The National Federation of the Blind in Computer Science Annual Business Meeting Minutes for July 5, 2024

When it becomes available, a link to a recording of this meeting will be sent to those who have registered for the division in 2024. To become a registered member of the NFB in Computer Science, visit

<https://web.nfbcal.org/nfbcsreg>

A meeting of the National Federation of the Blind in Computer Science (NFBCS) was held at the Rosen Centre Hotel, in Orlando Florida, on Friday, July 5, 2024.

The meeting was called to order by President Brian Buhrow at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

# Business Meeting

Two program items were presented, after which President Buhrow called the business meeting to order at 3 P.M.

The membership agreed that the minutes from the NFBCS 2023 business meeting need not be read since the minutes had been distributed by e-mail. The minutes were approved.

A motion was passed saying that if a member paid dues more than once a year, that the additional dues would be considered to be a donation to the chapter.

The treasurer, Curtis Chong, next presented the Treasurer's Report. On June 30, 2024, the NFBCS treasury had a balance of $554.97. The treasurer's report was approved.

It was moved that the NFBCS contribute a total of $300.00 to the NFB: $150 to the STEM scholarship, and $150 to the White Cane fund which sends money directly to the general treasury of the Federation. The motion was carried.

The treasurer reported that the NFBCS paid approximately $33 in PayPal fees this past year.

Since 2024 is an even-numbered year, elections were held. There are four officers and three Board members. Elected were: Brian Buhrow, President; Steve Jacobson, Vice-president; Louis Maher, Secretary; Curtis Chong, Treasurer; Michael Sahyun, Board Position One; Harry Staley, Board Position Two, and Michael Forzano, Board Position Three.

The business meeting adjourned at 3:25 PM.

Next, the rest of the program was presented.

# Presentations

Below is a list of talks that were given during the 2023 NFBCS meeting. Some meeting attendee comments are included.

**Amazon Web Services Accessibility: Advancements and Solutions**

Jack Marchetti, Senior Solutions Architect, Amazon Web Services Accessibility

Joshua Miele, Principal Accessibility Researcher, Amazon Web Services Accessibility

Justine Pascalaides, Head, Amazon Web Services Accessibility

Discussion and Feedback for Amazon

**ACTION:**

Ms. Pascalaides asked the NFBCS chapter president to work with Amazon to set up regular communications between Amazon and the NFB.

Curtis Chong Read NFBCS Resolution 2024-01:

NFBCS Resolution 2024-01

Regarding the accessibility of Amazon Web Services (AWS)

Harry Staley seconded Curtis' motion. The resolution passed. This resolution is pasted at the end of these minutes.

**Certification Testing with Pearson: How to Request and Obtain Accommodations in the Certification Process from Pearson's Perspective**

Debbie Bergtholdt, Accommodations Manager, Pearson View

Questions and Discussion

Ms. Bergtholdt is having a public session at 6 PM on the evening of July 5, 2024, so that people can ask questions.

**ACTION:**

Ms. Bergtholdt has slides for this talk which Brian Buhrow should get. These slides include personal contact information which should not be publicly shared, and a general inquiry email address.

**ACTION:**

Ms. Bergtholdt will provide a slide presentation that can be publicly shared.

Brian Buhrow asked Pearson to set up a personal account system so that people can establish a Pearson ID so that a person taking several tests should not have to provide all the same information for each test.

Ms. Bergtholdt said that Pearson does not like to hold personal information.

Ms. Bergtholdt said that each test provider has their own rules about what information they need, and the providers insist that each test taker provide their information each time they take a test.

Harry Staley said that individuals should not have to go through the approval process for each test they take.

Harry described his security-controlled site which does not allow employees to carry cell phones. Pearson had a process of informing individuals, by phone, when they can take a test, and the test taker must agree at the time of the phone call.

Since test takers could not be called, the test alternatives were delivered by voice messages, and the test taker could not immediately respond to give the test-taker's decision. It can take months of this voice-mail process before Pearson and a test taker can agree on a test date.

Curtis Chong said sometimes people need Braille. He also asked how Pearson could set test conditions for the blind—where did Pearson get its blindness expertise?

Curtis pointed out that Pearson provides the JAWS installation for the test taker. Often JAWS needs to be customized to the test taker's needs and this can take an hour assuming that the test taker has the knowledge to customize their own installations.

Curtis called for the elimination of visual test biases.

Pearson should have close contact with the NFB concerning setting test conditions for the blind.

One person had light sensitivity, and had a great deal of problems with the test check-in process.

Another person was required to send a picture of their ID to Pearson, and they were unable to do this due to their blindness.

Another person requested that there be a witness during the test taking interval in case of inaccessible test material such as diagrams.

**Azure Like It: Microsoft's Inclusive and Accessible Cloud and Developer Tools**

Ryan Shugart, Senior Program Manager, Cloud+AI Accessibility

Ed Summers, Head of Accessibility, GitHub

Questions and Discussion

**Many Paths to a Career in Tech: Stories From the Trenches,** a panel discussion

Moderator: Harry Staley, Senior Software Engineer

**Artificial Intelligence: An Overview and a Practical Application**

Michael Sahyun, Software Engineer

Geoffrey Peddle, AI Engineer, Aira

# Adjournment

The division meeting was adjourned at 5 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Louis Maher, Secretary

National Federation of the Blind in Computer Science

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# Resolution

National Federation of the Blind

in Computer Science

Resolution 2024-01

Regarding the accessibility of Amazon Web Services (AWS)

WHEREAS, Amazon Web Services (AWS) is comprised of a large number of diverse web applications designed to fulfill a plethora of customer requirements, including: virtual computing, virtual networks, database servers, large data stores, telephony and conference services, and a host of other specialized services; and

WHEREAS, most of these services are made available to the public through browser-based interfaces which, after a decade of effort and public availability, have not yet reached the level of nonvisual accessibility that would enable blind users and support professionals to work with AWS with the same effectiveness and efficiency as the sighted; and

WHEREAS, the need to use visually-based techniques to manipulate Amazon Web Services is particularly troublesome to blind technology professionals who rely on screen reading technology to support Amazon Web Services systems inasmuch as many of the support functions they must use are limited to visual techniques involving pointing, clicking, and dragging with the mouse; and

WHEREAS, the infrastructure used by the browser-based interfaces to Amazon Web Services is architected around a series of restful API calls which are publicly available through Amazon's python-based command line development toolkit which offers an interface that is nonvisual accessible; and

WHEREAS, this underlying infrastructure remains woefully underutilized because of a lack of detailed documentation regarding the specific data elements which can be used to build and maintain individual AWS environments; for example, the specific data elements required to build and maintain a virtual environment utilizing Amazon Chime or Amazon Lightsail services; and

WHEREAS, such detailed documentation would be invaluable, not only to Amazon's blind or low vision customers for whom AWS would become much more accessible than it is today, but also to its enterprise customers; and

WHEREAS, making comprehensive and detailed documentation available would most likely result in an increased uptick in demand for and utilization of AWS services by enterprise customers; and

WHEREAS, because the AWS command line infrastructure is already built, tested and in use by Amazon itself, all that is needed is additional documentation to permit Amazon's customers to experience AWS services in a whole new and delightfully scalable manner; and

WHEREAS, competitors such as Akamai have already proven that it is possible to build and maintain virtual environments using Akamai services without touching a browser by making the documentation and support of its restful API and, by extension, its command line interface, a top priority: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind in Computer Science in meeting assembled this 5th day of July 2024 in the city of Orlando, Florida that this organization strongly urge Amazon to improve the accessibility of its Amazon Web Services platform by:

1. fully documenting and supporting its restful API for its suite of AWS services,

2. documenting the data elements, including the JSON choices available for controlling its suite of AWS services necessary to control and direct the data flow and manipulation of customer data so as to provide, at the very least, the same functionality offered today through the browser-based interfaces,

3. publishing and making this documentation widely available to all customers, individual and enterprise alike, and

4. in the long term, keeping this documentation in good working order as its products and services evolve.