Diversity Statement - Ryo Suzuki

I have been committed to promoting diversity and inclusion throughout my research, teaching, and mentoring experiences.

My Ph.D. research started as a research assistant for Prof. Tom Yeh's *tactile picture books* project, which aims to make picture books tangible for children with visual impairments. This project originally started from one motivation: "how can we allow children with visual impairment to *read* picture books?" Picture books play a significant role in children's early cognitive development by allowing them to learn new concepts through audio (voice), visual (picture), and symbolic (written language) representations. However, children with visual impairments cannot see and read the picture. To promote the accessibility of this important learning experience, we have explored a *tactile picture book*, a picture book that is readable with the fingers. For example, we have sought to make an existing picture book tangible by creating a 3D version of the picture book [1] with 3D printing, laser-cutting, and other emerging technologies.

[1] 3D Printed Picture Books Help Blind Children Read `https://medium.com/@3dhubs/a4620bdc656f`

This project gave me an opportunity to learn the importance of diversity and inclusion. For example, through the interview with more than twenty people with visual impairments, I have learned how current technologies and common practices lack the accessibility, and how small changes (e.g., adding an image caption or video transcript) can lead the dramatic improvements in their accessibility. Since then, I have been developing accessible technologies that enable people with visual impairments to equally access information [2].

[2] R. Suzuki, A. Stangl, M. Gross, and T. Yeh. Fluxmarker: Enhancing tactile graphics with dynamic tactile marker. ASSETS 2017

Accessibility and inclusion are important not only for people with visual impairments, but also for people who have diverse backgrounds and special needs. As a teacher, I aim to foster an environment that welcomes students with diverse experiences, backgrounds, and abilities. For instance, when I was a teaching assistant for Prof. Shaun Kane's Fundamentals of HCI class, we made sure lectures, assignments, and readings to be accessible for people with disabilities. In addition, we had an extra quiz session for hose who need extra help and time, such as students who are dyslexia or who cannot attend due to extracurricular activities. Also, as a mentor of ten students from diverse backgrounds and expertise, I learned how diversity can make a positive impact on the research by promoting a new way of thinking, which is essentially important in interdisciplinary research.

In conclusion, through these experiences, I strongly believe in the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in research, teaching, and mentoring, and I will be committed to promoting them as a new faculty member.