

Hearing the Bullseye: An Auditory-Cued Archery Exergame for the Visually Impaired and Their Sighted Family and Friends

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Figure 1: “Hearing the Bullseye”, an archery exergame designed for harmonious play between VI individuals and their sighted family and friends. (Left) Demonstration of user interaction in “Hearing the Bullseye”; (Middle) Visual feedback in the interface for sighted users, without revealing the actual location of the bullseye; (Right) Both sighted and visually impaired players participating in the two-player mode

ABSTRACT

How can blind and sighted individuals play together? The natural disparity in visual abilities often poses challenges for fair competition in social play. This can diminish the confidence of visually impaired (VI) individuals and reduce engagement for sighted players. While previous literature has incorporated fairness design strategies for the VI, we additionally aim to address the potential problem of boredom for sighted players by providing enhanced visual feedback without compromising fairness as a novel design strategy. We present “*Hearing the Bullseye*”, an archery exergame designed for harmonious play between VI individuals and their sighted family and friends. Players use a bow equipped with an infrared sensor, allowing them to target an unseen bullseye using sound rather than sight. An empirical study involving 18 sighted and VI participants demonstrated that the design strategies used in “*Hearing the Bullseye*” effectively promote social engagement among both groups while ensuring fair competition.

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CHI PLAY Companion '24, October 14–17, 2024, Tampere, Finland
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ACM ISBN 979-8-4007-0692-9/24/10
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3665463.3678829>

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → **Accessibility theory, concepts and paradigms; Interaction design theory, concepts and paradigms; Interaction paradigms.**

KEYWORDS

Visually Impaired, Exergames, Design Strategy, Accessibility, Auditory Feedback

ACM Reference Format:

Shan Luo, Jianan Johanna Liu, and Botao Amber Hu. 2024. Hearing the Bullseye: An Auditory-Cued Archery Exergame for the Visually Impaired and Their Sighted Family and Friends. In *Companion Proceedings of the Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play (CHI PLAY Companion '24)*, October 14–17, 2024, Tampere, Finland. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 8 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3665463.3678829>

1 INTRODUCTION

According to WHO [1], over a billion people worldwide live with some form of visual impairment (VI). As inclusive design of technology for people with VI advances in the context of the Third Wave HCI [51, 77], research emphasis on social adaptation for the VI and their interactions with sighted individuals has increased [46, 76, 81]. Often, VI individuals have fewer opportunities to participate in physical social activities with sighted family and friends. This can lead to feelings of social isolation, which can affect their quality of life and social relationships. Research suggests that social exergames [35, 62, 73] involving VI individuals and their sighted family and friends can improve both physiological and psychological well-being [12, 18, 25, 27, 45, 48], and enhance social relationships [41, 58, 67, 71, 72, 74]. This understanding has resulted in

significant contributions to social exergames by researchers in the field [11, 30, 43, 44, 52–55].

How can VI and sighted individuals play together? VI can often result in imbalances and asymmetries between VI and sighted players during gameplay [25, 34, 37, 63]. Sighted players tend to make concessions, while VI players may worry about becoming overly reliant on others [8, 17, 34]. This imbalance can discourage VI players from initiating interactions [33, 34], and may cause sighted players to feel bored or overly considerate, preventing them from enjoying the game with the same winning goal as the impaired. This behavior not only undermines the confidence of VI players, but also discourages sighted players from engaging with them, creating barriers to spontaneous social gameplay [15, 38, 75]. Numerous researchers have contributed to this field [4, 7, 11, 13, 16, 22, 24, 29, 30, 32, 36, 42, 44, 47, 52, 55, 60, 66, 70, 78]. Games such as VI-Bowling [54] and VI-Tennis [53] use auditory or tactile interactions to reduce the imbalance between players. Electronic games that incorporate 3D spatial audio have been developed [2, 11, 20, 30, 39, 52]. These games allow both VI and sighted individuals to enjoy video gaming, including family-oriented casual games [30]. Despite technological advancements, many games still fail to address competitive imbalance and asymmetry, which compromise fairness. Often, these games result in sighted individuals taking on a supportive role, leading to disinterest among both VI and sighted players. This unaddressed research gap leaves significant design space for games, with technology ready to further address the imbalance in social play between VI and sighted individuals, while ensuring fairness for the VI and maintaining engagement of the sighted.

Combining previous research, we have identified two major challenges in the design space of social play games involving blind and sighted individuals.

- (C1) *Fairness for the VI*. The inherent imbalance in visual abilities presents challenges for fair competition for the VI. This can diminish the gaming experience for the VI, leading to a lack of confidence and a less engaging social game experience.
- (C2) *Boredom for the sighted*. In traditional social games for VI and sighted players, sighted players often adopt a supportive and accommodating role towards VI players. Sighted players need more effective feedback to prevent the gameplay from feeling unengaging or boring when playing with the VI.

Based on the challenges and design needs faced by blind and sighted individuals in games, we have developed “*Hearing the Bullseye*”, an archery simulation game that places blind and sighted players on the same level, allowing for equal competition through auditory cues. Players use a vibration bow equipped with infrared sensors to aim at an invisible target, with changes in sound frequency indicating proximity to the target, thus guiding them to complete the shot. The game uses sensory compensation to allow both parties to play through the same sensory interactions, addressing the asymmetry between them. Additionally, the game emphasizes that sighted players need more game effect feedback than blind players to prevent boredom during the game.

Finally, we conducted empirical studies in a booth at a design exhibition. Over a five-day period, we invited 18 VI and sighted participants to play the game and evaluate the effectiveness of our design work. The event attracted a significant audience and received enthusiastic cheers from the public. Our primary contributions include:

- *Innovative archery exergame for VI and their sighted player*: We’ve created an archery game with auditory cues, allowing fair competition for VI and sighted players, addressing social play challenges.
- *Maintain balance*: We’ve proposed a game that balance social games between VI and sighted players, enabling VI players to fully experience the game, while enhancing feedback for sighted players.
- *Insights for future research on social exergames for the VI and the sighted*: Our game design and the game strategies offer valuable insights for future inclusive game design research catering to diverse sensory abilities.

2 RELATED WORKS

2.1 Traditional simple social games for VI

Simple community-organized events and activities that enhance the interaction abilities of the VI [9, 17, 19, 31, 69]. To prevent injury from excessive physical movement among the VI and to consider the high cost of action training in some activities, most community-organized events tend to be straightforward. Examples include ‘Movie Description’ [68], ‘role-playing exercise’ [61].

Apparently, These social activities do not consider the inherent imbalance in interactions between VI and sighted individuals. VI participants still rely on sighted individuals for assistance during the activities, failing to showcase their capabilities. Meanwhile, sighted participants often play a supportive role, and frequently find the feedback from the game effects to be boring [25, 34, 37, 63].

2.2 Modified versions of traditional games for VI

In recent years, the development of numerous accessible technologies [3, 10, 26, 28, 56, 57, 73] has provided both VI and sighted individuals with a richer and more varied array of social play settings, enhancing their ways of interaction. For example, modified versions of traditional board games [14, 21], such as the simplified mobile multiplayer card game based on conventional card rules developed by Hanseul Cho and others [21], allow both VI and sighted individuals to enjoy gaming together. For instance, *Front Row* is an immersive audio broadcast application designed for VI audiences to enjoy tennis matches [42]. Dorothea Reusser and others have designed a device for VI individuals: *Feeling Fireworks* [66]. VI individuals can also engage in special social activities, such as participating in social events at museums [5, 6] and marine parks [47], and co-creating music games with sighted individuals [49, 60].

However, in most of these social interactions, VI and sighted individuals are part of two separate game interaction systems. They do not use the same senses simultaneously to complete the game, and many do not fully consider the level of interaction between

the parties, or the interaction is not yet sufficiently deep. the unfriendly game interactions or purely auditory games make it difficult for sighted players to adapt to completing games through sound alone, reducing interaction between sighted and VI players. This approach often leads to an increased imbalance between the two groups.

2.3 Highly interactive sport games for VI

Research confirms that sports-related social interactions not only help VI individuals overcome visual barriers to participating in various sports activities, but also provide opportunities for socializing with sighted individuals [4, 13, 13, 16, 16, 22, 23, 26, 64, 65, 70]. Numerous studies have used assistive technology to enhance interactions between visually impaired and sighted individuals in activities like Sonic-Badminton for physical and social engagement [44], and games replacing visual with auditory and tactile feedback such as VI Bowling and VI Tennis [53, 54]. Leisure activities include eyes-free yoga developed with Kinect [62] and a 2D action game for both sighted and visually impaired users [52], along with social experiences like enjoying live football matches together [59]. Glinert and Wyse [30] developed an accessible video game named *AudiOdyssey*, co-developed by VI and sighted developers. This game utilizes the Nintendo Wii remote and provides feedback through auditory cues, allowing both VI and sighted players to play together. Drew Berge and others demonstrated an audio-based mobile game, *Pingball* [11], which offers all players, including those with VI, the traditional pinball experience. In these activities, the interactions and collaborations between VI and sighted individuals are closely knit and carry significant social value [79].

Although these types of sport games have already addressed the imbalance in game interaction mechanisms between VI and sighted players to some extent, and sighted players receive stronger feedback on game effects compared to electronic games, as sighted players, there is still a need for enhanced feedback on the effects produced in the game. This enhancement is necessary to increase the enjoyment for sighted players, preventing boredom and allowing both parties to enjoy the fun brought by social play. Our research aims to explore more possibilities based on this foundation.

3 DESIGN

Based on our preliminary study, which looked at preferences and challenges of VI and sighted individuals in social games, we introduced *"Hearing the Bullseye"*, a motion-sensing archery game that uses sound feedback to locate the target center on the screen. Combining the principles of ability-based design [40, 50, 80], we designed the interaction method of *"Hearing the Bullseye"* to better support the sighted and VI to experience the archery sports game. As the bow gets closer to the center, the sound frequency increases, aiding in precise aiming. This game levels the playing field for VI and sighted players and provides enhanced visual feedback for sighted players upon hitting the target, making the game enjoyable for everyone.

3.1 Interaction design

3.1.1 Start archery. Players face the screen and draw the bow. They hear audio feedback and see a cursor when the game starts.

As the bowstring tightens, the handle vibrates, helping visually impaired (VI) players. Sighted players see the cursor, making the game accessible to everyone using various sensory cues.

3.1.2 Listen to the bullseye. Each round, the bullseye appears randomly. Players track it by changes in sound frequency: higher as they near the target and lower when farther. This method trains spatial perception, helping both visually impaired (VI) and sighted players improve their spatial awareness.

3.1.3 Listen and shoot. Players release the bow when the sound frequency is highest, indicating the bullseye's location. A successful hit results in bright lights and positive sounds, while a miss leads to dim lights and negative sounds, encouraging another attempt.

3.2 Game levels and two-player mode

Figure 2 shows the game design Corresponding levels and two-player modes are provided to encourage players to continue to experience the fun of the game and competition.

- First Level: Players locate a normal-sized bullseye using the sound frequency.
- Second Level: The bullseye size is reduced, increasing the difficulty as players must be more precise.
- Third Level: The normal-sized bullseye moves randomly every ten seconds, requiring players to locate and shoot the target quickly.
- Two-Player Mode: Players must distinguish the sound from their own bow and locate the bullseye by sound frequency within a set time. The player with the most successful shots wins. Hits are marked by specific sound and light effects, and a new target appears randomly after each hit. Misses require players to reset by pulling the bow again. This mode emphasizes the ability of VI players to differentiate correct sounds from background noise and allows sighted players to experience the auditory challenges VI players face.



Figure 2: The working examples of Bullseye level and two-player mode: (a) First level. (b) Second pass. (c) Third pass. (d) Two-player mode.

4 EVALUATION

We evaluated *"Hearing the Bullseye"* to assess its effectiveness and user experience. The study involved VI and sighted participants

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Visual Condition	Occupation	Familiarity of Archery (1-5)
V1	Male	25	Low vision	Freelancing	2 : Slightly familiar
S1	Female	26	Normal vision	Nurse	2 : Slightly familiar
V2	Female	30	Low vision	VI masseur	1 : Not at all familiar
S2	Male	21	Normal vision	Student	3 : Moderately familiar
S3	Male	28	Normal vision	Artist	4 : Very familiar
V3	Female	21	VI	Student	1: Not at all familiar
V4	Female	30	Half VI	Freelancing	1: Not at all familiar
S4	Male	35	Normal vision	Writer	1 : Not at all familiar
S5	Female	18	Normal vision	Student	4 : Very familiar
V5	Female	31	VI	Voice Artist	1 : Not at all familiar
V6	Female	28	Low vision	Freelancing	2 : Slightly familiar
V7	Male	27	VI	Voice customer service	2 : Slightly familiar
S6	Female	32	Normal vision	Influencer	3 : Moderately familiar
S7	Female	29	Normal vision	Reporter	1 : Not at all familiar
S8	Male	25	Normal vision	Teacher	2 : Slightly familiar
V8	Female	43	Low vision	VI masseur	3 : Moderately familiar
V9	Male	29	VI	VI masseur	1: Not at all familiar
S9	Male	31	Normal vision	Civil servant	3 : Moderately familiar

Table 1: Summary of Participants

who provided insights into the game’s accessibility and enjoyment, as shown in Figure3.

4.1 Participants and Environment

We recruited 9 visually impaired (VI) individuals from the local association for VI volunteers and 9 sighted participants through social media and snowball sampling, with participants varying in visual abilities and familiarity with games. An 8x8 meter indoor space was prepared, with walls and floor serving as projection areas for the game. The space included areas for spectators and was equipped with immersive projectors and audio devices. Multiple cameras recorded player experiences and audience reactions. Six volunteers were recruited for various roles, including video recording, commentary, training, and data documentation.

4.2 Procedure



Figure 3: Photos from the “Hearing the Bullseye” user experiments

4.2.1 Game Rule Explanation. Both sighted and VI players were taught game controls through live demonstrations, verbal instructions, and physical actions. Sighted players received a 5-minute tutorial, while VI players were taught using tactile methods and sound cues.

4.2.2 Game testing. Game testing included single and dual-player modes. Each participant completed three levels of increasing difficulty, with data recorded to evaluate shooting accuracy. Two-player matches paired VI and sighted players randomly until one hit the target.

4.2.3 Interviews. Post-game feedback was gathered through semi-structured interviews, focusing on players’ overall experience, perceptions of fairness, and reactions to the game’s effects.

4.3 Data and Analysis

From our user experiments, we collected both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate whether “Hearing the Bullseye” addresses the primary challenges for VI and sighted players in social play games. Insights were derived from gameplay data and semi-structured interviews.

4.3.1 Single-player Game Segment Data . We analyzed the completion counts and times for players V1 to V9 and S1 to S9. Data from the game system’s backend provided a detailed view of each player’s performance in the archery component, as shows in Table 2.

- Level 1. All players successfully completed the first level, indicating a good understanding of the game rules.
- Level 2. Increased difficulty resulted in a higher failure rate, with most players initially completing the task.
- Level 3. This level posed significant challenges, with only a few players successfully navigating it. VI players typically excelled due to their reliance on auditory cues, giving them a distinct advantage.

Participant ID	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Visual Condition
V1	✓	✓	✓	Low vision
S1	✓			Normal vision
V2	✓	✓		Low vision
S2	✓	✓		Normal vision
S3	✓	✓		Normal vision
V3	✓			Blind
V4	✓	✓	✓	Half Blind
S4	✓			Normal vision
S5	✓	✓		Normal vision
V5	✓	✓	✓	Blind
V6	✓	✓		Low vision
V7	✓			Blind
S6	✓	✓		Normal vision
S7	✓	✓	✓	Normal vision
S8	✓	✓		Normal vision
V8	✓	✓		Low vision
V9	✓	✓		Blind
S9	✓	✓	✓	Normal vision

Table 2: Single-player Game Mode

4.3.2 *VI vs Sighted Match Segment Data*. Participants were categorized by visual status and paired randomly for one-on-one battles. Detailed data in Table3 from these encounters illustrated the outcomes and performance metrics.

Rounds	Player 1	Player 2	Result
1	V1	S7	VI wins
2	V2	S5	Sighted wins
3	V3	S1	Sighted wins
4	V7	S8	Sighted wins
5	V6	S2	VI wins
6	V4	S6	VI wins
7	V5	S3	VI wins
8	V9	S9	Sighted wins
9	V8	S4	VI wins

Table 3: Two-player Match Segment Data

VI players won six out of nine matches, showcasing their adeptness in adapting to the game and stimulating interest among sighted participants. These outcomes demonstrate that our design strategy successfully addresses fairness issues and engages sighted players with innovative gameplay elements.

4.4 Findings

Semi-structured interviews, lasting between 20 to 30 minutes, focused on participants' feedback about their experiences with "Hearing the Bullseye" under our design strategy. We observed players' time spent, emotional changes, and game outcomes. Thematic analysis was used to construct themes encapsulating participants' experiences.

Engagement and Enjoyment. Both VI and sighted reported high levels of engagement and enjoyment. The immersive experience and competitive elements kept players interested and motivated throughout the sessions.

Accessibility and Fairness. VI players found the audio cues intuitive and essential for gameplay, while sighted players appreciated the visual feedback. The design was praised for creating a fair playing field, where VI players often excelled due to the reliance on sound.

Social Interaction. The game fostered significant social interaction, especially in the two-player mode. Sighted participants gained a better understanding of the challenges faced by VI players, promoting empathy and cooperation.

Skill Development. Players noted improvements in spatial awareness and timing. VI participants, in particular, felt the game helped enhance their auditory spatial skills.

Suggestions for Improvement. Feedback included desires for more levels, additional sound customization options, and enhanced feedback mechanisms to further refine the experience and challenge levels.

5 DISCUSSIONS AND FUTURE WORKS

Our evaluation has confirmed the effectiveness of "Hearing the Bullseye," validating our design strategies and setting a foundation for further research. Based on our study, we suggest the following improvements:

- **Spatial audio:** Incorporate 3D spatial audio effects for enhanced feedback, as suggested by VI users.
- **Home accessibility:** Make the game more accessible by integrating a toy bow with smartphones and adding multiplayer AR, reducing setup complexity and cost.
- **More social exergames:** Expand to other sports-themed games like VI golf, fishing, or kite flying, applying our design strategies to enhance social play for VI and sighted players.
- **Audience engagement:** Develop games that incorporate bystander cheers and participation, enhancing the shared experience and motivation for VI players.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this study, our game "Hearing the Bullseye" — an auditory-cued, partially visual-feedback, tactile-feedback archery game — successfully validated our proposed design strategies. This game greatly improved fairness between VI and sighted players in social gaming scenarios. It boosted the confidence of VI players while also enhancing engagement for sighted players. This ensured the game was engaging for all players. Through innovative interaction, the game resolved issues of unfairness and prevented the gaming experience from becoming boring for sighted players. It provided a valuable social communication bridge for both groups. In addition, our research offers new design strategies and practical insights into social game design, particularly in facilitating effective interactions and understanding between players of varying abilities.

7 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was funded by the National Social Science Fund of China, major project in arts (Grant Number: 20ZD09)

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