USACM CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Washington, D.C., July 23, 2015 – The ACM U.S. Public Policy Council (USACM) joins the country’s celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a landmark law that has increasingly enabled people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of society, and, in so doing, has contributed to innovation and enhancement of technologies used by all of us.

Technology advances during the past 25 years have contributed to different dimensions in empowering people with disabilities. The global growth of the Internet and computing technologies have fundamentally changed the way in which we live, learn, work, and participate in society. It has improved access to vital public information, social and health care services, education, employment opportunities and resources. As those structures and technologies have developed, thus ensuring access for those with limitations and disabilities, they have brought benefits more fully to millions.

“Accessibility and usability are crucial to an inclusive digital world,” said Harry Hochheiser, the Chair of the USACM Accessibility Committee, and Assistant Professor of Biomedical Informatics at the University of Pittsburgh. “When the ADA was enacted in 1990, the Internet revolution was still a few years away. Although technological advances have allowed people with vision, hearing, mobility, and cognitive disabilities to participate in the richness of the web, mobile technologies, social media, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things, the ADA has been a vital tool for ensuring fair and equal access to these technologies and the opportunities they present.”

“In keeping with the vision of the ADA, we owe it to future generations to continue to innovate and to widen future possibilities for an inclusive digital world,” said Eugene H. Spafford, Chair of USACM, and Professor at Purdue University. “Advances in computing will continue to expand the possibilities for everyone to interact, no matter their circumstances or physical world limitations.”

Emergent areas of innovation bring the potential to empower people – including those with disabilities – to interact more easily, effectively, efficiently, and safely with the world using technology. The advancements of the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, wearable technologies, and 3D printing can be used to give people with disabilities highly personalized, adaptive, and flexible options for leading more independent lives.

The ACM U.S. Public Policy Council looks forward to the next 25 years of exciting advances in computing technologies. We reaffirm our commitment to working with U.S. policy leaders, the computing community, and across all sectors of society to ensure a disability-inclusive policy agenda that expands access, promotes innovation, enables research and development, and continues efforts to fully implement the ADA.

Read USACM’s statement in full.
About ACM and the ACM U.S. Public Policy Council
ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery (www.acm.org), is the world’s largest educational and scientific computing society, uniting computing educators, researchers and professionals to inspire dialogue, share resources and address the field’s challenges. The ACM U.S. Public Policy Council (USACM) (usacm.acm.org) serves as the focal point for ACM’s interaction with the U.S. government in all matters of U.S. public policy related to information technology. ACM U.S. Public Policy Council statements represent the views of the Council and do not necessarily represent the views of the Association.

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