



CANASSIST UPDATE

2013-14



University
of Victoria

www.canassist.ca

CanAssist is an organization at the University of Victoria that is dedicated both to helping people with disabilities improve their quality of life and to increasing awareness of disability issues.



CLIENT FOCUS



**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

WHO WE ARE

CanAssist at the University of Victoria provides customized technologies and programs to people with disabilities where there are gaps in existing services. CanAssist began as a small volunteer venture at UVic in 1999. Since those early years, CanAssist has evolved into a viable and highly reputable organization that has helped thousands of people with disabilities increase their independence and ability to participate. Today, we have a core team of about 20 professionals who are dedicated to helping people of all ages and from across the disability spectrum to improve their quality of life. CanAssist benefits enormously from being part of UVic in having ready access to its outstanding faculty, students, research facilities, administrative resources and infrastructure. Likewise, students and faculty at UVic benefit from the rich opportunities for engagement at CanAssist, in areas such as developing technologies, working with clients, participating in research and volunteering.

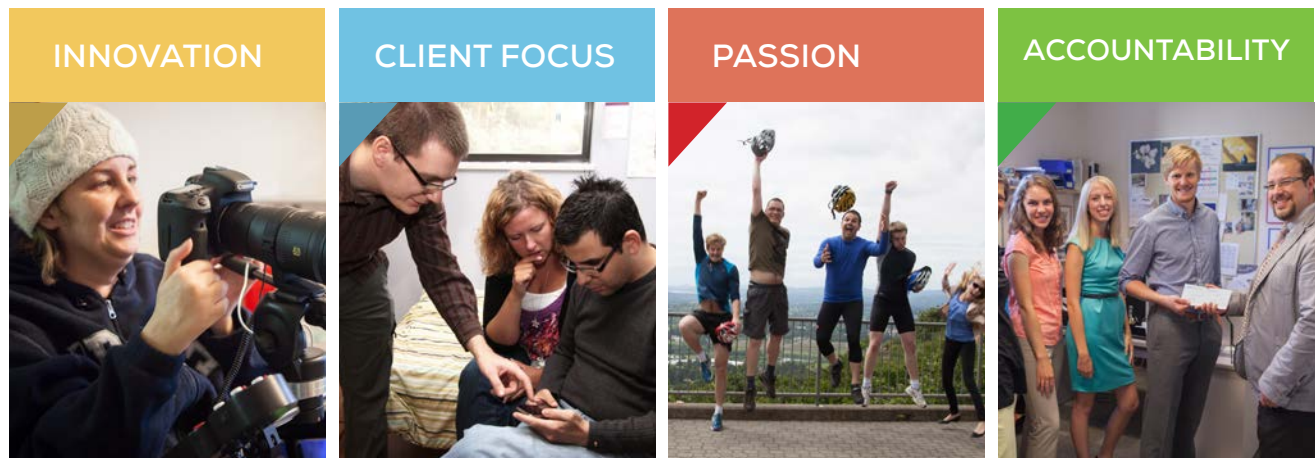
OUR VISION

In partnership with the disability and academic communities, CanAssist will be recognized as a global leader in creating technologies, programs and services that contribute to a truly inclusive society, where everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute.

OUR MISSION

CanAssist collaborates with the community to develop and deliver innovative customized technologies and programs to improve the quality of life of people living with disabilities, while at the same time providing students and faculty at the University of Victoria with rich and meaningful opportunities for education and research.

OUR VALUES



MEETING FOUR KEY GOALS IN **2013-14**

A MESSAGE FROM CANASSIST'S ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR

Dr. Valerie Kuehne

Chair of the CanAssist Advisory Board and UVic's Acting Vice-President Academic and Provost



The past fiscal year was a significant one in CanAssist's history as the organization completed its first-ever strategic planning and business development process. This exercise involved gathering input from UVic's executive, faculty, staff and students, as well as community stakeholders. The results included new vision and mission statements, four key goals for fiscal 2013-14, and a detailed plan to meet them. I am extremely pleased to report the significant progress CanAssist has made in each area:

Providing exceptional academic relevance and value. A new CanAssist Academic Steering Committee with interdisciplinary faculty representation was formed and now meets regularly to identify opportunities for collaboration between CanAssist and other university departments. Attendance at committee meetings is strong and enthusiastic, and has led to many examples of experiential learning and research and development activities.

Contributing to UVic's community engagement objectives. Community engagement has always been an area of enormous strength for CanAssist – and its achievements in 2013-14 were no exception. During the year, CanAssist helped hundreds of people with disabilities and their families through the provision of customized technologies, software downloads, specialty programs and volunteer opportunities. CanAssist also worked with numerous organizations to extend its reach in assisting those with disabilities.

Developing a sustainable operating model.

Evolving from a very small volunteer group into a healthy organization has required that CanAssist develop a sustainable operating and funding model that facilitates services to the disability community, while at the same time meeting UVic's educational, research and community engagement objectives. During the year, CanAssist worked with UVic's finance team to develop business and operating practices that have made it a tightly run and highly accountable organization.

Developing high-quality governance and management mechanisms. By the end of the fiscal year, new governance and management mechanisms had been put in place to further strengthen CanAssist's accountability, both to UVic and the wider community. A new Advisory Board – with strong representation from the university, government, business, disability and philanthropic communities – had its first meeting Feb. 18, 2014, and promises to provide excellent oversight and guidance to CanAssist.

UVic is proud of the great strides CanAssist has made over the past fiscal year and looks forward to another year of activities that create rich research and learning opportunities for UVic faculty and students and provide meaningful and practical assistance to people with disabilities in our communities.

CHARTING A STRONG COURSE FOR 2014-15

A MESSAGE FROM CANASSIST'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Robin Syme
CanAssist Executive Director

It's a pleasure to present an update on CanAssist's activities and considerable accomplishments during fiscal 2013-14. It's also exciting to look forward to what is sure to be a very busy year ahead.

The move to CARSA. UVic anticipates that by the spring of 2015 CanAssist will be ensconced in a new home – the Centre for Athletics, Recreation and Special Abilities (CARSA). Including CanAssist in this high-profile new building on campus is a wonderful example of the university's commitment both to community service and disability issues. CanAssist's current space will almost double in CARSA and will include a state-of-the-art machine shop and improved accessibility for our clients. Along with its central positioning on campus, this new home will help CanAssist achieve its goals of helping more people with disabilities in the community and engaging more students and members of faculty.

CanAssist's relationship with UVic. While there are many assistive technology providers, CanAssist is unique in North America in being a *university* organization that provides customized technologies to people with disabilities where there is no commercial solution. Simply put, without UVic, CanAssist would not exist. Being part of UVic allows CanAssist to fill a community need and market niche that would go unmet if left to other sectors. UVic's infrastructure and governance support make it possible for CanAssist to develop customized technologies at a reasonable cost –

technologies that would be prohibitively expensive to produce in the private sector. In return, CanAssist provides remarkable opportunities for academic engagement to UVic faculty, students and staff. These include shared research projects, co-op positions, volunteering and much more. In the year ahead, CanAssist pledges to increase the past year's level of engagement, which included activities involving almost 500 students.

Sustainability. Ongoing financial sustainability will continue to be a key goal as CanAssist moves into fiscal 2014-15. To meet this goal, CanAssist will continue to secure fee-for-service agreements with other organizations and philanthropic funding from a wide range of sources so that we can provide customized technologies to people with disabilities. In the past year alone, our partners have included: WorkSafeBC, Community Living British Columbia, the B.C. Ministry of Health, and the province's five regional health authorities.

Our *raison d'être*. Thanks to UVic's vision, the generosity of our donors, the participation of students and faculty, and the support of our many partners, CanAssist looks forward to another year spent meeting its original and ultimate goal: to fill the gaps in providing technologies and services to individuals of all ages and from across the disability spectrum. We look forward to a very busy and fulfilling fiscal year.



130

TECHNOLOGY
PROJECTS

undertaken by CanAssist
during fiscal 2013-14

498

STUDENTS

engaged by CanAssist during
fiscal 2013-14

5,186

DOWNLOADS

of CanAssist software apps
during fiscal 2013-14

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CanAssist had a good financial year in fiscal 2013-14 as a result of focusing on three key priorities: revenue generation (both earned and philanthropic); resource realignment; and precise execution of project deliverables. All of these activities have successfully created the foundation upon which long-term sustainability will be achieved.

CanAssist had an operating budget of \$1.2 million during fiscal 2013-14, representing a 20-per-cent decrease in overall operating costs compared with the previous fiscal year. This reduction was achieved through resource realignment and efficiency improvements. By continuing to focus on sustainability, it is anticipated that further efficiencies in operating costs can be realized in future years.

During 2013-14, CanAssist completed 54 technology projects and initiated an additional 76 new projects for a total of 130 projects. In the first six months of the fiscal year, CanAssist had a limited number of defined projects and projected a significant deficit; by fiscal year-end, the deficit had been mitigated by defining and executing a significant number of new projects and carrying out further organizational realignment. These activities resulted in increased engineering and labour utilization, which offset the shortfall in demand experienced in the first half of the year.

During the fiscal year, CanAssist secured \$540,000 in philanthropic contributions, which was 10 per cent greater than the 2013-14 target. The organization also earned \$250,000 from fee-for-service technology development projects, for total

revenue of approximately \$800,000. In addition, \$2 million in year-end funding was awarded by the BC Ministry of Health. The total secured new revenue for 2013-14 was \$2.8 million. By fiscal year-end, CanAssist had access to approximately \$4 million in secured funding available for technology projects for 2014-15 and beyond.

As a result of this new revenue and the strategies developed during fiscal 2013-14, CanAssist is well-positioned to complete significantly more projects in 2014-15 and expects to end the new fiscal year with a modest positive balance. CanAssist continues to make sustainability a priority and looks forward to sharing its progress and financial position in 2015.

Funds for CanAssist's operating budget of 2013-14 were made possible by numerous partners and donors, both organizations and individuals. CanAssist is deeply grateful for their contributions and for its ongoing relationship with each of them.

Below is a partial list of partners and donors who provided funding to CanAssist, whether through charitable donations, fee-for-service work or other means.



University of Victoria

Norgaard Foundation

vancouver foundation



Vancity



NRS Foundation through the



VICTORIA FOUNDATION



WORK SAFE BC



CanAssist's donors and partners during fiscal 2013-14 included the above organizations. For a complete list, please visit CanAssist's website at www.canassist.ca.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ▶ Completed an extensive strategic planning exercise that led to a well-defined vision, mission, set of goals and work plan. With assistance and oversight from UVic, developed new business and operations processes to make CanAssist more transparent and accountable.
- ▶ Secured ongoing funding from several foundations and numerous individuals to help provide technologies to those with disabilities.
- ▶ Undertook 130 technology projects and tallied more than 5,000 software downloads. Furthered CanAssist's reach by developing four new apps that are now sold on Apple's App Store.
- ▶ Engaged almost 500 students in CanAssist activities in areas such as: co-op placements, graduate studies, work study positions, classroom activities, presentations and volunteer work.
- ▶ Worked with UVic faculty and others on research projects, such as building sensors for research into stroke, and refining software that helps assess children's cognitive abilities.
- ▶ Provided job coaching and guidance to 18 young people who were part of *TeenWork*, an innovative employment program for high school youth with disabilities who are transitioning to adulthood.
- ▶ Facilitated *Just for Kicks*, a free soccer program for kids with and without disabilities. Each week 20 children and 20 volunteers gather to play.
- ▶ Began building a foundation for several longer-term partnerships that will address unmet needs in the disability community, while supporting CanAssist's ongoing sustainability.
- ▶ Took part in many community events to raise awareness of CanAssist and disability issues.



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