



Applying a neuroinclusive lens to standards development

Interview with a standards developer



Meet Randi MacAlpine

Randi is a recent graduate of the Master of Architecture program at the University of British Columbia. She also consults on accessibility for the Rick Hansen Foundation.

In her standards development work, Randi combines her passion for architecture and psychology. Her recent graduate project involved the development of a design manual to assist architects and designers in:

- Creating spaces that accommodate the unique sensory needs of people with various neurodivergent conditions
- Understanding how the principles of sensory perception can impact occupants in both their cognition and behaviour

Read what Randi has to say about considering neuroinclusivity in the standards development process.

Q&A

1 What do neurodiversity, neurodivergence and neuroinclusivity mean for standards development?

Neurodiversity is acknowledging and appreciating how everyone's brains work differently. Someone might be super creative or hyper-focused, or they might excel at problem solving or have a unique way of seeing the world. It's understanding that these differences and how our brains function is a part of what makes us, us—what makes us all unique.

Neurodivergence is how our brains don't all necessarily fit the same neurotypical mould. For example, someone's brain might function in a way that classifies them as having ADHD, autism spectrum disorder or dyslexia. And neuroinclusivity is essentially making sure everybody is welcome and supported, no matter how their brain functions, by creating spaces and systems that work for everyone—whether they're neurotypical or neurodivergent. As standards developers, we need to be making sure the rules and guidelines take into account everybody's brains to ensure that things are fair and accessible for everyone.

2 What role do standards developers play in our effort to create neuroinclusive products, services and spaces?

Standards developers play a key role in the effort to create neuroinclusive products, services and spaces by promoting equity and inclusion. And this begins with understanding all needs—what neurotypical and neurodivergent people need. Firstly, by incorporating diversity, we need to make sure the standards we create consider how a wide variety of brains might work and process things—from how we think, to how we see, or how we hear things. Everyone needs to feel included.

And by promoting accessibility, products, services and spaces should be made easy for everyone to use. And this should include testing things out, receiving feedback to continually improve, and providing a variety of options for those who might process, engage or do things differently.

3 Why is it important to prioritize neuroinclusivity when developing standards, and what are the benefits of doing so?

We need to prioritize neuroinclusivity when developing standards because, most importantly, we need to make sure everyone is included and considered. No one should be left out of the conversation, and in doing so, everyone will benefit. Making things easier to use for everyone will help remove hesitation around engagement for those who might be neurodivergent.

Also, greater development of new concepts and ideas can be achieved by including everyone's brains and their various ways of thinking and functioning. And with this, achieving greater inclusion equals happier people. We all come with our own unique brains in various strengths and functioning, and this should be embraced. This holistic approach is beneficial for everybody, and it gives us the ability to learn from one another and [makes] everyone feel appreciated and a part of the conversation.

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What is a neuroinclusive approach to standards development, and how can standards developers make neuroinclusivity a regular consideration?

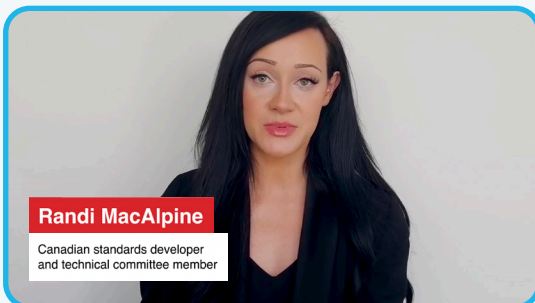
A neuroinclusive approach to standards development begins with bringing in neurodivergent individuals into the conversation. A wide spectrum of experiences and needs have to be considered and understood first before anything neuroinclusive can be achieved.

Secondly, we need to pursue standards with the idea that what is being developed is to be more easily used and enjoyed by a greater demographic, and how this might look different in various circumstances—whether it be a website offered in various formats or a product that has a wider variety of user options. It's understanding that more often than not, this is not going to look like a one-size-fits-all approach.

And lastly, regular reviews and feedback from a greater and more inclusive demographic ensure the neuroinclusive efforts are being effectively implemented. Keeping up with the times and consistently updating and involving will ensure that our understanding of brains and what works best for everyone is always evolving. This will help ensure the standards remain inclusive. And by doing all of this, we can make sure the standards developed are fair, accessible and helpful for everyone—no matter how their brains work.

LOOKING AHEAD

When developing standards, keep usability in mind. Consider if the standards will apply to various demographics. Think about alternative formats and purposes that can make it easier for more people to use the material. Inclusivity in standards development is key to continuously improve the products, services and spaces we all use.



We invite you to watch Randi's interview in video format. You can also read about another standards professional's perspective in their [Q&A](#).



[Watch the video interview with Randi MacAlpine](#)

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