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The Digital Access Show

Season 3, Episode 40

Ann Hyslop and Sarah Evans

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Introduction

Narelle: Hello and welcome to The Digital Access Show. We've had heaps of technical difficulties this morning, and there's a good reason for it. None of us can see much. So, where we were using, I used my computer, it's set up for me, we're now out on site. And I have two friends with me. My wonderful friend, Anne Hyslop.

Anne: Hi.

Narelle: And Sarah Evans.

Sarah: Hello!

The value of Meta Ray-Ban glasses

Narelle: So, everyone's talking about the Meta Ray-Ban glasses. We had Luke Irwin from Aegis Security on a few weeks ago, three weeks ago, talking about… what are the negatives? Now, Luke's on our side. He thinks… that, you know, we need these tools. And when you think about the fact that… so many of the tools that everyone uses… all the time are developed for people with disability, like the keyboard, just a minor one, Siri, Zoom. There's so many different ones. We've developed captioning. How many people… do you hear use captioning all the time because they like to hear the full wording, particularly when it's mumbled? And the same thing is happening with Meta…

Siri: Try again.

Narelle: [laughs]

Narelle: And there's one of our tools. So, what I'm going to do…

Anne: That was my phone trying to respond.

Different levels of sight and the tools we use

Narelle: What it is, is each of us has a different sight level. I have, I've got really bad sight. So, I see triple of everything, and I can't see anything clearly. Anne, what sight do you have?

Anne: Absolutely zilch. Nothing.

Narelle: Nothing. And Sarah?

Sarah: Partial. So, I have no central, just peripheral. So, it's vernacular.

Narelle: And this is what we're saying. We use these tools all the time. Every smartphone has accessibility built in.

Narelle: Yes?

Using the glasses while travelling

Anne: Yep. Every Windows, every Mac has accessibility built in. Now, I want to talk about the Meta Ray-Ban glasses, because you ladies have just come back from a trip to Croatia.

Anne: And a European trip from Amsterdam to Belfast. From our

Narelle: I forgot that bit, I apologise. And the thing is, you didn't need any support, because you provided support for one another.

Sarah: Yep.

Narelle: And what were the tools you used? And how did you do it?

Anne: Well, we used our common sense, our mobility canes and the Ray-Ban Meta glasses, basically.

Sarah: Yep.

Anne: That's it.

Narelle: Okay. How… So, this is going to sound stupid, because Anne's been, Anne taught me how she did it, but I want you guys to explain to everyone else that can see… the difference that Meta Ray-Ban glasses make for you.

What the glasses can describe

Anne: Okay, well, I'll go. From a blind perspective, which has given me a window to the world that I haven't had for many, many years. It's given me full description. Now, you ask the person standing behind you to describe a scene. For instance, in a room, they might say, "Yeah, it's got… windows, there's a table over there, bit of carpet on the floor. A nice ceiling." That's it. You ask the glasses with the same question in the same position, it will say the windows are round or tall or broad, or they're open or they're closed. It will tell you what colour the walls are. It tells you the ceilings are high, and that there are chandeliers, or different sorts of lights hanging from it. It will tell you what the floor covering is. It might be tiles in a certain pattern, or layout, or it might be a floral carpet even. But the descriptions are just exactly what you would see. And that's it.

Narelle: How do you find it, Sarah?

Sarah: Yeah, so from a partial-sided perspective, it was good to… If there was a sign or something I couldn't read, and getting that information for me, or say, a menu. So, knowing what was there, and knowing that I didn't have access to it using the Meta… helped me get access. And I did purchase them specifically for this trip, because I'd not used them before, and I don't think it would have been… as easy without them.

Anne: Yep.

Navigation and getting around

Narelle: How did you navigate? Did you use the Meta Ray-Bans to get yourselves around? Because Anne was here without having any sight, and just using the cane, Sarah was partial sight. Were they an important tool there as well?

Anne: Well, I don't know that we actually used them for that. Sarah may have, but I didn't, obviously. I was basically holding Sarah's elbow, and she was my sighted guide.

Narelle: Sarah, how did you go with them?

Sarah: It was a little bit of the blind leading the blind, cause I am also a cane user, which helped just navigate and let people know that, you know? Not necessarily the tourists, but we just need a little bit of extra leeway. I think we were nearly taken out by a tram twice. So, canes, canes are good. Didn't really rely too much on the Meta for navigation. I'm not sure if that's a skill deficit on my part, or technology hasn't caught up. I don't know how to use them to do that. We usually mainly used… Google Maps or Apple Maps to navigate.

Anne: And your glasses actually act as a Bluetooth… headphone. So, if you're using Google Maps, the directions are coming not from your phone, well they are actually, but you hear it through your glasses. Yeah. There's speakers on your glasses.

Narelle: Now that would be handy because I use a guide dog, and if I've got to try and navigate somewhere, I have to be really aware of what pocket my phone's in to make sure it's in the right spot. And even, I've got to be careful whether the glass is on the inside, or the outside so the camera picks up where I'm trying to go, and the GPS works. So, you'd have had a hand free is what you're saying.

Sarah: Yeah.

Anne: Yes.

Sarah: Especially, like you said, when one hand is occupied with a cane and you might have, like, you know, someone else you're guiding, or you might have groceries or souvenirs you've bought, to go there and get your phone out and, yeah, to have it on your head hands-free is so convenient. Yes.

Finding things and using everyday technology

Narelle: Oh, my God. I hadn't thought of that. Okay. What about… in the motels and things. The last time, I remember I went to Sydney, I think it was last year, and I nearly got, I ended up in the middle of road work in George Street

Narelle: . Then I couldn't turn the, they'd turn the lights on in the hotel room, and I couldn't find where to turn them off. And I searched and searched and searched. And I ended up, I was, it drove me crazy because I sat there and thought, I'm going to have to sleep with the lights on because… I've got it, I still see light, but I can't find where to turn them off. How did you guys manage with all of that?

Anne: Well, I have Sarah who could help me visually, but I can give you an example. I had a friend at my place… a couple of weeks ago, and she was sitting where you are sitting now, Narelle, and she was fumbling in her bag for something, dropped her credit card, or debit card on the floor. And of course, I couldn't help her find with it. And she is as blind as I am, and I said use the glasses. So, she came around, she looked down and she said, "Meta, can you see a credit card on the floor?" And it came up and said, "Yes, it's towards the base of the stool on the left hand side." So, she looked down, and she put her hand down on the floor and she said, "Is my hand near it?" And it said, "Move a little further to your left," and she found the credit card.

Narelle: Oh, my God. One of the things that Meta's sold with is the "be my eyes."

Anne: Yeah, you could make them your eyes, if you wish. But the glasses were handy, and it sold it for her. So, I'm assuming if you're looking for a light switch, as long as you're facing… the light switch is within the range of the camera, it can tell you where it is.

Money, shopping and taking photos

Narelle: What about ATMs and EPOS machines? They're a big problem for us, using ATMs and EPOS, and you've got to put in your PIN number.

Anne: I haven't tested it out.

Sarah: No, we actually… got one of the staff to support us to use the ATM. We needed it.

Anne: Yeah, we're in a foreign country, in Croatia, and… apart from the fact that there's no English, but there was a button for English. And I needed some cash out, so I just asked our first director to assist me with it.

Narelle: Right. What about even buying souvenirs and things? Meta could have described what you were looking at.

Anne: Oh, yeah, and cash. Hold up the notes and tells you how many euros you have. It recognises, and tells you your money in your hand.

Sarah: You can do conversion too. You can say, you know, what's this number? That's, you know, 30 euros. Okay, what's that… in Australian dollars? So, yeah.

Anne: And you can ask it anything.

Narelle: Oh, my gosh. That is so…

Anne: Yep.

Narelle: It took photos for you?

Sarah: Yeah, yeah.

Anne: Yup. At one stage, Sarah was… When we were in Belfast, we saw a lot of uni students climbing into the fountain. Sarah said, oh, I'd love to do that. So, the next morning we go out, she climbed into a fountain.

[Narelle laughs]

Anne: I took the glasses from her, put them on my head and said, hey, Meta, take a photo. So, now Sarah has a photo of herself on her own camera, of her climbing into a fountain in Belfast.

Narelle: Oh, my God. But the beauty of it is, because one of the things I struggle with… is like my kids' baby photos and things. You know, that's… There's a lot of sadness there that I can't…

Anne: Look at them.

Narelle: Look at them.

Narelle: And, I like this. I've got one photo on my… desktop, and it's got a lot of high contrast. And it's of my kids, David, my youngest is about seven, so Nick would have been nine, Peter, 10. And it's one of my favourite photos. But I know… I'm losing that ability, and… Meta would solve that because…

Anne: I'm not sure, because there is a certain amount of privacy on the web. You know, I haven't tested it with photos, but if I sit in front of you and ask for a description of you, it would be a general description saying a woman with… long or short hair or whatever you have. Might say light or dark hair, might say what you're wearing, but it's not a facial description. That's what I'm trying to say.

Narelle: That's interesting, because… I used to have an Orcam when they first came out. And the Orcam would give space for descriptions.

Anne: Yeah, it just gives you descriptions of people.

Sarah: I think… Well, yeah, I think you can preface it too in saying, look, I am a person with vision impaired or I'm a blind person. Can you give me more descriptions? So, you can kind of preface that, but it does take an extra step. Yeah.

Anne: Yeah, I haven't tried that.

Sarah: Yeah.

Privacy concerns and public use

Narelle: With the Meta, and everything that's going on right now, and all these controversies about them… being used in swimming pool areas, and banning them in those places, and they want to ban them. What's your response, Sarah?

Sarah: Oh. Well, to me, it is my sunglasses. Glare is a big, big thing. Do I have to take a second pair of sunglasses everywhere now? And then is it worth it? And then do I have to buy a second set of headphones? So, it does make me worry. Can I use them? Like, if people realise, will I get in trouble? It does make me a bit concerned.

And I remember like there was all this hype over when… we started putting cameras in phones. People are like, there's up-skirting, and there's this stuff, and now it's just normal. So, hopefully it will normalise, but I'm worried that, yeah, we'll get caught up in it.

Narelle: What do you think, Anne?

Anne: Well, basically the same thing, but maybe… they can bring in some laws to be implemented that, you have to be legally blind to have the cameras in your glasses.

Narelle: Yeah.

Anne: And then they know it's for a disability purpose. And I have noticed, I received an email, I saw this on Meta's list only yesterday, that they are now releasing glasses. I'm not sure if they're in Australia or not, but… they're just Meta glasses without cameras. They do everything else the glasses do, but they don't have cameras on them. So, they're obviously sitting up and taking notice, but by the same token, we need the cameras because that's all we have.

Sarah: Yep.

Anne: And if they ban it for everybody, then that's putting us back into the dark ages.

The wider value of accessible technology

Narelle: I agree with you because, you know what, if they started banning tools like this, Are they gonna find other tools that have come across… from, like the keyboard? There was a guy called Turri, I think it was 1608, 1708, can't remember the year, in Italy. He invented a form of typewriter that a blind person can use. That was one of the very first typewriters. Are they going to stop… the cram… cut-ins in the curb? All these things that came in for people with disabilities, so we can get around and we can be part of… the community, and now everyone else is using it. I don't know. I don't know the answer. For me, it's just, I don't know.

Sarah: Yeah. I think there's… Go ahead.

Anne: I suggest that I don't think anybody knows the answer. There's many different answers and variables for every situation.

Sarah: Yup. And I think if… we do see it every time there's new tech. I mean, look at the controversy just over AI in general, and whether we use that and how we use that. So, there's always that kind of concern. I mean, books were new technology at one stage. Reading was new technology at one stage.

Narelle: Here's the interesting thing. The guy that actually, so Gutenberg invented the printing press, right? But books were still written in Latin. There was a bloke called William Tyndale, Tyndale, converted the Bible to English. He was executed for it.

Sarah: Yeah, yeah.

Narelle: And that was during Henry VIII's era. So, I'm sorry, all you're doing is giving extra access to information, for people that need it.

Sarah: Yeah, and that's always been threatening, so yeah.

Making the glasses part of everyday life

Narelle: Yeah, just, you know, I don't know the answers. Would you be using them again? Are you going to keep using them as a better way to go travelling, And do what you want?

Anne: I'd never travel without them from now.

Narelle: I notice when we go out for dinner. Anne reads me the menu. [everybody laughs]

Sarah: Yeah. Look, I got them specifically for travel. I'm glad I got them.

Anne: You were very hesitant at first, aren't you?

Sarah: Sorry?

Anne: You were hesitant about them.

Sarah: Because I know, Anne, I know you found them useful, I'm like, oh, well, I can kind of still see, And so, would I, can I justify the expense for the use I'd get from them? But then Anne kind of encouraged me, and I saw her using them like, oh, maybe I should… So, yeah, it was directly Anne inspired me to get them. And now just day to day, I use them… all the time, to message the kids hands free if I'm on the bus. I'll be home in five. Do you need anything from the supermarket? Or I was at a bus stop the other day and there was a sign. I'm like, read the sign. It's like, this bus stop will be closed… on Wednesday between these hours. I'm like, oh, okay, good to know. So, they're so handy to have.

Narelle: And that's it. Like I said to Anne, I'm saving to get them. Anne's got me inspired because I want to travel. And there's so many, like… The last time I travelled overseas, I remember I was on the Royal Mile at Edinburgh, and of all places to get lost, I got lost there. Yeah, it's great. But it's because when I came out of the shop, not knowing… where I was, I turned the wrong way.

Anne: Yeah, it's so easy to do.

Narelle: Yeah. And I was lucky. The shopkeeper saw me, raced out and turned me the other way. She said, I think you're meant to go that way. Okay. Lucky I did, because there was some march or something coming the other way. And I got out of it. But this is what I'm saying. It will give me independence.

Anne: Exactly. And even… before we went on our trip, it was helping me decide my clothes that I was going to pack. I'd lay something out on the table, and put a pair of pants or a skirt or something, and put a top next to it. Ask Meta, what colour are these and do they match?

Narelle: Yeah.

Anne: And then, you know, swap the top for a different top with the same pair of pants, et cetera, et cetera. So, it helps in so many different ways.

Independence, confidence and control

Narelle: So, in summary, it's given you independence.

Anne: Exactly. Yep. And it's given me… sight… in situations where I haven't had it. Definitely. Even just looking outside the hotel window. I think, what's out there?

Sarah: Yeah.

Narelle: Your granddaughter getting married next year?

Anne: Next year.

Narelle: What an opportunity you have Meta tell you.

Sarah: Uh-huh.

Anne: The great thing is I can see again.

[in unison]

Anne: Yeah.

Narelle: All the things that you don't… we would not have.

Anne: Exactly.

Sarah: Yeah. And… I was going to say, I do want to preface too that you, like Anne pointed out at the beginning, you still need good O&M, you need good self-advocacy, Like, it's another tool we can add to our tool belt. It's not a cure-all, but it definitely makes it a lot easier.

Anne: Oh, yeah. First and foremost, you've got to have good skills. You've got to have confidence, you've got to be not afraid to ask for help when you need it, and you've got to use your glasses and be aware that they're AI, and AI can make mistakes.

Travel tips and airport assistance

Narelle: Yeah. Is there any other travel tips you can give people, you know, like us that want to travel, but have that bit of hesitancy?

Anne: Just plan it out. Take the time to accept what's there, plan it out. Make sure you get assistance all the way. Now, there's something that we haven't touched on.

At the airport, your luggage gets handled. Now, I did pre-book it through our travel agent, but found that… quite often it hadn't been communicated to the airline, which meant we had to sit in a corner and wait, while they organised it from the check-in desk. But one of the biggest hassles, not so much at Brisbane Airport, because we had help, getting to another airport, getting into your taxi, there's no assistance between the taxi drop off and the check-in counter. And that's in an unfamiliar airport. If you're going on

[UI]

Anne: , once there, we followed a couple in, and they directed us on where we had to go. In other places, we're wandering around for five or ten minutes, trying to find signs that we can use with our glasses.

Sarah: Yep.

Anne: It's that it's a bit of a dead area, between drop off and the check-in counter, at all airports. Yeah, once you get to check-in, you're fine, you can get assistance through security, and passport control, and head to the boarding gate and get on to the plane. But, you know, it's just that big gap area. It just sucks.

Battery life and practical considerations

Narelle: Yeah, it does. I hate that gap area. I've been in Sydney, I got lost in the gap area in Sydney. What about the battery life? So, the amount of use you would have. Is the battery life good?

Anne: Excellent. On the glasses, depending how you use it. As long as you're not doing a lot of video and filming, the batteries will last a good six hours.

Narelle: Yep.

Anne: The glasses case is a charging case. You can get four full glasses charges out of one case life.

Narelle: Oh, my God.

Anne: I basically, at home, charge my case maybe once a week, once every 10 days. And for the whole trip, I think I only recharged the case once. You're away for 30 days.

Narelle: So, in summary, you're able to travel. You're able to be independent. You don't have to have support. You don't feel like someone's leading…

Anne: You don't need constant support, but you need to be… able to ask for support if you need it. So, you've got to have the confidence to do that.

Narelle: And it's giving you control. Yep.

Sarah: Yeah.

Anne: Yeah, that's it.

Anne: Gives you control of what you want to do.

Contact details and closing

Narelle: Oh, ladies, if people want to find out more about your trip, and how you did it, is there a way to get in contact with you guys if they want to pick your brain?

Anne: Oh, they can. Email me, I guess.

Narelle: Yeah.

Anne: So… My email is my name in full, which is Anne Hyslop, A-N-N-E, H-Y-S-L-O-P… 51@gmail.com

Narelle: Yep. And Sarah, what about you?

Sarah: Yeah, so we did a little Instagram, not documentary, but I tried to document using Meta, so I did a lot of videos using Meta. So, my Instagram is Ratzfink, R-A-T… Z-F-I-N-K, or @Ratzfink. I only did up until, like, from Croatia, up until the Netherlands. I have not had a chance to do the river cruise, and all the tours throughout Germany yet. But I have the footage. We just have to edit and upload it. So, it's there. So… Yeah.

Narelle: I admit, I've seen them.

[everyone laughs]

Narelle: I've seen the lot.

Anne: How did they come out?

Narelle: Wonderful!

Anne: Really?

Narelle: Oh, yes. Our mutual friend… Sharyn and I, were sitting there going, my gosh, look at that. Look at that. Sharon's got sight, so it was wonderful.

Anne: Sharyn enjoyed them?

Narelle: Yeah. Thank you so much, ladies, for coming on. Again, I apologise for the technical difficulties. It sometimes happens and I cannot fix it. I'll go home and you know it'll work straight away. And look, if you like what we do, please like, subscribe, review, share. And please back people that use the Meta Ray-Ban glasses to manage their lives. There are people that are going to use them for bad, use them for the wrong things. We need them for the right things.

[music playing]