**Episode 5: Marianne Castano Bishop, AKA Mian Bishop, Ed.D., Platform Product Manager, EBSCO.**

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**Kim Cadieux:** Welcome to Long Overdue: Libraries and Technology, a podcast for librarians where we explore the impacts that technology has had on the library industry, look at current technology trends, and explore what the future could hold.

Welcome to Long Overdue. My name is Kim Cadieux. Today we're talking to Mian Bishop, the platform product manager of accessibility and internationalization at EBSCO Information

Services. Our conversation today is about accessibility.

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**Kim Cadieux:** So Mian, what do you do at EBSCO Information Services?

**Mian Bishop:** I'm the platform product manager for accessibility and internationalization. So, as platform product manager for accessibility, one of the things that I tend to do when I'm trying to explain what my role is is use some kind of a metaphor. If you think of a conductor in an orchestra, so we have different musicians in the orchestra, and they play their own instruments, and they all like contributing to harmony and to the music and all of that. So I help everybody in the group.

The individuals are doing, let's say, one particular music or a particular domain, let's say the designers, for example, the developers, and really help figure out some of the ways that we can then sync our work together so that then, at the end of it, we really have an harmonious music or harmonious work that we're putting together. So that then, at the end of the day, really, what's happening with our work that we're doing, is we're not only giving our customers or listeners, for this particular analogy, just a satisfying and delightful experience, but really to translate that into, what do we do with our customers and users to make sure that when they use our products, the information that they gather from our databases and the experience that they have with the interface or platform that they're using is actually seamless, it's actually satisfying to them. It gives them the opportunity to be able to then get to the information as soon as possible without any barriers.

So with the accessibility piece, it's really – two words that come to mind – is really seamless and barrier free, and as a conductor is really helping to achieve the seamlessness and the barrier free user interface for our customers and end users.

**Kim Cadieux**: So it sounds like you think about the user journey for all.

**Mian Bishop**: Absolutely.

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**Kim Cadieux**: What is accessibility as far as you're concerned?

**Mian Bishop:** That's a good question. Usually, when we think of accessibility, when we think of, sorry, access, right? We think of ease of use, right? So we want to, when we say, "I want to be able to have access to that information, or access to that person," or whatever the case might be, we're really, at the back of our minds, we're really hoping to have ease of use. Right?

So one of the things that we're trying to do with accessibility in terms of our work at EIS is really to be able to provide ease of use for our customers and end users. So, if we were then to move the idea of ease of use to our products and services, one of the things that we really need to be able to do is, the ease of use, as I mentioned earlier, is supposed to be seamless and barrier free. So if I was to then use the term of accessibility that the World Wide Web Consortium W3C has used, and I can look at my cheat sheet here, is one of the things that they're saying is that web accessibility means that websites, tools and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them.

So there's really an interesting thing with accessibility, as far as W3C is concerned, is they came up with five concepts, or things that they would want people with disabilities to be able to do with a web. And I'm using an acronym, which is PUNIC, so P-U-N-I-C. So really, what we would like to do is to have people with disabilities be able to equally perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the web, and also be able to contribute equally to the web without any barriers.So really, as you mentioned earlier, Kim, it's really looking at things that we can do for all of our users, whether or not they have a disability, so really easy access for everybody.

If we think of disability, there's different kinds, right? We have speech, auditory, visual, we have neurological, we have cognitive. And one of the things, at least as far as our products and services are concerned, one of the things that we're really looking at is really helping those people with print disabilities, which is not a formal disability, but it's a disability where people who have visual impairment, low vision, colorblindness, blind, have some difficulty getting to our databases or content.

So we want to be able to make sure that when they do get to our database or interface, and get to our content, that they're able to then, let's say if it's an article or an ebook or whatever, they're able to then use their screen readers or whatever assistive technology they're using to be able to then get to that information. So really, what a sighted person, for example, can do, we would like the people who have a visual impairment to be able to do similarly or if not the same.

**Kim Cadieux:** So our products actually need to sort of integrate with all these tools that

people with disabilities have.

**Mian Bishop:** That's really the hope. So, the really good thing is that we have an excellent team of designers, developers, and architects, and PMs, product managers, and those other wonderful people who are really trying to increase awareness of accessibility, at the same time, also trying to really bake in accessibility in our features and functionalities.

The term that we've been using for a while now is making our features and functionalities born accessible, to be able to put codes and make sure that our features and functionalities actually are accessible from the get-go, so that we don't have to go back and fix things or enhance things or whatever.

We have an accessibility app we have piloted with certain universities. So a student who encountered a particular article, for example, that's not screen readable, can then fill out this form and then it comes back to us. And then we're able to then send it out for alternative formatting, and then we send that particular updated file back to the student. We also have eBooks, for example, has a production team that's really, really great in putting together whatever alt formatting that they need to do for eBooks, and then they send it off to the customer as well. So those are some of the things that we do with the content piece. But we also are really working really hard right now with making our interface and platform accessible to everybody.

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**Kim Cadieux:** All right, so what sparked your interest in accessibility?

M**ian Bishop:** So my interest in accessibility was part with experience I had when I was a child. I had a neighbor, his name was Berto. Nobody really played with him. We would be in a group and we were playing together with other children, and he would just be quiet in one corner and just staring at me. And so I was really wondering like, I don't like people staring at me. So I was really wondering why he kept doing that. So I talked to him, but he couldn't really speak. So that was the first, I think, encounter that I had with somebody with a disability.

And so I was really intrigued by his behavior, and I really wanted to be able to understand him, and also be able to interact with him, to engage with him. So I would talk to him. I loved storytelling. So would tell him stories and stuff. And the nice thing with that is I found out that he understood me in some level, and his eyes would either grow big, or he starts smiling, or he would just look at me with his kind eyes. So I think while my parents or my grandparents taught me kindness, I think what I learned from Berto is really a sense of empathy and really to be able to then put myself in his shoes to really figure out what some things is going on with him.

And so the kind of the empathy and the kindness and the awareness of the differences that we have. So one of the things that I've been doing for the past several years, focusing on at least two domains, which is diversity and inclusion. And diversity could include disabilities. It could include people with perhaps mental health issues, people with just all kinds of diversity that we can think of. In other words, what population might be different from us, for example. And then the inclusion piece is really being able to include everybody. There's no sense of we and them. It's really a sense of us, we, together, as a group, really working together to be able to raise our level of kindness and our level of empathy as human beings.

So I tend to be philosophical and metaphysical in a way about things about diversity and inclusion. So that then became anything to do with diversity and inclusion, which accessibility internationalization actually speak, too, to those two domains, is really something that I'm really passionate about. So that's how that all started.

So if I was to look at the accessibility internationalization and inclusion, so I used to teach higher ed, and also high school. So I tried to like, put concepts in digestible chunks or chewable bites. So accessibility plus usability equals inclusion. So really, accessibility is helping people with disability to be able to then get to the same information as anybody who doesn't have that disability. And usability is really more the user experience. Making sure that the experience that they have is actually satisfying and delightful, for example.

So if you add those two things together, accessibility plus usability equals inclusion, it's really when we do all of those, when something is accessible and usable, then we really are able to include everybody.

**Kim Cadieux:** Okay. So, and then, just looking at this, three people in the room right now. So I just wanted to note, we all have accessibility issues, because we are all wearing glasses. So we sort of have disabilities there, as well. So three out of three. So this really affects more people than we think.

**Mian Bishop:** So, disability could be a permanent one, or it could be a temporary one. So for example, you broke your arm, or you lost your glasses, or whatever the case might be. So you still have to be able to get to your computer, your keyboard, or whatever it is. So it's really easy use, easy access, easy connection to whatever it is that you would like to be able to do.

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**Kim Cadieux:** I think you might've touched upon this a little bit, but why do you feel passionate about having our EBSCO products and services accessible to all our customers and users?

**Mian Bishop**: I think I'm looking at it from, again, because my background is also civil rights, at least from my perspective, it's also social responsibility, right? So not only do we need to be able to have our products and services accessible to everybody because the law says that, Section 508, or the American Disabilities Act, and from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or the WCAG, which we're really trying to adhere to, to be compliant to. It's that piece for sure that's really, really important, but at the same time, it's also the right thing to do. Because if we're really trying to be inclusive, if we're trying to make equal access and equal opportunity, it's something that we need to be able to do with our products and services.

One of the things too, talk about social responsibility, it's also just a sense of responsibility, because we have one of the biggest repositories of information. And a lot of people who can gain access to our databases can actually use that for the good, for research, or for trying to put in a business together, to be able to then help a third world country, for example, whatever the case might be.

So we really need to be able to give them, whoever it might be, have access to our information and our information technology. So, our interface and platform, eHost, EDS, and whatever products the customers are actually subscribed to or have purchased for their users.

**Kim Cadieux:** So it sounds like you have your hands in many pots that you get pulled in for all

different services and interfaces and stuff within EBSCO Information Services.

**Mian Bishop:** As I said, I like analogies. Every time I look at a package from Amazon, it has the

A to Z arrow.

Kim Cadieux: Mmm-hmm.

**Mian Bishop:** One of the things that we do with accessibility is really, in many ways, do A to Z. So we get the designers, developers, all of the tech people, at the same time, also work with the non-technical people. So sales, sales marketing. When we have request for proposals, or when customers renew contracts, we help them with figuring out how to respond to the accessibility pieces they have in the request for proposals.

And increasingly, we have found that many of our customers, whether they're renewing or they're looking into our products or whatever, are really asking for accessibility, governance and compliance. And the reason for that is because many of our customers are librarians or academic institutions, and many of them are funded by the federal government.

So to be able to then make sure that they are compliant, to be able to then get financial aid or whatever federal funding that they might need, they then come to us, as the vendor, to say, "Can you help us with this? Is this something that you can comply with? Is this something that you can help us with, the VPAT, or the voluntary product accessibility templates? What is your accessibility statement? What are some of the things that you're doing with accessibility?"

So we constantly have to update what we have and send those to them to have, so the sales has more awareness about that, and marketing, as well. But also, our customers are more and more, are increasingly able to then see that we are committed, we are dedicated. It's never a perfect equation, but we're constantly working on it. And as I said, we have an excellent team that's really working to make sure that we bake in accessibility.So it's really making sure that whatever we're putting together is actually born accessible.

So at the same time, so those are the new things that we're doing. But at the same time, there's also things that we already have that's existing, so we really have to be able to come up with some kind of enhancement or remediation to make sure that those features and functionalities actually are accessible to all of our users.

**Kim Cadieux:** So, can you tell us some of the things that the A11Y team is doing internally to

increase accessibility awareness and bake in accessibility in our design and development process?

**Mian Bishop:** Do you have a full day? (laughs) We have a lot going on right now. So for each PI, for each product increment, which is usually every three months, we have service issues that we're working with. So our designers, our developers, our architects, many of our tech folks are actually looking at these service issues. And if it's something to do with accessibility, some of the things that we do is provide guidance to them. As I work closely with these individuals and with these groups, it's really providing guidance and then also coming up with some kind of training that we could do with these developers, for example, to be able to really learn more

about accessibility.

There's a lot of things to learn about with accessibility, and WCAG, or the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, actually, it's an excellent international standard. So they come up with really great guidelines on what we can do, what we, meaning all of us who's working towards accessibility, can actually achieve. And I think WCAG, or World Wide Web Consortium, that developed this, actually did us all a great favor. I mean all like everybody who has products and services that need to be accessible, to be able to have. It's almost like we're looking at the

same page and we're trying to develop our products and services to be on the same page with everybody else in terms of what we really need to be able to address.

So we have developers and designers working in accessibility every quarter. We also have the accessibility champions, so these are people who are technical and non-technical people that can really be an advocate for accessibility in whatever capacity they might have. So it could be vice presidents, it could be like you, Kim. I know you're an accessibility champion.

**Kim Cadieux:** Yes, I’m interested.

**Mian Bishop:** That's wonderful. Thank you for that.

We also have subject matter experts, so these are more of the techie people, and they will be like the point person within their teams to be able to then help the other team members to learn how to do code that address this accessibility. We also have training with our developers, as I mentioned earlier. Well, we have an upcoming training with the Carroll Center for the Blind, so we have many of our developers from Durham, from Birmingham, from different places here, and also here in Ipswich and Topsfield, who will be attending that particular training. And we also are putting together an internal resource or in success factor to be able to then also help those who are new to the teams to be able to learn more about accessibility.

We also have community of practice that we're putting together. So one of the things that we have an advisory board right now for the community of practice. We kind of have a sense of what we would like to do with this community practice. And I think this will be more of a wider group of people who meet regularly and really think more seriously about accessibility issues for EIS.

We also have a great partnership that we just started with the Carroll Center for the Blind.

They're housed in Newton, Massachusetts. And what we've been doing with them in terms of our agreement with them is really them helping us with technical support, with consultations, with training, with auditing, if we needed to. So right now, we have features and functionalities, or even issues that come up with the developers or the designers, and there's the question, is this something that we really can do? What are some of the things that we can do to be able to

then fix this particular feature, or this particular issue? And when we can, and we're not able to do it internally, we then send the the issue or the problem to the Carroll Center, and Bruce Howell, the accessibility services manager, he's our point person there, and he's awesome, and he comes back with whatever resolution he and his team could come up with.

So there's a really great partnership going on between the Carroll Center for the Blind and us. And we also have done training with DQ, for example, which is one of the bigger accessibility organizations out there. So we are partnering with, we're having training, we're having partnering with Carroll Center, having training with one of the larger accessibility organizations out there. We are also looking into membership with W3C so that we can then really work closely with them and influence the discussion that's happening in those different working groups. So there's a lot going on, and I can talk more, but I think I'll stop here.

**Kim Cadieux:** Okay. Sounds good. Yes, definitely a lot going on. But just to back up for a

second, you were saying WCAG, is that W-C-A-G?

**Mian Bishop:** W-C-A-G, it stands for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

**Kim Cadieux:** Okay. Just in case some of our listeners want to look more into this, and so they

know.

**Mian Bishop:** And there's different levels and other levels, level A, level AA, and level AAA. So with our, when we do the voluntary product accessibility template, which is the VPAT, which goes back to the WCAG, it's all business acronyms. We really look more closely with level A and AA. At some point we'll be looking at AAA, but I think where we are right now, I think we're in a good place. But as I said, there's a lot going on, and there's a lot to do, and I think we are in a good place.

**Kim Cadieux:** Great. Yeah, and I mean, this is a really hot topic at EBSCO internally right now. I know you've been doing a lot of sessions, like webinar sessions with internal people.

**Mian Bishop:** Oh, right, the Lunch and Learns, yes, yes.

**Kim Cadieux:** So it's really hot, and now, we can kind of expand the awareness to externally, external customers and users. So this podcast will help out with that.

**Mian Bishop:** Right, so yeah. So, we're reaching out to as many departments as possible. Sales, marketing, communication. We have those blogs now, we have the podcasts, we have the PMs, we have business owners. We're trying to reach out to as many people as possible and really increase awareness across the campus, across EIS.

**Kim Cadieux:** Well, it's exciting, and it's interesting stuff, too, so, because it really bleeds into everything we do here.

**Mian Bishop:** Absolutely.

**Kim Cadieux:** So, what are the tools that we're using for testing?

**Mian Bishop:** More basic way to look at ensuring accessibility in our features and functionalities is to use at least two assistive technologies, screen reader and keyboard navigation.

**Kim Cadieux:** Okay.

**Mian Bishop:** So if we have keyboard only navigation. So for example, if I mentioned earlier, even if you have a temporary disability and you broke your arm or something, and you need to be able to then just use the keyboard to get to whatever it is that you'd like to do with that particular database. That's that something that when our developers are doing their codes for those particular features and functionalities, it has to be able to then, for the user, to be able to use the keyboard only. So, that's one consideration that we have.

The other is also screen readers, right? So there's a number of screen readers out there. Many of our end users are using several of these kinds, but for as long as we have edit fields or alternate tags, alt tags, or whatever way that we can do alternate formatting of that particular content, for example, that the screen reader will then be able to read what's there, so that whatever a sighted person, for example, can see or read, somebody who's using a screen reader will be able to hear that as well. Because as I said earlier, it has to be equal access and equal opportunity to the same information.

**Kim Cadieux:** So is that like a button or something? You're saying like, I can see a button, but somebody that needs the reader, would it say what the button in the interface actually says on it?

**Mian Bishop:** Right. So, if we did the interface correctly, or the, let's say, the landing page correctly when they're doing search, and we have really nice tagging for the headers, or whatever the case might be, and the screen reader is able to read that, so let me give you an example. So, when the screen reader goes to the request form, it just says, "Enter your name," or whatever the case might be that we are putting in the code, but it doesn't say anything that is a submit button, right? Or the button, it's not labeled. So it could be difficult for the person who's using a screen reader to think that, "Wait a minute, there is a submit button, but it's not reading it for me. So how am I supposed to then submit this form?" Right?

So if we go back to usability, right, so we have to make sure that the user interface is actually really helps the individual or the person using the screen reader to then be able to complete the form. So, we really have to have some labeling to the submit button to then say, so when the screen reader gets to that, it will say, "This is a submit button," but whatever the code might be, so that then they can select that. And then once they submit that, then it goes to wherever that that form goes to.

Another piece to this is not only the alt tags, for example, but it's also color contrast. So we have people, not only those who have visual impairment, but also just like us, we wear glasses, right? But also who are color blind, for example. So there are certain colors that just can't be really seen. So if you have, let's say, a gray on gray, dark gray on gray background, that's really difficult for somebody with color blindness, for example, to be able to read.

So the nice thing is, there is a contrast, a color contrast checker that's available to anybody. So our developers are actually using that, and it will help them to be able to figure out what is an acceptable color contrast between the font and the background color so that anybody with colorblindness, for example, is able tothen see what anybody else, like a sighted person is able to see.

So we also have an accessibility checklist, that's also, let's say, from DQ, or from different organizations, that we also look at, aside from the WCAG that we were talking about earlier. So we also have, in terms of assistive technology that we provide to our customers, we have text to speech. So we have an outside vendor who we've contracted, and there's a feature that we have in our interface that will then allow the user to click on the button that allows that individual to then turn on the text to speech. So whatever is on the page will actually be read. If there's an article, instead of using the screen reader, for example, the text to speech application or software will be able to then read the content for the user.

We also use ARIA landmarks for screen reader navigation. We also have ... I was talking earlier about descriptive text for images, like for the submit button, for example. We also have transcripts for video and audio books, and we have MP3 downloads. We have responsive user interface, we have several things going on.

So our developers are actually using many of these assistive technologies to be able to then test our products. So if they provide the code, or whatever it is that they need to do with that particular feature, they then have to test it out to see if it's actually doing what we had wanted it to do. And if there's some questions that they might have in terms of, is this really the right way to do it? Then one of the things we do is do then send it off to the Carroll Center for the Blind.

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**Kim Cadieux:** All right, so, we ask this of everybody, what book are you currently reading? And I always like to know if it's digital or if it's a physical book.

**Mian Bishop:** Okay. So, right now, well, the past several months, I've been reading three books. And sometimes, I wonder, "Why am I doing this?" But I have to sleep, right? But anyway, that's another story. So, I started reading *Becoming* by Michelle Obama, and I was reading the book because, when I went to the bookstore, I actually saw that there were a lot of pictures in there. Lovely pictures, colorful pictures, and I like pictures, right? But then at the same time, I realized that I don't really have time to be able to sit down and read it. Right? So I ended up, after I looked at all the pictures, I ended up doing audio book on *Becoming*. And the nice thing with that is, at least the version that I'm listening to, Michelle is the one who's now reading it. So it's almost like she's talking to me, like she's telling me her story, and she's got these inflections in her narration and stuff, that's like, "Oh my God, that's so great." I kind of feel her journey, kind of thing. So, that's awesome.

The other thing that I'm reading is called *The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World*, by Melinda Gates.

**Kim Cadiex:** Yes!

**Mian Bishop:** And she has lots of stories about her experiences inthird world countries and all of that, and how women were able to then feelempowered at the same time, but also not empowered by their husbands, or bythe community and stuff, and how they were able to transcend all of thosedifficulties that they had.Which, for me, is very inspiring, and from the same, from very uplifting. And so,but I'm doing audio book on that, because also Melinda is now the onenarrating. So as I said, I like storytelling, so it's really like she's telling me herstory, and so I'm just going, "Oh my God." And when she tells it, I kind of feelher encounter with this particular woman who has, excuse me, so many issues, for example, with her husband and stuff.

And the other thing that I ... This one is more reading, is ... Harvard BusinessReview has come up with a whole series of the Top 10 Must-Reads, or somethinglike that. So I'm reading the Harvard Business Review's 10 Must-Reads onmanaging yourself.

**Kim Cadieux:** Sounds interesting.

**Mian Bishop:** Because I'm constantly trying to figure out how to do time management.

**Kim Cadieux:** I'm going to check that out.

**Mian Bishop:** But, and it's nice, it's almost like ... It's like small chapters of the 10 Must-Reads. And one of them there, one of the essays there is by the gentleman who came up with disruptive innovation, and his name is Clayton Christensen. So he's a professor in the Harvard Business School, and his title is *How Will You Measure Your Life?* Which I think was pretty intriguing. And one of the things that he was saying is that, yeah, you can have as much money and all of that stuff as possible, as you want, but at the end of the day, are you really happy? And you have to somehow figure out, what is it that's going to make you happy? And for him, it was more of his family, the love that he has for his family, the love that he received from his family.

So in many ways, and I'm just going to loop that in and circle back, so one of the things that I think is ... So, we have the gift of being able to then help whoever we can help. So I think we have that gift to be able to give, and I think we also have the gift to be able to receive, right? So I think if we're able to then learn from each other and teach one another at the same time, the gift keeps giving, and we also keep giving as well. So that's kind of like, again, back to my philosophical propensity to just be out there.

**Kim Cadieux:** This is really interesting stuff, and I really appreciate your time.

**Mian Bishop:** Thank you.

**Kim Cadieux:** And also, everybody I've interviewed is reading multiple books, I just find that it's really funny. And then I always write down these books. So I'm going to have to check out that...

**Mian Bishop:** The HBR.

**Kim Cadieux:** Yes, definitely.

**Mian Bishop:** We might even have it on our database.

**Kim Cadieux:** Yeah, I'll look out for it. That's where I always look first. Great. Thank you so much.

**Mian Bishop:** Thank you!

[music]

**Narrator:** Thanks for checking out Long Overdue: Libraries and Technology. If you like what you heard, be sure to tune in to the next episode. ISBN nice talking to you!