Transcript of Jisc and University of Kent Opera Project video 1.

**Ben Watson:** I was a student here and I loved it. I did English and American literature and I had a really great experience. When I left University I went on to do teacher training and one of the placements I had was in a school for young people with visual impairments, the experience of inequality that I felt on their behalf never left me. My name is Ben Watson I'm the Accessible Information Advisor at the University of Kent and I have been working with Jisc on the Opera Project.

The acronym for Opera is: Opportunity, Productivity, Engagement, Reducing barriers and Achievement. Effectively what we're trying to do is to put in the equivalent of ramps and lifts to information so that anyone with print disabilities can seamlessly get access to it and that's really what the project is about. Trying to raise awareness of that at Kent and the broader opportunities that inclusive information creates for everyone.

One of our key principles of making information accessible is to make it available electronically; that's great for part-timers for commuting students as well and, of course, it's really great for people with print disabilities who can manipulate that information whether it's through magnification, whether it's through format shifting it so that you can take a text document and convert it to speech so that someone can hear it being read aloud to them.

I was aware of the great work that Jisc had done particularly around Digital Inclusion and in speaking to their accessibility specialists I'd got lots of really useful advice about how we might structure the work at Kent and go about building this project but still at that time it was all very research-based.

**Alistair McNaught:** The place we were starting from with Kent was accessibility is about everybody and it's not just looking at disability per se but it's looking at the things that can cause barriers for any student. I often use the analogy of ladders and walls in that a typical response to disabled students is to give them a ladder to get over the barriers whereas what's actually better in the long term is to work on reducing the barriers so they don't need the ladders.

Ben could see that the library needed to be doing something - he saw that as a librarian – and the people he worked with recognized this was something that actually impacted on the whole gamut of the university
experience and that was really refreshing because we were knocking at an open door.

**Ben Watson:** That's kind of how the idea for the project began to evolve - that it can be of a two-way partnership with Jisc specialists advising us on the ground (kind of at the coalface) seeing how it would work to adapt and embed some of their approaches and strategies in this living breathing ever-changing dynamic environment and we would give them feedback about what worked and didn't so that was the kind of quid pro quo for them.

What I think we have done really well is show that we're a university that takes this really seriously, we've got an institutional habitus that's inclined to be inclusive - it's very much in line with our institutional ethos to make all of our services equally accessible to everyone for the greater good.

**Alistair McNaught:** As a result of this work as part of the subscription offer for every University and every college we can offer a short, objective accessibility snapshot that will look at your website, your prospectus, your learning platforms, your assistive technology provision and your eBooks, e-journals resources and we give you a report and help people see accessibility not how big is the ladder you're giving the students but how effective have you been and making the barriers as small as possible. And if you get accessibility right it gets it right for everybody, it has value for everybody.