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With a background in translation and a passion for localization, she has worked on the localization of renowned gaming titles like Need for Speed: Payback, Titanfall 2, and Battlefield 1.

Verónica's background, encompassing translation, localization, and accessibility, positions her as a leading voice in the push towards more inclusive digital environments. Her insights and work experiences make her a valuable contributor to conversations on accessibility, localization, and user-centered design.

Accessibility in Gaming from Today's Perspective

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Abstract

Verónica Morales Beltrán, a digital accessibility consultant, explores the intersection of accessibility and gaming, reflecting on the evolution of accessibility in the video game industry and its impact on society. The article highlights the transformative role of accessibility in gaming, recent advancements such as the standardization of terminology, and the importance of representation and inclusive design.

Verónica emphasizes the necessity of a top-down approach to accessibility, advocating for equal opportunities for people with disabilities. The article also underscores the broader societal implications of accessibility, framing it as both an altruistic and self-serving endeavor that benefits everyone, particularly as we age or face temporary disabilities. The article concludes with a call to action to embrace human diversity and foster inclusivity in digital environments for a more equitable future.

Keywords:

Accessibility, Video Games, Representation, Inclusion, Digital Equity, Inclusive Design, Gaming Industry Trends, Disability, Accessibility Consultants, Entertainment, Human-Machine Interaction

Accessibility in Gaming from Today's Perspective

Introduction

My passion for video games began in childhood, playing as a dolphin, building theme parks, and tackling beat-'em-up games with Blaze. This love evolved into a 12-year career at Electronic Arts, where I managed localization projects and witnessed the magic of game development. During the pandemic, I discovered accessibility and realized how it could merge with my passion for gaming. In this article, I'll explore the intersection of these worlds and the current state of accessibility in gaming.

Why is gaming so important?

Gaming is important for many reasons, starting with the most obvious: games are fun! With countless genres to choose from: puzzles, adventure, sports, life simulations, and more. There's truly a game for everyone.

But gaming goes beyond just having fun. It brings people together, fosters connections, and builds communities through shared interests. It challenges our skills, sparks creativity, and allows us to appreciate its artistic elements, from stunning graphics and immersive soundscapes to captivating narratives.

Player motivation is dynamic, often changing depending on mood, energy levels, or time availability. Regardless of why someone plays, one thing remains true: skills and abilities should never be a barrier. When games are designed with accessibility in mind from the very beginning, they become experiences that everyone can enjoy, no matter who they are.

Progress on the accessibility

In just the first four months of 2025, progress has been made in video game accessibility, setting a promising tone for the future of inclusive gaming. These advancements span over multiple areas:

1. Hardware Innovation

Companies such as Microsoft have launched new, adaptive hardware options to cater to players with diverse needs. The Xbox Adaptive Joystick joins now the family of adaptive controllers that were already available such as PS5 Accessible Controller or the Quadstick Controller.

Also, the release news of the Switch 2 has been a significant milestone. It includes an integrated screen reader and a range of customizable accessibility options, enabling players to tailor their gaming experience to their individual preferences.

Additionally, the Nintendo Direct about Switch 2 explored the new console features with “Drag x Drive”, a video game about wheelchair basketball. Having such a disability representation on a launch of a product is very powerful and highlights again the importance of having everyone represented.

2. Industry Initiatives

In March, the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) unveiled the Accessible Games Initiative, aimed at providing clear information about accessibility features in video games. The times where games would be purchased and then it would turn out they cannot be played truly by everyone are over!

This initiative, supported by founding members such as Electronic Arts, Google, Microsoft, Nintendo of America, and Ubisoft, introduced 24 accessibility tags. These tags highlight features related to auditory, gameplay, input, and visual accessibility. Example of these tags are: clear text, large subtitles, narrated menus, and save-anytime functionality. Over time, it is expected that companies will prominently display these tags on digital storefronts, product pages, and catalogues, ensuring players can easily identify the features included in a game before making a purchase.

It is remarkable to see major companies uniting around a common goal with the player at the heart of their efforts. This collaboration highlights the immense value of working together across industries to achieve a shared purpose, ultimately leading to a significantly enhanced experience for players.

3. Defined Roles & Responsibilities

Accessibility consultants are playing a pivotal role in this evolution. These specialists ensure games are inclusive by evaluating features, providing timely feedback based on players' diverse abilities, flagging potential risks, and guiding developers on how to incorporate accessibility from scratch. Their expertise is critical to creating experiences that are as inclusive as they are engaging. Thanks to their work, the gaming industry opens up the market to the 15% of the population that is willing to invest their discretionary money on a barrier-free and user-friendly product.

4. Information transparency

Accessibility features are no longer hidden or left for players to discover post-purchase. Publishers have been building for the past

years dedicated websites to showcase these features, engaging players early and demonstrating that their products are designed with them in mind. This transparency not only excites and engages players but also reinforces the industry's commitment to inclusivity. Examples of this are: [Assassin's Creed Shadows – Accessibility Spotlight](#) or [Accessibility Resources - Split Fiction](#).

The value of representation

When creating products with diverse characters, the goal should be to design a world where players feel both represented and respected. To achieve this, it is essential to create characters with a wide range of skills and abilities, ensuring authentic and meaningful representation. The way disability is depicted holds significant influence: it shapes attitudes from society toward disability and, in turn, contributes on how players develop their perceptions based on what they experience in games.

For instance, the video game [Harmonium. The Musical](#), which features a deaf girl as the main character, serves as a powerful example of how early player feedback led developers to shift their portrayal of disability. Initially focused on negative aspects, the depiction was reworked to highlight the positive dimensions of living with a disability, adding depth and value to the narrative. It is also critical to consider the context in which disability is portrayed. Representation should add meaningful value and avoid falling into harmful tropes, such as "inspiration porn," which sensationalizes disability for emotional appeal. For further insight, Stella Young's talk, ["I am not your inspiration. Thank you very much"](#), provides an excellent perspective on this topic.

While the lack of disability representation has been a long-standing issue across industries, progress is being made, and positive changes are becoming more visible.

What we are currently missing: A top-down or bottom-up approach?

What we are missing, not only in the videogame field but also everywhere else, is that people with disabilities have access to the same opportunities as others, from the cradle to the grave. This includes equitable access to education, job opportunities, and the ability to climb the corporate ladder. Once companies succeed in retaining disabled employees in higher positions where decisions are made, accessibility will naturally cascade through a top-down approach, accelerating progress and embedding inclusivity into the core of organizational strategies.

At the moment, however, a bottom-up approach is playing a crucial role. Invaluable feedback from players with disabilities, who directly experience barriers in games, provides real-world insights that drive incremental improvements. This grassroots input ensures that developers, designers, and companies are addressing actual needs and creating meaningful changes. However, while the bottom-up approach is impactful, the absence of complementary top-down leadership often slows systemic change.

To truly make a difference, organizations need to embrace both approaches. The top-down strategy ensures accessibility is prioritized at a strategic level, while the bottom-up approach keeps the process grounded in real user experiences. Together, these methods can create a more inclusive and equitable world for everyone.

Misconceptions about the disability group

The disability group is the largest minority group, accounting for 15% of the world population. We all can potentially and suddenly become part of this group. Common examples are when we feel our throat sore and we are not able to speak or can't type with two hands on a keyboard because we broke an arm doing sports on our holidays.

Even if we don't experience any minor or major accidents along our lives or are born with it, we will eventually get old, older. Our capabilities will decrease (sight, smell, touch, movement...). As generations manage to live longer, we will also expect to continue to do the same things we did in our younger times: from enjoying playing video games to pre-ordering the latest console or sharing our excitement on accessibility features through social network with our friends.

In a nutshell, all of us will feel disabled at some point in our lives. Yes, I will repeat it again: all of us will feel disabled at some point in our lives. Let it sink.

This means that creating accessible experiences, products, and digital and physical environments is, depending on which state of your life you are in, the most egoistic and, at the same time, altruistic way of moving forward.

Accessibility means leveling up your skills

What if I told you that the work you've been delivering as a designer, developer, writer, business analyst, or CEO has never truly been complete? That's the case if accessibility hasn't been integrated into your processes.

Thanks to the European Accessibility Act, professionals across various fields in Europe now need to rethink their approaches, leaving outdated patterns behind and upgrading their skills. By embracing accessibility, the impact is immense: transforming user frustration into satisfaction and ensuring products are not just usable, but equitable. Taking people's diverse needs into account during product ideation and development means creating solutions that make lives easier and contribute to a fairer digital world where no one is left behind.

I understand that this shift takes time and practice. It doesn't happen overnight. But building awareness, having the will to drive change, and valuing every small improvement acting as a butterfly effect is what we should strive for every day.

Conclusion

We all have not a duty but a responsibility towards accessibility and every small step count.

Embracing human diversity in all its forms is key to building a more inclusive world. Be curious, reach out and engage in conversations with people who are different from yourself. These interactions help build bridges instead of unconscious walls between "you" and "them." And really, there's no such thing as "them" versus "you" as eventually "you" will be "them". For now, whether your reasons are altruistic or egoistic, always be an ally*.

Accessibility is about creating a future for everyone, including yourself. Let's ensure the spaces we design today reflect a world that's fairer, kinder, and ready for all.

***A11y is shorthand for "accessibility." It's a numeronym where the "11" represents the 11 letters between the "A" and the "y."**

When read out loud, "A11y" sounds like "ally." It's a way to make the term "accessibility" more succinct and at the same time emphasizing the idea of being an ally to people with disabilities by ensuring that digital content is accessible to all.

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