack of access to the sharing of information across the country, breaks down to many small ways in which information access is disabled. However, when each of these small ways is examined, we find they might be very big problems also, with many connections that need to fall into place in order to be dealt with, in a manner that thinking people can feel satisfied that something useful is happening. That's what we do, work with technology and the ways in which technology can be made useful to people who need to communicate.

who is the brain behind this initiative

Dr Arun Mehta has been championing the dissemination of knowledge of low-cost application development tools for accessible smart devices for years now. Together, we ran a project with the Helen Keller Institute for the Deaf Blind (HKIDB), after meeting with the founder, Beroz Vakil, during her lifetime. Unfortunately, we did not have the funding then to put it to the test, before she passed away.

Arun wrote a proposal that won an international award, and we used that money to work with teachers and deafblind persons in the institute to find what kind of communication tools could be made accessible and affordable. We have made some of these tools, which you have seen on the website, games, text-to-speech converters, text-to-vibration converters and so on, that run on very cheap tablets and phones.

How do you manage funding it must be an uphill task.

All the projects were created with international support through awards for outstanding project design. We have never had any success in getting Indian philanthropists to support this kind of activity, in over 20 years, although we have won several national recognition awards.

Inspiring work ,how can youngsters join this activity

We have always encouraged youngsters, both so-called 'abled' and so-called 'disabled', to participate in learning how to design and develop useful tools. The apps you see in the Play Store and on the website were developed with the active participation of the teachers and the deafblind students and staff of HKIDB. For that exercise, we had also involved graduate students from the outreach programs

run by the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, India's premier institute for development of science awareness.

We are now working behind the scenes at SEDB, the organisation for the deafblind by the deafblind in India, to drive further developments through recognition of the tremendous potential that persons with such problems (which affects many people to one degree or another as they get older, as I am sure you have noticed, and improving healthcare in India means that many large numbers of older people are and will be around) have to continue contributing in important ways to the quality of society.
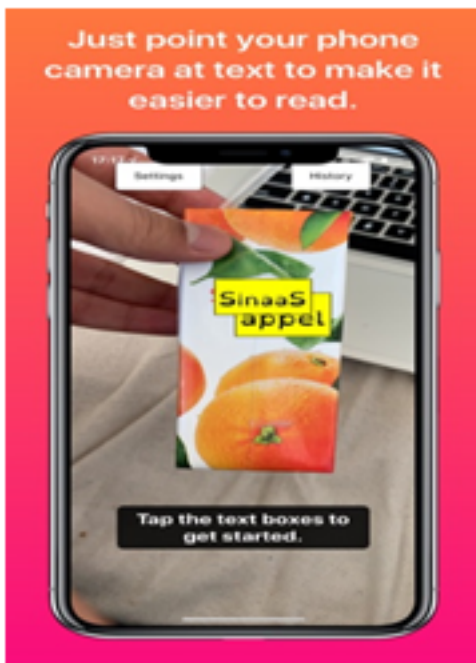
Augmenta11y- Dyslexia-friendly reading app

Originally featured in **Access and Inclusion through Technology**

https://oswaldlabs.com/platform/shravan/apps/augmenta11y/

Augmenta11y is an Augmented Reality (AR) app that helps people with learning disabilities like dyslexia easily read signage, paper, and other material in the real world.
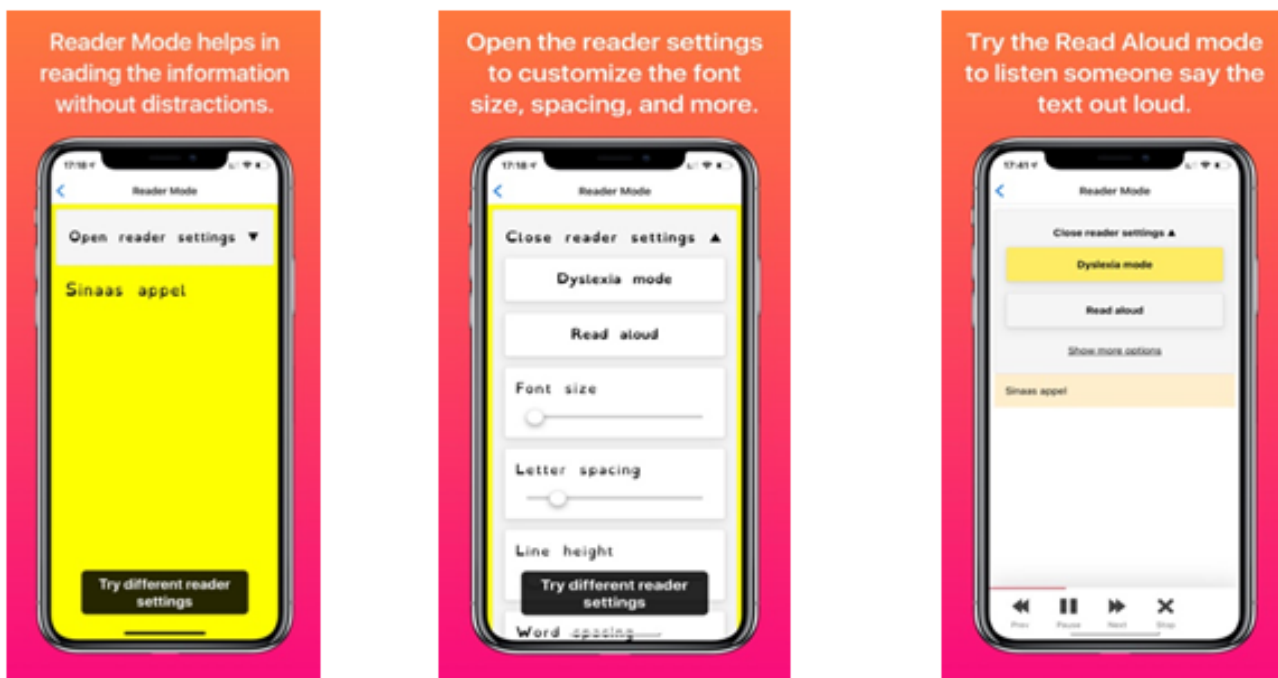
Augmenta11y is a one-stop platform that aims at making life easier on a regular basis, simplifying the process of interacting with objects and text-based data (such as billboards, street signs, hard copy documents, online data) that one may encounter with through the course of their day.

It helps those with dyslexia absorb and interact with reading material with comfort. It provides a vast array of customisable options, rendering the text to be completely user-customisable based on their preferences. Augmenta11y serves as the ultimate assistant while dealing with the effects of a condition such as dyslexia.

It aims at helping them be more independent, by ensuring ease of accessibility and usability. The application is fairly intuitive to use, simply point your device at the object at hand and let Augmenta11y work its magic. The user can read the text unaffected by external environmental factors by tapping on a text box and entering the Reader mode.

This tool keeps track of previously detected text for future reference, so users can revisit anything they found interesting.

Reader Mode helps in reading the information without distractions.

Open the reader settings to customize the font size, spacing, and more.

Try the Read Aloud mode to listen someone say the text out loud.