



MY STORY OF LIFELONG LEARNING

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I love using technology and I have always wanted to learn more about it.

I bought a laptop for myself during the COVID lockdown in 2020. It was my first personal laptop. I thought about buying a laptop before the COVID lockdowns but didn't. For many years, I thought I didn't need to have a personal computer because I could use a shared one at my day service. Also, there were many different laptops to choose from and I didn't know which one would be easy to use.



However, during the COVID lockdowns, I couldn't attend activities in person. Online meetings became the only way to participate in programs. So, the house staff helped me decide on which laptop would work well for me and advised which one was of great quality. They helped me set up my laptop. So now I can use Google, YouTube, email and play computer games. I love my laptop because it's easy to use.

Since then, I have been able to look up clips of interest on YouTube and watch them on my own. Having a laptop makes things much easier and gives me privacy. Before COVID, I mainly watched YouTube videos on the TV in the living room. Myself, my four housemates and staff at home shared the TV. I watched whatever was on the TV. Now I can control what I watch because of my personal laptop. I enjoy searching YouTube for videos. It has so many video recommendations for me.

One day, I typed in Justin Bieber on YouTube to watch his music videos. After that, I am always seeing Justin Bieber's music videos on my YouTube front page. I don't need to search for them again, they just appear. There are many new songs by him that I didn't know before. YouTube also recommends many other videos to me. And I like most of them.

I still don't know why YouTube seems to know what I like. But I have learnt that it's because of AI. What is AI again? I still don't know. But I was told that AI is like a very smart robot. Youtube is amazing and brings me so much fun. That's not all, sometimes, I show my laptop screen to my housemates and watch videos I like together. I feel so happy to share it as they all love the videos I show them.

I love using the search bar on YouTube to find music. But searching videos on YouTube is more tricky than picking music from the auto recommendations. Sometimes, it brings up the wrong ones. For example, I once searched "Let it Snow", it showed me the version I didn't want.



Staff also helped me create my personal email account because I needed it to set up my laptop. Otherwise, I don't think I want to have a personal email. I know emails could be important these days, thankfully, I can use a shared email account at my day service centre. Sometimes I make digital flyers for the committee meeting on the computer and send them out to the committee.

When I was on Facebook, there were people I didn't know who sent me photos and chatted with me via Messenger. In the beginning, I talked to them because I was confused. I didn't know who they were and why they messaged me. But later I found out that they might be hackers. I deleted these things by myself and didn't want to ask for help from any staff. I was scared. They might ask for my phone number next, and my home address. I deleted my accounts and I don't need to deal with them again.

I just do not feel comfortable having these personal things associated with technology. I don't share my mobile number, I don't share my email address and I have deleted my Facebook and Messenger accounts. Like the incident at Optus, that's so scary. I am worried about using my email, people might hack my email. If I get hacked, personal details on the computer will be leaked. I share my email with the only disability service I am in. Because I know who they are and I trust them.



I use the shared email as my primary contact. Staff tell me whenever there is an external email related to me. I also check the shared email almost every day on a desktop at the day service centre because I enjoy getting our monthly newsletters. I think it's so much easier to read emails on the computer than on my phone. Seeing emails on the computer screen helps me understand them better.

I am always excited to receive the internal emails at the day service. I want to check the staff roster once it comes out, so I have a heads-up for which staff takes me for the once-per-week one-on-one shift with me. The one-on-one is always changing, like it could start earlier or later, and last shorter or longer. But I don't need to worry as I can know the arrangement ahead and make plans in my mind. I believe it's part of being independent.

However, things in emails can be tricky sometimes, such as links and files. They take me to a different place and sometimes they don't work and make me confused. When I have problems like this, I ask the staff to help me. We often solve problems together. If we cannot solve it, at least I know it's not my fault. I want to keep learning more about technology. In particular, I want to be able to problem-solve when there are problems. For example, when technology breaks down, how to fix it. If the internet stops working, how do I reconnect? I don't want to always rely on staff to get help.



I love making crafts like jewellery and keychains. When I first heard from staff that people set up online stores to sell their self-made jewellery and post them on social media like Instagram and Facebook, I was so excited. I wish I knew how to do that. I want to learn how to build a website so that I can have a website to sell the jewellery I make. But, I also heard from staff that there are lots of strangers online and we don't know them and that can be dangerous. I once thought that maybe a staff member would help me create a website to promote my jewellery that is for sale. The good thing is, we set up a fundraising store at Bunnings and we sold the craft we made at the day service.

But things are always changing and many things are outside of my control.

When I made jewellery, my friend Sadie used to join me. She loved it. But sadly she got sick and she no longer came to the day service. This year, we no longer made jewellery as staff told me the equipment is no longer available. So we do artwork this year instead. Sadie also passed away in September. I went to her funeral. I am really sad and miss my friend.



Before COVID lockdowns, 4 of us from my day service went to the Toastmasters club at Hornsby RSL every month. I was able to continue attending the Toastmasters program because I could access it easily through the Zoom meeting app on my laptop. I just thought I would never continue it without both lockdowns and my new laptop.

Toastmasters is an education program that helps people improve their communication and public speaking skills. It taught me to speak up for myself. I have always wanted to get my independence back. I am proud that I can attend committee meetings with the manager at my day service and represent participants on the staff training days. I have been on the committee of my day service for many years. Toastmasters have helped me become more confident in speaking during committee meetings. During these committee meetings, we discuss what activities we want to do and make plans for them.

Through Toastmasters, it was very interesting to meet people outside of my day service and get to know them. These days, I feel that I only meet people outside of my day service sometimes, like going to my day program friend's birthday parties and going to the big Christmas party organised by my day service.



I love the Toastmasters club, but I had to stop it after the COVID lockdowns. There is no longer staff available to take me there. At the day service, we go out every day to different places, like parks, shops and movies. I am not sure if the online Toastmasters meeting is still available, but I think I have to attend the activities to join everyone at my day service. I would love to continue doing Toastmasters in the future if I can.

I used to attend the transition-to-work program for some time each week, where I gained work experience at McDonald's and Woolworths. I also got help to make my resume on the computer. But now, I just go to the day service five days each week and no longer have access to the work experience program. I hope to learn more through technology. So one day, I can attend TAFE online to learn about retail work and hospitality. They use computers and iPads these days and we no longer do things on paper. And I want to work at a cafe. Now I hope to get help to understand how to sign up for TAFE online courses. Because I think TAFE can help me gain more knowledge and experience and get into the workforce.

It's very important that I get help with technology when I need it. It's very important that I can learn more about using technology. I can then feel confident in using it to get what I need and want.



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The digital narratives were co-created with participants across a set of online and face-to-face workshops in addition to focus groups and follow-up one-to-one interviews. Each of the participants worked with the project team to examine, explore and create these digital accessible books of their personal experiences with everyday technologies to share the impact of such technologies upon their daily lives.

Over a period of two years, research participants were able to critically engage with AI technologies and create these books to publicly disseminate their diverse experiences with the aim of enabling others to learn from their personal experiences. The stories are developed from the narratives of the participants, using AI technologies such as Mid Journey to generate illustrations and Chat GPT to develop the alternative text that describes the illustrations.

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