



Editor 's Desk

Dear friends,

The year 2020 taught us that the value of simple things we took for granted are PRICELESS. Going out for a movie, visiting friends, travelling, eating Golgappa from roadside eating joint, wearing party wear looks a distant past!!!!

As we hope for the new year to bring back all these joys, let's also remember to add on the top of our new year resolution list - "To Appreciate and Enjoy what we have in hand today"

Wishing you all a Happy New Year!!

Regards,

Bhavna Botta

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Interesting Tech News-

ActiveWords

ActiveWords is a nifty free program that does seven useful things when you type key words or letter combinations and hit the space bar. In fact, the developers believe program's seven categories make up the 80 percent of computing tasks in the 80/20 paradigm: Substitute Text, Launch a Program, Open a Document, Navigate to an Internet Site, Send E-Mail, Open a Folder, and Scripting. You specify your ActiveWords using quick, easy commands, and then associate the words with one of the seven tasks via simple wizards.

It lets you create easy-to-remember shortcuts that do what you need most often: Type "addy," for example, and have ActiveWords fill in your entire address or launch a program by typing its initials, open a Web site with a word you're typing anyway; a dictionary site, for example.

ActiveWords can open files and folders, web pages, and applications, and handle most tasks a person may need to perform on the computer. If you have multiple devices, you don't have to start over establishing commands with each device either, as ActiveWords Sync allows users to use most cloud services like One Drive, Dropbox, and Google Drive to automatically sync data between their devices. This is useful to students with developmental disabilities as it will significantly save time

https://download.cnet.com/ActiveWords/3000-2084_4-10055469.html

Xfinity Eye Detection

Comcast recently unveiled some new features to their Xfinity X1 cable package that uses eye detection technology that enables people with mobility limitations to change the channel, access the guide, record shows and even open some apps by just using eye motions.

This free-to-use software can even be used on tablets and laptops and it works seamlessly with already-existing hardware and software on devices, so users will not have to purchase a new set of gadgets to enjoy the benefits of this service



The Electrolarynx

One of the characteristics that differentiates humans from other creatures is the ability to produce and manipulate our voices to communicate in complicated ways.

Our voices are actually generated by vocal cord vibrations from the air as it passes from the lungs. All of this happens in our larynges, sometimes called the "voice box" because ... well, it produces our voices. You can literally touch your neck while talking and feel the vibration.

Sometimes, due to cancer or trauma or other reasons, the larynx may need to be removed, which obviously results in an individual being unable to speak. If there were a way for someone to actually get their voice back, that would be *incredible*.

An electrolarynx, sometimes referred to as a "throat back", is a medical device about the size of a small electric razor used to produce clearer speech by those people who have lost their voicebox, usually due to cancer of the larynx. The most common device is a handheld, battery-operated device pressed against the skin under the mandible which produces vibrations to allow speech. To be able to use an electrolarynx, you need training from a speech and language therapist and plenty of practice.

Seven winning solutions to empower people with disabilities

Originally featured in

Access and Inclusion through Technology

<http://www.accessandinclusion.news/#/>

<https://news.microsoft.com/apac/2020/12/03/seven-winning-solutions-to-empower-people-with-disabilities/>

Our AI for Accessibility Hackathon is held virtually for the first time across 14 Asia Pacific countries.

---By Pratima Amonkar, Chair for D&I and Accessibility for Microsoft APAC

Accessibility is a journey towards a future where everyone can participate. The [World Health Organization](#), shares that more than 1 billion people identify as having a disability (PwDs) globally, and at some point in our lives, everyone will face some form of it.



Whether temporary like a fractured arm, situational like carrying an infant, or permanent. Unfortunately, only one in 10 have access to technology that can assist and enable full participation in society.

In Asia Pacific (APAC), that number is [650 million](#).



At Microsoft, when we look ahead, we see tremendous possibility here. We believe that we have the responsibility and opportunity to design and build technology that is inclusive and innovative. We believe that text-to-speech tools like [Microsoft Narrator](#), voice commands and remote controls were designed for people living with disabilities, and benefit us all. In addition to the [Microsoft Enable Lab](#), we host hackathons which have resulted in assistive solutions like [Eye Control](#) and [Seeing AI](#).

Beyond tools, it's crucial that we create a culture of inclusion and build the digital skills capabilities of people with disabilities. To achieve that, we launched the [Microsoft Enabler Program](#) in September 2020 with employer partners and non-profit organizations, improving the employability of people with disabilities through digital skills and corporate training, internships and job shadowing.

The AI for Accessibility hackathon is so much more than just a hackathon – it is also a springboard for us to identify and

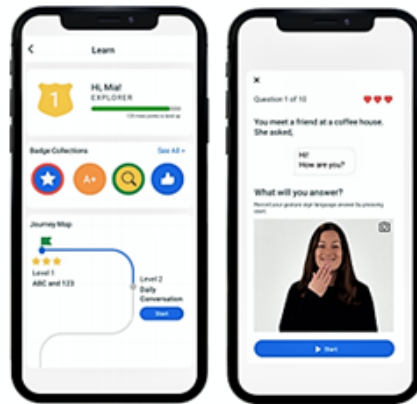
advance technologies that make the world more accessible and inclusive. The 2019 winner of the AI4A hackathon from Sri Lanka, [Fortude](#), also received our global [AI for Accessibility grant](#), which will enable them to further develop their Dysphagia identification app.

First virtual AI for Accessibility Hackathon in APAC

578 participants from 181 teams across 11 countries came together on one platform to create solutions for real-world problem statements posed by 12 non-profit organizations (NPOs). The seven winning teams developed innovative solutions to meet needs in the areas of employment, daily life and communication and connection.

To assist people who are hard of hearing, [TeamAccensible](#) from **Singapore** developed an application that would run alongside video conferencing platforms and provide assistive tech such as speech-to-text, sign-to-text and a meeting minutes transcriber – an especially relevant tool in our 'remote everything' world of today. To build awareness on common challenges for the deaf, *TeamCloud Access* from Indonesia built an app with gamification features so that everyone can learn sign language using AI

Everyone should learn **sign language**...



A **gamification** app for **learning sign language**

Thanks to the AI, you can learn sign language and ethics with **ease** in the **interactive** way

dengarkan.ai | Microsoft AI Hackathon

ABOVE: A prototype of Team Cloud Access' solution dengarkan.ai.

In **New Zealand**, Team *Nawi (Navigating Kiwi)* designed a navigation assistance tool for people with low vision. Their wearable tech solution "Nawi" was equipped with haptic feedback, hazard sensors, audio feedback and camera-tracking sensors, so that users could wander hands free or with a tactile controller.

From **Vietnam**, we had Team YehYeh's app "YehYeh NFC", which houses an audio bookshelf with text-to-speech technology as well as a physical "Braille-able", which replaces touch screen operations with YehYeh buttons, so that people can accurately tap on their desired function on touchscreens.

In Thailand, Team *Vulcan Coalition* developed a Thai text-to-speech synthesizer.

In addition to aids, winning teams also looked at making it easier to employ people with disabilities.

Team#ASBWeAllNeedToSee from **Malaysia** designed *BlindIn.co*, a job-matching platform for potential candidates to showcase skills and capabilities through videos using Azure Cognitive Services and Machine Learning.

In the **Philippines**, Team*Lingaro* looked at psychosocial disability. Their *Lingaro Wellness App* tracks moods through AI and data analytics and delivers basic cognitive-behavioral interventions including suggestions for meetings with medical professionals and human resource counselors.

To support their innovation, all the teams had access to more than 18 technical and non-technical workshops, coaching, support by Microsoft and our partners – LinkedIn, Datacom, and Telstra. The teams consisted of business partners, developers, start-ups and students from universities and their solutions were developed on Azure, the Microsoft cloud.

Accessibility is more than a bold thought

Technology is a powerful force for inclusion, and when created to help someone with a permanent disability, it helps those with temporary injuries or situational disabilities. Accessibility for the few, often, becomes usability for many. I'm excited to work with communities make technology accessible.

There are no limits to what people can achieve when technology reflects the diversity of everyone who uses it.

For subscription write to-
botta.bhavna@gmail.com

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