



Job

retention

Tailor-made light jobs

Since its foundation in 1885 the Danish State Railways have applied a policy for the integration of people with disabilities. This social responsibility has taken shape mainly – to avoid dismissals – through the creation of so-called light jobs with reduced working hours and less arduous work.

The integration policy followed by the Danish State Railways (DSB) is based on an agreement signed with the trade unions which stipulates that company employees who become disabled during the course of their working lives qualify for additional vocational training funded by the company, while a social worker helps them to find a job suited to their changed situation.

In addition, in the context of Danish employment-promotion policy, the Ministry of Financial Affairs and the Danish trade unions have recently signed an agreement which lays the groundwork for a joint effort aimed at encouraging public institutions to increase the number of jobs earmarked for people experiencing difficulties in entering the labour market. In the long term the aim is to ensure that such jobs are retained for the

same people even in the event of reduced ability as a result of sickness or accident.

The guidelines for this social measure took account of vulnerable groups of workers (employees with reduced capacity for work, employees with an illness preventing them from working on a regular basis, people having taken early retirement, the unemployed).

As DSB assumes its social responsibilities, this agreement naturally prompted DSB to increase its endeavours to offer more employment opportunities through the creation of light jobs. Geared to the situation of the people experiencing difficulties, the working hours or intensity of work in such jobs is reduced.

The light jobs are funded by the parties involved in their introduction: DSB, local

associations and authorities and occupational organisations concerned with disabled people. DSB plans to identify a number of light jobs inside the company, corresponding to some 2 % of the present total staff of around 10 000 employees.



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DSB

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Personalepolitik

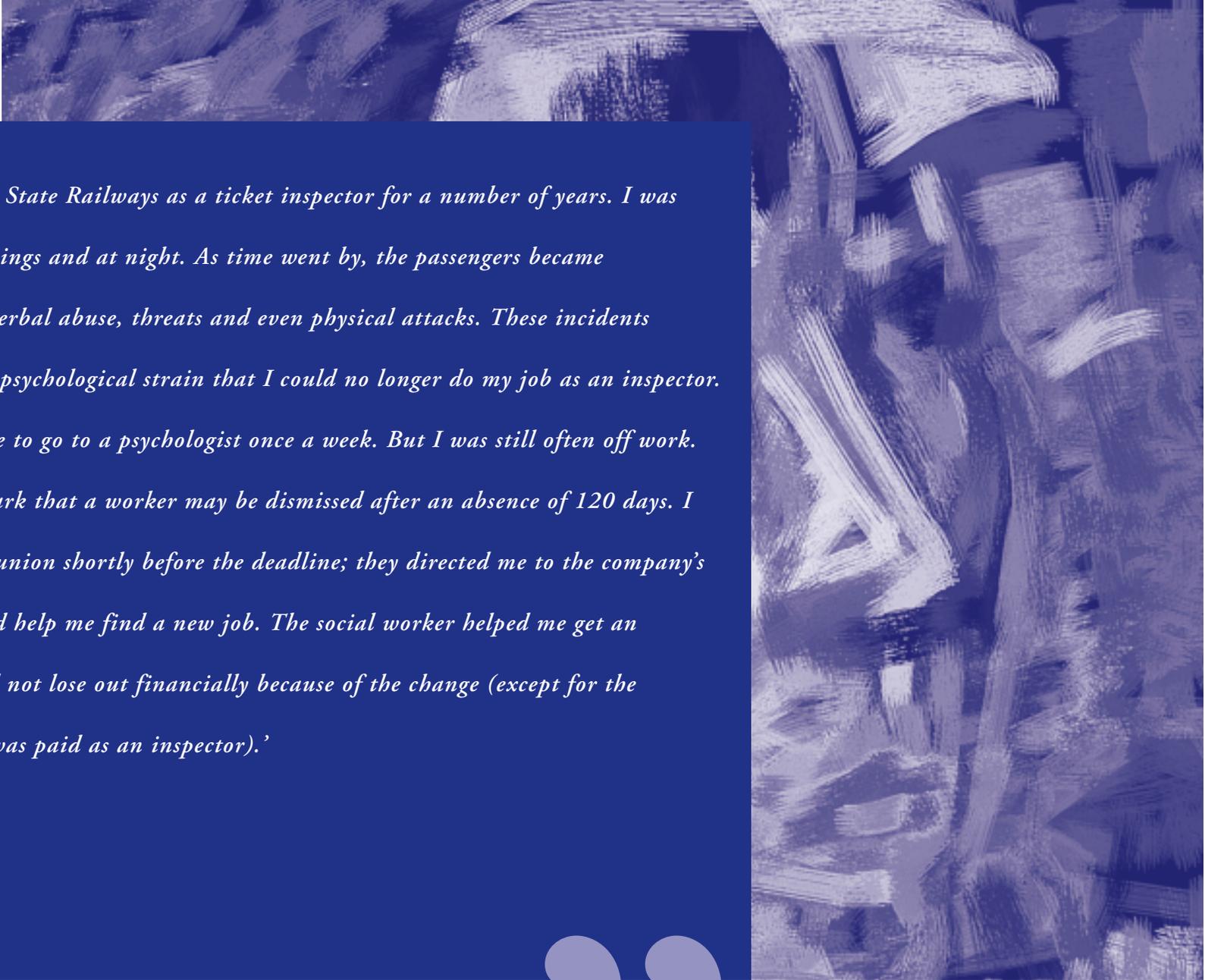
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'I worked for the Danish State Railways as a ticket inspector for a number of years. I was often on duty in the evenings and at night. As time went by, the passengers became increasingly aggressive: verbal abuse, threats and even physical attacks. These incidents gradually became such a psychological strain that I could no longer do my job as an inspector. The company paid for me to go to a psychologist once a week. But I was still often off work. There is a rule in Denmark that a worker may be dismissed after an absence of 120 days. I was told about it by the union shortly before the deadline; they directed me to the company's social service which could help me find a new job. The social worker helped me get an administrative job. I did not lose out financially because of the change (except for the nightwork allowances I was paid as an inspector).'

Young woman working with DSB



Meeting the cost of gradual reintegration

Of all German car manufacturers, Adam Opel employs the greatest number of disabled people. Its social policy for victims of accidents at work is based on ergonomic adaptation of worksites and a centre for rehabilitation and progressive reintegration.

Opel's 46 000 employees include 6 000 disabled people working in the different plants at Bochum, Eisenach, Kaiserslauten and Rüsselsheim. Some 7.2 % of jobs are earmarked for disabled people; under German law, disabled people must make up 6 % of the workforce of private and public companies employing more than 15 people.

Opel endeavours above all to ensure that any member of its staff who becomes disabled can return to their job or remain in a company. Opel accordingly uses a rehabilitation centre which applies the so-called Hamburg method for gradual reintegration. When the plant's occupational physician recommends a return to work, the disabled person goes back little by

little to their former workstation. If there is a problem in returning to work, training is offered, the aim being to equip the disabled employee for new tasks in a different unit. The sickness insurance fund pays the disabled person during this time.

This measure is the fruit of cooperation between the social partners and took shape through a company agreement signed in 1997. Since then a medical and psychosocial centre has been set up within the company. The representative of the disabled employees plays an important role in the social life of the plant, acting as relay and providing advice and assistance with administrative formalities.

Opel's research department is currently looking into the possibility of ergonomic changes to the entire production line. The changes would improve working conditions for the whole workforce, not just the disabled employees.



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Self-fulfilment at work



Doubling the integration of disabled people in one year: that was the challenge met by the Spanish services group, Eulen, in recruiting and training disabled employees and adapting installations to meet their requirements. And these initiatives are backed by an industrial accident prevention policy.

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Under Spanish law companies are required to recruit 2 % of their payroll as disabled employees on open-ended contracts. The Eulen group wanted to do more. In October 1997, an agreement was signed between the group, a trade union and three disabled people's organisations concerned with different kinds of impairment: physical, visual and hearing. The three organisations put forward for recruitment disabled people who have registered with them as jobseekers.

The local human resources managers, psychologists and training specialists, who deal with coordination, have set up an occupational integration group which looks into all the changes needed to facilitate the integration of the newly-recruited disabled employees. The group also develops vocational training programmes and integration schemes. Their goal is to increase the number of recruit-

ment contracts for disabled employees at Eulen.

To help the disabled people overcome the various barriers they come across in their new situation, specialists oversee a vocational training programme adapted to their different skills. This learning process also covers able-bodied workers.

The Eulen group has adapted workstations and paid for the necessary changes. It has also introduced more flexible working hours. NGOs, the occupational integration group and the Department for the Prevention of Risks at Work are now reviewing preparations for an industrial accident prevention policy. A few practical steps have already been taken: when a task is performed by two employees, the disabled person is always accompanied by an able-bodied colleague; some disabled employees have portable telephones and

coded displays are used for the hard of hearing.

The main outcome of this awareness-raising and training policy was the creation of 40 jobs for disabled people in 1997. Ninety posts are now filled by disabled people and they are all motivated by their new tasks, while the company has qualified for tax deductions and improved its customer image.



'My job gives me security and confidence, both financially and psychologically. I am treated like any other employee. I enjoy excellent relations with my colleagues, based on mutual respect and empathy. I am also on excellent terms with my bosses. Everyone is ready to help me if I come up against difficulties.

I feel I am useful both to the company and society. The fact of having a job has made me understand that my disability does not prevent me gaining access to the world of work. That is gratifying. I set myself targets every day so that I can improve and show what I can do. Work has given me independence.'



Employee, Eulen Group

Disability does not mean dismissal

No effort is spared at Centre Leclerc, Loudéac in ensuring that no employee loses their job on account of disability. Adjustment of working hours, adaptation of workstations, cooperation with rehabilitation centres: clear evidence of the management's intention to bring the project to a successful conclusion.

Acknowledging that disabled employees can do a job like any other employee: that was the goal of the various steps taken for the seven disabled employees at Centre Leclerc, Loudéac. They are now working as skilled sales people, checkout operators, store technicians and night watchmen.

CHSCT looked into the matter for Centre Leclerc and carried out surveys without charge in order to find vacant posts that could be reconciled with the disability of the workers concerned. The adaptation of the workstations was funded jointly by AGEFIPH (*Association de Gestion du Fonds pour l'Insertion Professionnelle des Personnes Handicapées*) and the company.

The difficulties encountered (whether technical, staff-related or interpersonal) were discussed in the course of constructive talks between the different parties involved in this action plan (social partners, sheltered workshops, occupational physicians, ergonomists and a rehabilitation centre). The disabled people thus feel that they play a full part in the day-to-day operation of the firm. The different measures taken to integrate the disabled people were explained to the entire staff and this gave rise to a highly productive climate of solidarity.

Special measures are required when offering posts or retaining jobs for disabled people: adjustment of working hours, adaptation of workstations and follow-up in liaison with a rehabilitation centre. The firm has committed itself to making such arrangements for employees who become disabled in the course of their working lives.

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100 % efficient redeployment

A furniture company in the Vosges has set up a redeployment system and various training courses, particularly in safety. Alongside these measures, it is running an awareness programme among its workers, both able-bodied and disabled.

A total of 911 persons, of whom 79 are disabled, make up the workforce of the *Manufacture Vosgienne de Meubles et Sièges*. This company, which is particularly concerned about finding possible ways of redeploying its workers, has set up a specific rehabilitation scheme. The *Association de Gestion du Fonds pour l'Insertion Professionnelle des Personnes Handicapées* (AGEFIPH) (Association for Occupational Integration of the Disabled), a rehabilitation group comprising occupational physicians and trade union representatives, the works council and members of the technical department are involved in this initiative.

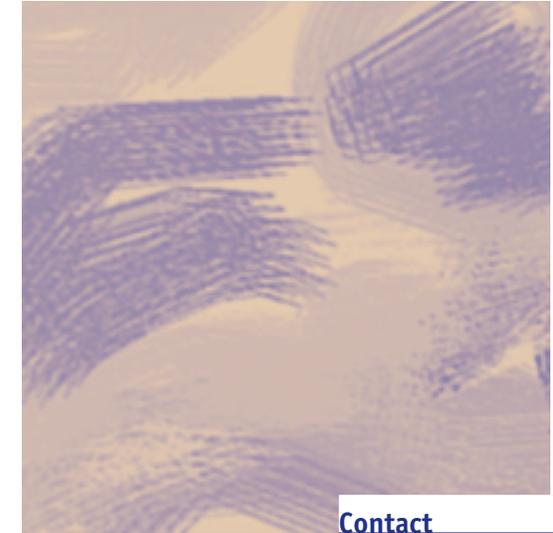
This scheme has many facets. Nine disabled persons whose jobs had been cut following restructuring were redeployed within the company. Nine new jobs were therefore found and these disabled workers were given training to familiarise themselves with their new tasks.

Another facet of this initiative involves giving prevention courses (accidents, health in general and back problems in particular) to all the staff. They are taught in particular the most suitable movements for lifting and carrying very heavy loads.

The AGEFIPH also makes a financial contribution. It funds the trainers' work and bears the cost of the ergonomic changes linked to the reorganisation of the premises. In addition, when the company designs a new job, the Association makes sure that it can be filled by a disabled person. It directs purchases of machinery and equipment accordingly.

Awareness-raising constitutes the third facet of this action. It comes into play, for example, when a disabled person takes over the job of an able-bodied worker and has to get used to his new environment.

The results of this method of redeployment are more than encouraging: its success rate is 100 %. Any person faced with a problem of redeployment is in fact given support by the multidisciplinary group set up for this purpose.



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‘After a road accident which left me with a permanent physical disability, I found a new job with MVM. I have been working there for 18 years, first of all in the repair workshop and now in the quality control department. MVM has changed my workplace completely and adapted it to my needs. I have good contacts with my colleagues and I am very happy with my working environment.’

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Skilled worker at Manufacture Vosgienne

Employment agency within the undertaking

'NS Mobility Centre', the Dutch Railways' employment agency, has set up a job bank which employees can consult to find appropriate work after an industrial accident. Emphasis is placed not on what the disabled person can no longer do but on what they can still do.

NS Mobility Centre has 25 advisers in four units in different areas of the country. It helps all employees in difficulty, notably staff who have lost their jobs through reorganisation and staff with a disability resulting from an accident at work or sickness, to retain employment with the Dutch Railways. The results are encouraging: employees are rarely laid off on account of disability.

NS Mobility Centre initially helps the disabled person by providing psychological assistance to overcome the job loss. It then looks for a new post within the undertaking. The mobility centre operates as a job bank where all vacant posts are listed.

If a disabled employee shows interest in a post available in one of the railway

departments, the centre commences negotiations with the manager concerned and provides information on the granting of State aid and on changes to and adaptation of the workplace. Provided that the manager is interested, the two parties agree on a trial period. Once this is completed, they decide whether the disabled person is appropriate for the work in question.

This scheme was introduced on a voluntary basis and is an integral part of company policy: the aim is to find the best way of integrating disabled people into the world of work. If the employee is paid less in the new job on account of the disability, the company makes up the difference in wages. Promotion opportunities are open to all employees without distinction.

The partners in this scheme were the Dutch Railways, the works council and the trade unions. The latter contributed to the funding of the mobility centres. They persuaded employees to forego pay increases for two years. They also make sure that all vacant posts are advertised and made available first of all to disabled people.

Following the privatisation of the Dutch railways, the placement of people with disabilities has continued without any problem. Disabled or able-bodied, all employees can provide the same standard of work when they are able to accomplish all the tasks required for the job.

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'Some one hundred jobs are found for disabled colleagues every year thanks to the mediation. The company's disabled employees are very satisfied with the work of the mobility centres for account is taken of their aspirations. Only three or four jobs a year remain vacant. In all other cases a solution has been found to the satisfaction of both parties. There is no problem with integration as the people with disabilities are longstanding colleagues.'



Manager of a mobility centre

Dutch Railways

Return to work

Under Dutch law (WAO: Invalidity Insurance Act) employees receiving disability benefits are defined as 'unsuitable for work'. A law (TBA), enacted in 1993 with the aim of reducing the number of applications for disability benefit, introduced measures to offset the unwanted effects of the WAO system.

Introduced in 1967, WAO protects employees against industrial accidents and diseases by providing them with a decent income. To start with WAO covered 100 000 persons, but one year later they numbered 163 500 and in 1985 were estimated at 610 000. These figures prompted the authorities to change their approach; they wanted to reduce the number of people covered by WAO and also promote the employment of disabled people.

This was the goal of a building firm, FNV, which started to try and combat abuse of the WAO system in 1992. In cooperation with the trade unions, the company set in train a genuine policy for the reintegration of people with disabilities.

In the event of protracted absence, the firm encourages the employee to return to their job. If necessary, it offers further training, organised by the human resources department in conjunction with specialists and trainers.

In funding the retraining, the firm receives State support. Since 1992, 35 administrative and supervisory staff and several construction workers have returned to work under the scheme. They are all highly motivated by their return to work.

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'Although my hips are worn out, I work in a building company. I was taken on as a solderer and later moved on to making concrete. It was done entirely by hand at that time and the materials became increasingly heavy. Workmates sometimes complained of backache, but we didn't talk about it.

In 1993 I was declared 40 % unsuitable for any construction work. I couldn't do it any more because I couldn't move about over rough ground. As part of my work therapy in 1994 I had a job in wage cost control and at the same time followed computer courses. One of the managers told me that I was suitable for different work and I was officially appointed archivist in October 1995. My work has a purpose and I am my own master.'



FNV employee

Cutting accidents at work

The Finnish Employees' Confederation (STTK) cooperates with employers in preventing industrial accidents and facilitating the return to work of disabled people. Various measures have been introduced: prevention schemes, training programmes, occupational reintegration programmes and alterations to workplaces.

The Finnish Trade Union Confederation (STTK) gives priority to occupational rehabilitation following accidents at work. When an accident victim is nearing the end of convalescence, they are examined by a specialist appointed by a Tripartite Committee reporting to the Finnish Social Affairs Ministry. The physician assesses the ability for work and initially whether a return to the former post is possible. If that cannot be, a new, more suitable job is suggested. In the event of permanent invalidity, the person concerned receives benefit.

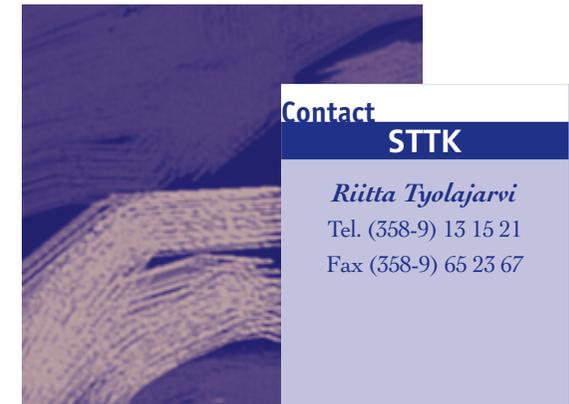
This system is regulated by Finnish law and is run by the Tripartite Committee which includes representatives of trade union and employers' organisations and insurance companies. Should an injured worker disagree with a decision, he may appeal to a special tribunal.

At national level the trade union organisations have negotiated a number of agreements with the government and employers' associations to combat accidents at work. They provide for prevention measures, establishment of training programmes for accident victims, occupational reintegration schemes, ergonomic adaptation and consultation of the injured parties directly concerned by the decisions.

At local level, the trade union organisations and insurance companies, together with businesses, have drawn up a programme for training and accident preven-

tion. The employees' associations have negotiated agreements on improving the performance at work of accident victims.

The goal has been attained: the number of accidents has dropped and the social climate has improved. The disabled people feel better integrated and more respected; they are happy with their new working conditions.



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New tools

Barclays Bank plc is a financial organisation employing around 85 000 staff worldwide, with over 60 000 working in the United Kingdom. Barclays has had an equal opportunities policy since 1985 and is committed to ensuring that job applicants and employees with disabilities are treated fairly.

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Barclays employs over 200 visually-impaired staff, historically as telephonists. Advancements in technology and upgrades of Barclays' telephony systems were removing the bank's need for telephonists. In 1996 Barclays decided to develop and introduce new technology for visually-impaired staff, allowing them to retrain and redeploy into alternative jobs.

Barclays' partners in the project, known as the Ability Project, included an IT company, a government department and specialist advisers for visually-impaired people. In the first phase, a magnification terminal was developed and installed, being funded entirely by the bank. In the second phase, a Braille and speech terminal was designed and installed and

Barclays received a government subsidy towards the purchase and installation of equipment. Visually-impaired staff whose telephony jobs were falling away could be redeployed and were offered opportunities to retrain and transfer to different jobs within the company. The availability of this new technology has also enabled the recruitment of visually-impaired people into customer service teams.

So far 65 magnification terminals and 90 Braille and speech terminals have been installed both for visually-impaired staff already in the company and for future new recruits. Individual training plans have been developed to prepare the visually-impaired staff to meet the requirements of their new role. Regional ability coordi-

nators are assigned the task of helping them overcome any anxieties concerning the new technologies. Additional equipment assists with mobility and access to work sites.

Barclays is also conducting research into specific technologies which could be used by other people with other disabilities, not just visual impairment.