

# Working in a Data Center: Conversation on Perspectives in Accessibility

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## ABSTRACT

Within this paper we have illustrated the difficulties of working in a datacentre while having a disability. Enlightening the other students, faculty members or co-workers of the obstacles faced on a daily basis, should be addressed by the college on the start of each academic year and the employer annually. Simple steps or awareness can make the difference to the disabled individuals assimilation into an established group.

## CCS CONCEPTS

### KEYWORDS

ACM proceedings, Muscular Dystrophy, heavy servers, isolation

### ACM Reference format:

## Introduction

My name is Tania Quill and I am currently studying my Masters of Science in Private Cloud Technologies at LYIT. I have congenital Muscular Dystrophy which is a disability which weakens the muscle. This can lead to a person having mobility issues or limited strength. My disability effects my arms and legs has my strength would be quite poor in my arms. I would also fall and trip easily.

My name is Mary Walsh MGinty and I am currently studying for my BSc(Hons) in Computing in Computer Services Management as a mature student and I am a mother of three children. I have met Tania Quill through the LYIT ACM\_W chapter and have enjoyed her company.

## Minority

Tania - As a female in computing I already fall into a minority group. This has be apparent since I started my studies in computing. In first year there was three females in my class group and in one year I was the only female. This can led it to being harder to form friendships with people as if there is a few lads together they may automatically feel connected or find it easy to create a friendship. But I also fall into another minority group as in first year there was

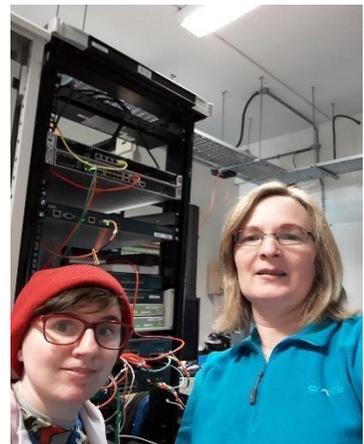
only three students with physical disability in my whole year group. In the last two years I have been the only student with a physical disability in the group.

Mary- As a mature student and a female I am very much a minority in the college. There are a lot of male mature students similar in age, but most of the female mature students close to my age have left after the second year and after the third year none continued. I am the only female in my class and the male students are much younger and we are on two different levels. They are big into gaming and I have no interest in it.

## Difficulties faced

Tania - As I am now a student in cloud computing I now find myself being in the datacentre. In datacenter's the walkways can be very narrow. I have noticed how narrow the walkways are. Have noticed that if a person was in a wheelchair they would not be able to enter datacenter's because of this that student would feel isolated and left out. There is also cases in datacenter's where cables maybe on the floor or loosely hangs for anyone these are trip hazards but for me with bad balance it is extra dangers. Also, if I fall I need help getting up with the tight space in datacentre's it would be difficult for someone to help me.

We had a class where we had to move the servers and open them and add memory to them. As I am not strong enough I was not able to lift and move the servers. Although my class mates where very nice and did give assistance this leaves me feeling at times that maybe think I am taking advantage or they may think I am just being lazy if they are not fully aware of my disability as it is not visible. I do at times say why I am not able to move or lift that due to my disability but through doing this I then worry have I made the person feel uncomfortable. So even though I do know it is ok to ask



for help do worry about how the other person will respond and feel. Then

there is the issue of when people do become aware sometimes they become to helpful and start to think that I am completely incapable.

them apart. Also, if a person with a disability such as dwarfism was in a datacenter they would not be able to use the table or console. Also, as the racks are so high it is also difficult for people of small height to cable up the servers. Datacenter's can be very loud, so this would affect people with hearing disabilities and the lighting could affect people with intolerance to lights.

Mary – Being a mature student and raising three children by myself can be very chaneling at times. Trying to balance my college work along with their needs without support sometimes becomes very stressful. When a crisis arises with one of them the college work has to wait, adding to the pressure. There is no social activities for the mature students to participate in, in the college or groups where they could meet outside of college hours like there is for the international students. It can become very isolating, being a mature student especially a female one. I have met Tania through the LYIT ACM-W chapter. I understand her worries. It is also difficulty for an abled bodied person to know when to offer help and when to let them be. I offer my help when I see her carrying heavy or bulky objects. By holding the door open wide enough for her to get through and waiting for her to pass in before letting it go. These little actions help her to manoeuvre around the corridors and into the class rooms easier. Walking slower beside her so she doesn't feel rushed or that she is holding anybody up. I would not like her to feel that her independence was not respected by offering to do things for her. Then on the other hand I would not like her to feel uncomfortable in asking for assistance when she needs it. No matter how often she needs it.



Figure 1 Tania in College Datacentre

Also, the height of the table in datacenter's are quite so people would find it difficult to work with the servers if they have to take

## Difference and Similarities

As females in computing we also fall into different minority group, both facing different channels. However something we both face is that for the mature student and a student with disabilities there are little to no set activities. Although other students try to included us it would be nice to meet with people facing the same challenges , who we can relate to.

## Changes

Tania – Datacenter's could be made more accessible for people with disabilities by making them wider so that a wheelchair can enter. In datacenter's if the tables and console heights could be adjust this would make it easier for people in wheelchairs and with disabilities that effect a person's height. There also are not many people in computing with disabilities so it is important that people are made aware. Also if there away the servers could be moved more easily this would be very helpful for people. Also if the stacks in datacentre's were not as high it would be easier

Mary – I agree with Tania, the obstacles faced by both physically and visually impaired students should be addressed in the student development module. Students with these disabilities should be given the opportunity to explain to the other students what their needs are going to be, moving forward in the course of study. I would also like to see more social activities and gatherings geared towards both the mature students and the students with disabilities. It is very important for this group of students to have a social outlet. Somewhere where they can meet and do things together as a group.

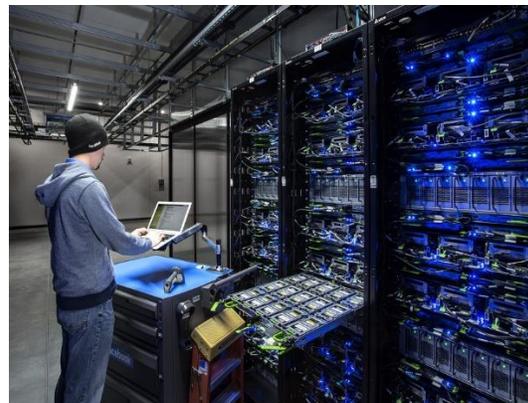


Figure 2 Datacenter what we would like