Brilliant. Well, what a great start.

We've got lots of questions here.

I'm really sorry, I'm not sure we're going to get through

all of them but we'll do our best.

We need to move to the next session at 10 past,

we've got just about 10 minutes to ask us these questions.

These are going to the three presenters

that we've already had this morning.

In no particular order,

I think I'd like to start with the first question,

and actually any of the panel members could answer this one.

What is the single thing do you think

that's made the biggest difference to the experience?

Paul-Georg, actually, that question was primarily directed to you.

Do you want to kick us off with that?

Paul-Georg is with me, actually,

so I'm going to turn my computer around.

Probably the one event or the one thing that

made the biggest difference for me

was just really to see, to have a device such as the iPhone

that already provide inbuilt accessibility features,

because this is the time when you realize

that it actually becomes a mainstream feature,

something that is viewed as a necessity or something

that should already be provided to everyone,

and that makes everyone's life easier in the end.

So that was probably for my part,

the biggest thing that made a difference for me.

Brilliant.

Any of the other panelists want to have a go in that one?

I can jump in. It actually completely mirrors

what Mike has just said in the chat,

that the universities tend to listen to the student voice

more than they listen to staff talking about the student voice.

Hearing it from people like Paul-Georg is very powerful,

and seeing the demonstrable impact of digital accessibility

on a real person is quite a powerful thing.

I think that's so important,

making sure that the end users,

the students, those that benefit are heard.

I would agree with you, Dan.

I always say it's a sandwich approach.

You need the student voice

and you need the senior leadership support,

and that seems to create momentum that can be meaningful.

But again, without using the word, "stories" again,

you'll get in those real life stories that make people

understand that it's not a tick box exercise,

it's not extra-admin, it's about equity.

I think I come in from a slightly different perspective.

I often find in some of my conversations,

I go for the stick maybe more than the carrot of good user stories.

I'd say, one of the most interesting and eye-opening conversations we often

have is when it comes down to

building empathy when talking about the barriers that people face.

Take the chat, for example.

Say lots of people have been saying they can't hear, they can't see;

these are tech barriers that have been put in

place and that are stopping people's engagement in the conference.

When we have some conversations like that and show

these barriers in place and explain that this is affecting many students,

many members of the public,

many members of staff,

and that we need to do something about

removing these barriers so everyone can have that consistent experience.

That, definitely coupled with real-world stories as well,

I think is part of that sandwich approach that Amy was just talking about.

I totally agree with that.

The next question now,

if we had the rest of the day with this conversation,

I'm not sure we'd get to the bottom of this one,

but Darren has asked,

a number of people with vision impairment

that he's worked with over the years have suggested

that PDFs are the work of the devil

and most want their documents in straight text.

However, more recently,

he's met students that don't mind PDFs.

What's your view on this?

Paul-Georg, can we start with you?

Yes, I personally think it just all comes down

to each person's preference.

I also don't mind PDFs at that,

probably coded add-ins in them,

so I think it's very much just what the students prefer.

I say you could like HTML if it makes your life easier,

if you prefer Microsoft Word, if you prefer PDF.

I think for me personally,

the main issue is really to provide

or to give different alternatives

to a great range of different students.

So, that I can pick the one that they're most comfortable with,

and I wouldn't say that that's to be like it's great.

You know, no PDF, or no Word, or no HTML.

I think everything can be helpful

if it makes the students feel more comfortable,

or reaching things more accessible.

Brilliant, I think choice is king, isn't it?

Any of the other panelists have a view on PDFs?

I'm sure you do.

Well, I don't know if Richard Morton's around to be about,

but I know what he'd say.

from a government perspective,

there's definitely a move for a lot of the content

on gov.uk to be moving away from PDFs to HTML,

and there's a lot of good reasons for that.

I still think there are some cases where PDFs may be required.

But again, my personal opinion is it's horses for courses,

it's whatever we can do to fit the user best.

If someone prefers a PDF,

or if someone wants it as a Word document,

or as a HTML file,

or as plain text,

whatever we can do to accommodate, is its worthwhile.

From my perspective,

I just think PDFs were designed for printing,

they were never meant to be digital documents to be navigated easily.

We've got a number of visually impaired colleagues

and similar to the experience expressed in the chat,

some of them really hate PDFs

and others have learned to put up with them, but typically,

HTML does tend to be preferable for screen reader users,

but again, having a choice of formats is always fantastic.

But for all those that talk about conserving the information in it's state.

I mean there's plenty of ways you can pull data out of a PDF,

so that one definitely doesn't stand up.

Some of the quality of PDFs that I write there is shoddyism, if that's a word.

I've just seen, Gavin's added PDF equals please don't force people to use.

Interesting.

I like that.

Okay. I have these so many questions.

There was an interesting one here.

Initially to you Dan,

do you think institutional leadership

regarding digital accessibility has been crucial

to progress or not during and prior to the pandemic?

I think it is, but I think it has to be done in the right way,

so I don't think that my approach is that, "thou shall doesn't work."

It might work to an extent,

maybe it worked with GDPR,

go and do this training course, textBOX,

but I think with something like digital accessibility,

you have to lead from the front really.

Getting an executive group to make sure

that their emails are accessible,

the documents that they get created

at council and executive group,

want to make them accessible

so that that anyone can engage with them.

It's that small steps approach to showing

that not only are they trying to convey the message that this is good,

but they acknowledge that it's a good thing for them to be doing.

There's no point saying you need to go and do it

and then they don't practice what they preach.

I think they need to lead from the front.

The simple things; planning the emails,

making sure your emails are accessible,

documents that are accessible and just encouraging

people to do that small steps approach.

Because I think as I mentioned,

creating accessible documents is not that hard if

you understand the mechanisms behind it and why you're doing that.

When you're trying to retrofit something,

that's when it becomes complicated.

I think, I completely agree with Amy.

That sandwich approach is key.

You need the user voices,

but you also need the proactive senior managers as well.

I think leadership is a many splendid thing, isn't it?

There's layers of leadership and some of it is

just about being realistic about resourcing,

budget, staff, time, those kinds of things.

I think when you do the "thou shall",

but do it in your own time and in a way and everything else,

that's a pretty poor bit of leadership, you know?

You need a senior leader,

but you need the layers beneath that committed,

supported, and provided with what they need to do their bit.

I think role model behavior is key

because if you've got someone who is allowed to sworn about saying,

'This doesn't apply to me.'

It's the dominant Cummings effect in lockdown, isn't it?