

## NEXTcast Season 2 Episode 2: Lichuan Wen and The Accessibility Bar

In this episode, special guest host Kristin Valois speaks with CTL programmer Lichuan Wen about the Accessibility Br, which makes the web more accessible for everyone, and which has been gaining attention and interest inside and outside of Humber College.

Kristin Valois: Hello, and welcome to NEXTcast, a podcast about teaching and learning at Humber College. I'm Kristin Valois, an Editorial Assistant at Humber Press. In this episode, we talk to Lichuan Wen, a programmer at The Centre for Teaching and Learning, about the online Accessibility Bar she's helped develop here at Humber, which has been getting a lot of attention outside of the college.

Kristin Valois: Welcome to NEXTcast, Lichuan. So I got to know you a little bit this summer, but I was hoping you could tell our listeners a little bit about the work that you do at the CTL.

Lichuan Wen: Okay. Hello everyone. I have been working as a programmer at CTL for the last three years. Since I graduated from Humber's Multimedia Design and Development Program. My job responsibility is developing online content with the latest technologies in order to provide learners multisensory user experiences.

Kristin Valois: So you've been working on a really interesting project over the last couple months, called the Accessibility Bar. So what, on a practical level, what does the Accessibility Bar do?

Lichuan Wen: Accessibility Bar is a free open source tool. It's again, how developers implement accessible online content by just three lines of code. It's a cross platform, user-friendly tool that can be embodied in any website with no additional training, installation, or payment required. It comes with three tools: tags to audio screen reader, magnifier, and printing. So generally speaking, the Accessibility Bar allows those who can see the content to listen to it. And it gives those who can't see content clearly, an online magnifier.

Kristin Valois: Amazing. So what was the inspiration behind this project? How did this get started?

Lichuan Wen: There was a time I was working on course named Accessibility Design in Digital Media, with Anne Zbitnew and Jennie Grimard. I found traditional reading and magnifier software, they all have compatibility issues with the latest computer systems and the browsers because they were

developed years ago and they are very costly. So this fact made me think, if there's a way to create our own tools to accomplish this functions, which are free for everyone and can be used on any computer platform and can also be easily implemented for developers.

Kristin Valois: So who is the team behind the Accessibility Bar? I know you've done a major bulk of the work, but who else is developing this with you?

Lichuan Wen: At the beginning, I was spending my spare time to do research about this. When I reported my idea to my director Mark Ihnat, he gave me great support. Not only much time to my research and then work on it, but also he approved to popularize it into all current CTL online courses.

Kristin Valois: Wow, so it's implemented in all current CTL courses?

Lichuan Wen: Yes.

Kristin Valois: Wow.

Lichuan Wen: Yeah. And also, my colleague Gina Catenazzo, she suggested that I arrange all the buttons as one piece. And she designed a nice layout for that.

Kristin Valois: Amazing. So, I'm wondering, what's the feedback been like from users of the tool that you've developed? I know you've also gone to a couple conferences and presented your software. So, what have you heard from your colleagues?

Lichuan Wen: Yeah. We presented this bar in many conferences. People were blown away by this. And many educators showed interest to implement this bar into their online courses. We received feedback, actually we received feedback from users and developers. Most of the feedback from users is that, the bar is very easy and convenient to use. It's free cost and they don't need to do any installation. And they can use the Bar on any computer platforms. And they can use a keyboard to control the text to audio screen reader.

Lichuan Wen: Also, another part of the feedback is from developers. They think it's very easy to implement the bar. No training needed. And the implementing progress is very fast and efficient, since they only need to copy three lines of code into HTML page.

Kristin Valois: So, Li, you've had interest from other organizations about the project. Maybe you could tell me a little bit about that.

Lichuan Wen: CBC contacted my director Mark Ihnat, and they wanted to implement the bar on the CBC Paralympic website. However, at that time, the Accessibility Bar could not be implemented very fast. So, they haven't embodied the tool. But, they are interested to implement into their other webpages in future.

Lichuan Wen: Also, we have announced the tool to all the colleges in Ontario, and we are happy to share the tool with any and all higher ed colleagues.

Kristin Valois: So what's coming next for the Accessibility Bar? Where will we see it in the future?

Lichuan Wen: First, I will enhance existing features. Like, putting more language support for reading, make it more easy for developers, smarter with a content filter and selection, more key structures to users.

Lichuan Wen: Secondly, I am thinking of and exploring new features that might be accessible to students. Such as, day or night reading mode, voice recognizing, and command.

Lichuan Wen: Last but not the least, I want to put more time to research new technologies. Not only for access with the Bar, but also some other projects like Gesture or Body Control and Artificial Intelligence.

Kristin Valois: Sounds like you're really passionate about continuing to work on this.

Lichuan Wen: Yeah.

Kristin Valois: Yeah.

Lichuan Wen: Yeah, I am excited.

Kristin Valois: That's amazing. The CTL and Humber are lucky to have you.

Lichuan Wen: Oh. Thank you. I am honoured.

Kristin Valois: Thanks so much for joining us Lichuan.

Lichuan Wen: You're very welcome.

Nathan Whitlock: NEXTcast is produced by Humber Press and the creative productions team at The Centre for Teaching and Learning. Special thanks to Santino Pannozzo and Eileen DeCourcy. To suggest stories for future episodes of

NEXTcast or to just let us know what you think, email Humber Press, all one word, at humber.ca. That's [humberpress@humber.ca](mailto:humberpress@humber.ca).

Nathan Whitlock: Thanks, and see you next time. That's still not a pun.