

# SIGACCESS Member Profile

*Becky Gibson*

IBM, Emerging Technologies Division

URL: <http://www.weba11y.com>

E-mail: [gibsonb@us.ibm.com](mailto:gibsonb@us.ibm.com)

Member of SIGACCESS since: 2004

## **1. How many years have you been working in this area?**

I've worked full time in accessibility since 2004. In 2000 I started working on Web accessibility for the product development teams I worked within at the time – Lotus Notes and Lotus Workplace.

## **2. Please describe your current and/or past research project(s):**

I am not a researcher but a developer in the IBM Software Group. I have most recently been involved in helping to develop the Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA) specification which is happening through the Protocols and Formats group within the Web Accessibility Initiative of the W3C. While I am not a formal member of the Working Group, IBM contributed significantly to the specification and was responsible for getting it started. I have contributed to the specification and created examples. Currently I am integrating the ARIA techniques into the widget set of the Dojo Open Source Toolkit for JavaScript.

## **3. What is your professional background?**

I have a BS Degree in Natural Resource Management with a minor in Soil Science and an Option in Land Use Planning from the University of Maine. When I graduated I could not find a job in my field. I had taken a required course in the Fortran programming language my senior year and found I really enjoyed it. Programming is like solving puzzles to me. My first job out of colleges was in a Computer Store (before there was one on every corner) as a technician and trainer and I then took a job at Lotus Development Corp working in 1-2-3 Support. I continued taking programming courses and moved to writing printer and video drivers for 1-2-3 (this was before Windows). Eventually I completed my MS in Computer Science from Boston University Metropolitan College. I have worked as a programmer / architect on various versions of Lotus 1-2-3, Lotus Notes & Domino and Lotus Workplace. Other than the computer store and a brief stint at Fidelity Investments I have worked my entire career for Lotus or a Lotus subsidiary and eventually IBM through acquisition.

## **4. What technology or product would you really like to see developed? Why?**

I admit that I am very naïve about the issues surrounding voice recognition but I think capable voice recognition would be a great start towards making the computer more accessible for all. Truly operating and interacting with the computer via speech would

enable better access for visually impaired users. Voice recognition would provide automatic captioning when needed. In order to make this happen, the ubiquitous computer needs to be brought to the mainstream. We need a new operating system and user interface paradigm. When people insist on having safe, non-visual computer access in the car or in noisy environments the technology will be better financed and eventually conquered.

**5. *Are there any user groups that you feel are currently underserved by the research community? Why?***

I personally know the least about cognitive disabilities, although I know there is significant research in this field. But, as a developer trying to make it easier to create accessible Web sites, I cannot find much information or techniques for improving Web accessibility for this set of users.

**6. *Have you participated in any SIGACCESS-sponsored event (e.g. the annual ASSETS conference)?***

I presented a demo of Dynamic Web Content Accessibility (which has been renamed to Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA)) in 2005. I was not able to attend in 2006 due to participation in another conference.