

# 用觸覺說故事 設計新玩具讓視障小孩玩在一起

## Telling Stories with the Sense of Touch, Designing New Toys to Bring Visually Impaired Children Together

Animomo - Janie Lau

撰文 阿緒



走進劉彥慈（Janie）的工作室，首先映入眼簾的是在椅子睡覺的貓兒，加上訪問當天Janie穿了一件花貓圖案T-Shirt，不用多問就知道她是「貓奴」。貓咪天生性格慵懶，身為「貓奴」的Janie語速也不慍不火，臉上總是掛著淺淺的微笑。她於2017年為視障兒童製作了「Animomo」——一套包含兒童繪本、玩偶及應用程式的玩具套裝，她坦言：「成件事都十分『佛系』（意即隨緣，沒有刻意計劃），哈哈，我們沒有特別去推銷。」

縱然Janie常笑言產品出世後的工作「佛系」，但聽著她因Animomo而與視障兒童相處的經歷，讓她思考到玩具的價值，「玩具對小朋友來說很重要，一直都是，我希望自己能夠設計讓小朋友開心的玩具。」

When I stepped into Janie's studio, the first thing I saw was a cat curled up in a chair, sound asleep. That, together with the cat print t-shirt that Janie was wearing, told me that she is a cat lover without question. Cats naturally adopt a laid-back attitude; no wonder cat lover Janie speaks softly and always wears a gentle smile. In 2017, she created "Animomo", a toy set that includes children's picture books, dolls, and a mobile application for visually impaired children. She told me, "We don't do anything special to market it. We just wing it."

Despite her constant self-mockery about winging the post-production work, the experience she gained with visually impaired children thanks to "Animomo" seems invaluable: it inspired her to reflect on the value of toys. She commented, "Toys are very important to children. They always are. I hope to design toys that make kids happy."

視障小孩玩具選擇少

Janie就讀產品設計，大學用上了兩年時間專注研究玩具相關的範疇。大學三年級那年，Janie曾於設計視障人士手錶的公司工作，這次經驗讓她首次接觸相關產品，更讓她思考如何以自己的專業幫助視障人士，「那時候好奇想知道，視障小朋友的玩具是怎樣的？種類又足夠嗎？」Janie帶著這個疑問，在畢業作品中試著找答案。

在開始設計Animomo前，Janie曾到心盲人學校進行資料搜集。她分別訪問了三至六年級的學生，發現視障小朋友的玩具選擇有限之外，讓她更感驚訝的是小朋友大多都是獨自玩耍。「弱視的小朋友可以玩電腦遊戲，而視力再差一點的就玩實體玩具，他們甚少會走在一起玩，因為集體遊戲對於視障小朋友來說有點難控制。」Janie道。



觸感聲音激發孩子聯想交流

社會創新工作的重點在於，透過在地訪問及觀察爬梳社群面對的問題，繼而想出解決方法。Janie在學校裡觀察視障小朋友所遇到的問題，她接著便順著問題製作出Animomo——透過應用程式以聲畫講述四個小動物角色的故事，加上實體玩偶及繪本，能夠讓多位視障小朋友聚在一起玩耍，增加他們之間的交流。

視障小朋友的視力雖然有限，但無礙他們的想像力及表達能力，Janie說刻意選取外形獨特的長頸鹿、刺蝟、企鵝及大象作繪本主角，增加玩偶的觸感，「有些小朋友以為牠(刺蝟)是榴槿，當他們一邊玩的時候，其實會不斷想像及發問，加上有老師能夠帶領的話，會讓他們有更多交流。」Janie在跟教育機構合作的時候發現，Animomo除了能夠促進視障小朋友溝通外，更有老師反映玩具能提高健視兒童的說故事技巧，「這讓我有點意外，我們會在故事裡配音，當中會提問一些開放式問題，這都很適合家長跟小朋友一齊玩耍。」Janie道。

Limited Choices of Toys for Visually Impaired Children

Janie studied product design and spent two years in university focusing on the toy design field. In her third year, she worked for a company that designs watches for the visually impaired. The experience introduced her to products designed for the visually impaired; since then, she has been thinking of ways to use her profession to help the visually impaired. “I was curious about toys for visually impaired kids. Are there enough varieties?” Janie tried to find the answers through her graduation project.

Before starting the project of “Animomo”, Janie went to the Ebenezer School & Home for the Visually Impaired to conduct some research. She interviewed students from the third to sixth grades. She was surprised to learn that not only did they have limited choices of toys, but most of them also played alone. “Kids with Amblyopia could play computer games, while those with even weaker eyesight could play with physical toys. However, they seldom play together because group games could be challenging for visually impaired kids.”

Touch and Sound Effects Spark Imagination and Interaction Between Children

The core of social innovation work lies in identifying problems faced by a community through observations and interviews, and searching for adequate solutions. Janie recognised the problems faced by visually

impaired children at school and endeavoured to create “Animomo”. The stories of four animal characters are told in the mobile application in audio and visual form, and with the help of dolls and picture books, visually impaired children can play and interact with each other.

Although visually impaired children have a limited field of vision, their imagination and ability to express themselves are limitless. Janie explained that she chose a giraffe, a hedgehog, a penguin and an elephant as the main characters because of their unique shapes, which improves the tactile experience. Janie pointed out, “Some kids thought the hedgehog was a durian. When the children are playing with these toys, it stimulates their imagination and intrigues them into asking more questions. With the guidance of teachers, children will surely have more interactions among themselves.” While working with educational institutions, through teachers’ feedback, Janie discovered that “Animomo” helped improve the students’ story-telling techniques as well. Janie added, “It surprised me. We do the voiceover for the stories and include some open-ended questions, which makes it perfect for children to enjoy the experience with their parents.”





### 視障小孩教會我的事

由設計、製作到推出市場，Janie的團隊約花了一年多的時間籌備，她坦言當中最花時間的除了是協調工作之外，還有應用程式的設計，「如今的apps是以講故事為主，但當初想是多一點互動遊戲，奈何成本太貴而放棄。」縱然成品未如當初所想，但Janie在過程中跟視障朋友交流時，他們的想法及意見讓Janie甚有得著。「當初設計角色時，我們設定刺蝟是視障的，但不論是視障小朋友及年輕朋友都說，不需要有這種設定。這讓我反思我們很習慣把視障人士設定為被照顧的角色，但他們說『健視人士的煩惱，其實我們都有，不需要刻意強調視障這個特徵。』。」

### 「好玩最重要」

Animomo於2018年獲得Good Seed撥款支持，如今計劃已經完成。Janie說Good Seed給予她平台實踐計劃之外，還有機會認識到來自不同

界別的人士，擴闊對社會創新的想像，「還有Good Seed舉辦不同工作坊，可以學一些本身不大擅長的知識。」

談到現時Animomo的發展，她笑言團隊的推銷手法甚為「佛系」，「由於團隊沒有專責Marketing的成員，所以一直都沒有很具體的推銷計劃、銷售渠道，我們想到甚麼就做。」

縱然Animomo的後續發展緩慢，但Janie對工作方向甚為清晰，「希望能在玩具設計方面發展下去。」Janie認為玩具對小孩的發展尤其重要，她回想小時候媽媽總是讓她玩一些益智動腦的玩具，如積木，這從小就啟發她的創意，而她相信好玩的玩具能令小孩享受過程外，也能發掘到他們的潛能，「我覺得好玩是最重要，因為小朋友才開心投入到，這才是玩具的價值吧。」

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### What the Visually Impaired Children Taught Me

It took Janie's team more than a year to design, produce and launch the product. She recalled that besides the coordination, the most challenging part of the process was designing the application. She said, "The application we have now is storytelling-oriented, but the original idea was to make it an interactive game. However, the cost was too high so we had to give up that idea." While the finished product might not be what she had imagined, Janie has learned a lot from the exchange of ideas and opinions with the visually impaired children she knew and her visually impaired friends. She noted, "While drafting the design of the hedgehog, we wanted it to be visually impaired, but the children and my friends thought it was unnecessary. I then realised how often we regard the visually impaired as people who need to be taken care of. But for them, they feel that they have the same problems that people with normal vision have, so there's no need to emphasize their visual impairment."

### A Fun Toy is a Good Toy

"Animomo" received the Good Seed sponsorship in 2018 and the project has since been completed. Janie said that Good Seed had allowed her to meet people from different sectors, broadening her understanding of the community and her imagination towards social innovation. She added, "Good Seed also organises workshops where you can learn something you are not very good at."

When talking about the development of "Animomo", she joked about how her team wings the marketing. "As there is no dedicated marketing team, we've never had specific plans on how to promote or sell the product. We do whatever comes to our mind."

Regardless of the leisurely-paced development of "Animomo", Janie has a clear vision of the project. "My aspiration is to keep working on toy design." Janie believes that toys are essential to a child's development. She recalled how her mother would let her play with educational toys, such as building blocks, to stimulate her creativity. She has strong faith that toys can help unlock children's potential.

"I think the most important thing is to have fun. Toys need to be fun to engage children. I guess this is the true value of toys."