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# Matilda Ziegler Magazine for the Blind

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[HOME](#)

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[EVENTS](#)

[PEN PALS](#)

[READER'S  
FORUM](#)

[SPECIAL  
NOTICES](#)

[TECHNOLOGY](#)

## [Contributor Jennifer Streisand – A ‘Top Ten List’ to Achieve a New, Normal Living with Vision Loss: Part Two](#)

Posted by Matilda on November 16, 2012; This entry is filed under [Magazine Contributor](#).

Low vision technology—sometimes called assistive or adaptive technology—has evolved substantially through the years, and is now available on mainstream devices, but primarily began with what is called a portable CCTV, which stands for Closed Circuit Television Reading Machine. It's like a small magnifying screen that can be held over any type of document to magnify the text and make it more readable. Many also now read the text aloud.

The original CCTVs first came on the market in the late 1970s, and were not mobile, but the size of a computer screen (about 22 inches). They had a tray underneath the screen, and the user could place documents, checks, and whatever needed to be read or written on the tray. The user turned a knob to the left or right to adjust the magnification on the screen, and voila, readability was accomplished. The larger, non-portable CCTVs are still sold today with the technology more refined than ever. Now they come with flat screens, just like flat screen TVs.

“In some cases, it is pretty much the only option that people really have to remain independent,” says Perski. “For instance, a person can actually read their mail (old fashioned, snail mail). They can see their own medication bottles. They can look at food labels. If they become really proficient, they can even thread a needle under there, and resume doing all of the little things, activities of daily living that are so important. For an older person, it may mean the difference between giving up their home and moving into some kind of assisted living center.”

While CCTVs are still commonly used by people with low vision, some people with low vision need other kinds of assistance that cannot be provided by a traditional CCTV.

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- [› November 2012 \(25\)](#)
- [› October 2012 \(53\)](#)
- [› September 2012 \(47\)](#)
- [› August 2012 \(56\)](#)
- [› July 2012 \(46\)](#)
- [› June 2012 \(46\)](#)
- [› May 2012 \(49\)](#)
- [› April 2012 \(51\)](#)
- [› March 2012 \(55\)](#)
- [› February 2012 \(52\)](#)
- [› January 2012 \(40\)](#)
- [› December 2011 \(44\)](#)
- [› November 2011 \(47\)](#)
- [› October 2011 \(96\)](#)
- [› September 2011 \(48\)](#)
- [› August 2011 \(58\)](#)
- [› July 2011 \(51\)](#)
- [› June 2011 \(55\)](#)
- [› May 2011 \(49\)](#)
- [› April 2011 \(41\)](#)
- [› March 2011 \(57\)](#)

Steve Pangere, who is president and CEO of The Pangere Corp., and the CEO of a separate company, Culver Roofing, both in Gary, IN, uses a special scanner for low vision called Zoom-Ex, made by the ABiSee Co. The scanner takes a picture of the document, and then the screen reader he uses on his computer reads the text aloud to him. Having the scanner has given him access to many more documents, books, and magazines, he explains, because before he had it, his best option was to listen to recorded texts on small disks from the Library of Congress. While many texts are available this way, some are not, particularly when it comes to rarer documents, and documents in a specific field of interest or career.

“I can read not just my contracts, but magazine articles, and I can get certain books, including technical books, that are for my type of career that you are not going to find at the Library of Congress, or that you can get anywhere else,” Pangere says. He obtained this scanner from The Chicago Lighthouse.

Pangere is a well known businessman in the Gary, IN area where his companies are located, and in March 2012 was inducted into the Northwest Indiana Business and Industry Hall of Fame. The Pangere Center for Inherited Retinal Diseases at The Chicago Lighthouse is named after Pangere’s family. Patients receive medical diagnosis and treatment in this part of The Lighthouse.

Steve Pangere has had low vision since he was a young adult, and has been using low vision technology for about 40 years, he says. Over the years, he has become more proficient at using the technology, and he explains that his proficiency comes from a combination of one-on-one training and just using it himself through trial and error.

Reading the newspaper is even relatively easy for Pangere, who calls a special number set up by the National Federation for the Blind called the NFB Newslines, which allows subscribers free access to hundreds of newspapers in an audio format, by pressing the keys on the phone keypad, and then the subscribers can hear the newspaper of their choice, and even the articles of their choice, read to them. In order to apply for the service, go to [www.nfbnewslines.org](http://www.nfbnewslines.org), and then click on “online application” once at the website, or call 866-504-7300 for more information. Applicants will be asked to submit proof of their visual impairment or blindness.

At the top of the page on the National Federation for the Blind website ([www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)), is a quote that reads, “The real problem of blindness is not the loss of eyesight. The real problem is the misunderstanding and lack of information that exist. If a blind person has proper training and opportunity, blindness can be reduced to a physical nuisance.”

> [February 2011](#) (49)

> [January 2011](#) (39)

> [December 2010](#) (44)

> [November 2010](#) (52)

> [October 2010](#) (53)

> [September 2010](#) (51)

> [August 2010](#) (56)

> [July 2010](#) (63)

> [June 2010](#) (59)

> [May 2010](#) (55)

> [April 2010](#) (48)

> [March 2010](#) (53)

> [February 2010](#) (41)

> [January 2010](#) (27)

> [November 2009](#) (168)

> [October 2009](#) (243)

> [September 2009](#) (132)

> [August 2009](#) (129)

> [July 2009](#) (66)

Proper training and accessibility to low vision technology is not a minor point however, and sometimes is hard to achieve, depending on where a person lives, what type of support system they have, and their stage of low vision because for most people, having some vision (even very limited vision) is useful when learning new technology—or anything new, for that matter.

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[November 2012](#)

[October 2012](#)

[September 2012](#)

[August 2012](#)

[July 2012](#)

[June 2012](#)

[May 2012](#)

[April 2012](#)

[March 2012](#)

[February 2012](#)

[January 2012](#)

[December 2011](#)

[November 2011](#)

[October 2011](#)

[September 2011](#)

[August 2011](#)

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[May 2011](#)

[April 2011](#)

[March 2011](#)

[February 2011](#)

[January 2011](#)

[December 2010](#)

[November 2010](#)

[October 2010](#)

[September 2010](#)

[August 2010](#)

[July 2010](#)

[June 2010](#)

[May 2010](#)

[April 2010](#)

[March 2010](#)

[February 2010](#)

[January 2010](#)

[November 2009](#)

[October 2009](#)

[September 2009](#)

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