

BayLines

Fall, 2016

BayLines



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BSCB E-mail Lists:

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From the Editor by Bob Hachey

Welcome to the fall 2016 issue of *BayLines*. The featured topic for this issue is accessible voting in honor of the upcoming Presidential election. I would like any member who has an idea for a featured topic for a future issue to contact me. We would like to begin a "Letters to the Editor" column in the next issue. Letters can be either comments regarding past topics that appeared in previous issues of *BayLines*, or any other topics that you believe would be of interest to our readers. Note that letters may be edited for clarity and brevity.

President's Message: Reflections on Friendship by Brian Charlson

Do you remember your first "best friend"? I would have to say that my first best friends were my brothers and sisters. But after that, they were always either a neighborhood kid or someone in my class at school.

As I grew up, and as my family moved from one community to another, I had fewer and fewer "best friends" and more and more "just friends". At about the time I started being interested in girls, I once again made a "best friend". Steve was a classmate and I dated his sister. Steve and I purchased our first car together (don't worry, he did the driving). We stayed up late listening to the latest bands; we even shared a newspaper route. When I went off to a different college than he did, the friendship became logistically difficult and we both made new friends.

It was at about this time that I became an active member of the American Council of the Blind through my membership in the

Oregon Alliance of Blind Students. My future bride was the president of the group, and many of the older members became my mentors on one topic or another.

It was also at this time that I started traveling as a leader in the blindness community. There were chapter meetings, state conventions, public hearings, leadership seminars and, of course, the American Council of the Blind annual convention. I met many more people through this part of my life than I ever did while at school or at any of my jobs.

From time to time, I found myself spending more time with one person than with any other. These times resulted in “best friends” - not always men, not always people of my own age and not always people who lived in the same state as I did.

One notable friend was, and still is, Paul Edwards, past president of the ACB, and active member of the Florida Council of the Blind. I was the First Vice President for the six years he served as President and we served many years prior to that as members of ACB committees, including Resolutions, Constitution and Bylaws, and so on. Throughout, we traveled together, spent late nights arguing over resolution language, who was going to win this year’s World Series, and just which folk singer was the best of all time.

As with all things, time moved on, and Paul and I found ourselves spending less and less time together. ACB elected a new president, each of our work lives took up more and more of our after-work time, and our individual travel schedules crossed less and less.

New friends gradually took the time that old friends once occupied. New concerns required our attention at home and at work. More and more time laps between face-to-face

conversations and even telephone conversations. Throughout, however, friendship remained.

From Steve in my twenties to Tom in my thirties, from Paul in my forties to Rick in my fifties, and Vicki throughout, friendship continues to play a vital role in my heart and soul. ACB has done many things for me over the years. It has given me opportunities to meet famous people, to travel around the world, to impact the built and digital worlds, and so much more. It remains the truth, however, that what I am the most thankful for are the friendships it has given me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every friend I have made in ACB, whether through the Bay State Council of the Blind, the Library Users of America, the Oregon Council of the Blind, Guide Dog Users Inc., and so many others, for making my life so filled with fond memories, exciting moments, and opportunities to share our mutual passion for ACB and all that it does. Please take the time to thank those around you who have, and continue to, improve not only your life, but of all of those who are blind or visually impaired. It is they who are making the lives of future generations rich with opportunities to grow and prosper. Thank you, one and all.

Save the Date!

BSCB will hold its annual fall conference on Saturday, December 3 at the Grousbeck Center located on the Perkins School campus in Watertown. Details about registration and the convention program will be announced as they become available.

Perspectives on Accessible Voting by Bob Hachey

BSCB has been advocating for the right to vote privately and independently for well over 20 years. Until the passage of the Help America Vote ACT (HAVA) in 2002, we who are blind or visually impaired needed the assistance of friends, family members or election officials to vote. When HAVA was implemented, Massachusetts decided to make ballots accessible to us by means of the AutoMARK which is a machine that turns the content of the printed ballot into speech and allows us to make our choices privately and independently. The ballot is inserted into the AutoMARK and the ballot is read to the voter who is able to make his/her choices via a keyboard. The voter also has the opportunity to review ballot selections. When the voter chooses the cast ballot option, the ballot is returned to the voter with the appropriate choices filled in. Finally, the voter inserts the ballot into the ballot box along with the rest of the ballots for that polling place.

A lot of work has gone into the implementation of this process with varying results. Here in Waltham, which was one of the first communities to offer accessible voting, we are fortunate to have a city clerk, Rosario Russ Malone, who was and is extremely interested in HAVA implementation. Elections officials at each polling place are trained in the operation of the AutoMARK, and Russ has procured at least two extra machines to be used in the event of technical glitches. Russ has asked all elections officials to contact him immediately in the event that the AutoMARK at any polling place is not working properly.

I have participated in a few of these trainings. Putting a face on accessible voting helps to increase the importance of accessible voting in the minds of election officials and poll workers. While

they may understand the theory of the importance of accessible voting, they understand the need for machines like the AutoMARK much better when they have the opportunity to see a blind or visually impaired person using the machine. Any time someone tells me of problems they have had using the AutoMARK, I always tell them to participate in the process of training elections officials. I have been voting via the AutoMark since 2004 and have had only one experience where the machine failed to work properly and I had to get assistance filling out my ballot.

Below, I'll present a number of perspectives from four communities. I sincerely hope that all or most of you are now using the AutoMARK to vote privately and independently. For any of you who may be having problems using the AutoMARK, I suggest the following steps to take which should improve your experiences. Firstly, try to work with your municipality's clerk and elections officials in order to resolve any problems. Be sure to let them know how much you want and appreciate the ability to vote privately and independently. Participating in poll worker training will usually make things run more smoothly. Secondly, if you have tried working with your elections officials and continue to have issues you should contact Bridget Simmons Murphy, Project Manager, Secretary of State's Office and Elections Division. She can be reached via phone at 617-727-2828 or via email at bridget.murphy@sec.state.ma.us.

BSCB will be producing an online survey for blind and visually impaired voters to be conducted within the two-week period following the election on November 8. Please watch our email lists for further details. Anyone who would like assistance filling out the survey should contact me via phone and I'll be happy to see that you get the assistance you need. I encourage all of you to participate in this survey. Results of the survey will be shared with the Secretary of State's office, and Bridget has assured me

that her office is very interested to get more feedback on accessible voting, whether it be positive or negative.

A Perspective on Voting from Newburyport by Barry Spiro

I have been totally blind for twenty years. I have always voted, both with and without sight. I have been fortunate to have my wife assist me in the voting booth. She reads me all of the choices and marks my selections.

Two years ago, as a member of the Rehabilitation Council of the Mass Commission for the Blind, I learned about the newest voting machine for the blind and how it was to be available in all towns and all voting booths. As a new resident, as well as a new member of the Committee on Disability of Newburyport, I took a heightened interest in this. Two years ago at the polling location, I inquired about the machine and was told by the local election workers that they did not know what I was talking about. I voted once again with my wife's help as I had done for the past 20 years. I followed up with the town clerk's office after the fact and was assured that this was a mistake and in fact the machines were available at all voting precincts in Newburyport.

At the next election, I again asked the election worker for the machine and was told that they did not have it. I requested the manager/supervisor of my precinct who located the machine (with difficulty) at the far recesses of the vast voting room. The election assistant attempted to operate the machine, but was unable to do so. She brought the chief supervisor of my precinct over but neither of them could get the machine to work. Once again, I voted with my wife's help. I reported on my experience at the next Committee on Disability of Newburyport meeting and asked how

the other members had fared. I found that one other precinct had an inoperable machine with no audio, and the third precinct had no machine. I again approached the town clerk in charge of the voting, and he assured me that all precincts had the machine, and they would make sure to notify and train all precinct supervisors and the entire staff of the precinct so anyone needing the assistive voting machine would have it available. The town clerk assured me that he personally would make sure that everything would be fully operational and run smoothly on the next voting day. I feel confident that the town clerk will do everything in his power to make this November's Election Day a successful experience for those of us in need of the assistive voting machines.

A Perspective on Voting from Leominster by Karen Crowder

In the March 2012 presidential primary, I used the AutoMARK for the first time. I went to the polling place in Leominster, finding it easy to use. After inserting a paper ballot, I put on a set of light comfortable headphones. I pressed a large square button hearing its clear speech. It began to read my ballot. When pressing the up or down arrow, it read candidates in a given contest. After making my choice, I pressed the square button, marking that part of my ballot. Pressing the right arrow led me to the next contest. When I finished voting, pressing the square button released my ballot. I felt liberated, able to vote independently in the privacy of an accessible voting booth. It is a privilege most Americans do not appreciate.

With the AutoMARK, I voted In the September 2012 primary helping to choose Massachusetts's next US Senator. On the afternoon of November 6, 2012, my friend and I drove to crowded

polls in Leominster. A poll worker guided me to the AutoMARK. I sat there for half an hour, voting for candidates, and four referendum questions. The workers remarked at how adept I was at using this machine.

In 2013, I voted in several special elections, one for a Senator to replace Senator Carrie who is our secretary of state. In November, there was an election about whether our city should have casinos. We were hoping for a "yes." Casinos would mean job growth in the Leominster/Fitchburg area. We were disappointed by its defeat.

On November 4, 2014, my neighbor and I voted in the midterm election. This was despite my trouble walking because of an ankle fracture. Although my favored candidate for Governor lost, it was rewarding to participate in America's time-honored political process.

In the Massachusetts presidential primary in March, 2016, there was trouble with the AutoMARK. After inserting the ballot and putting on headphones there was silence. Despite turning up the volume, the speech did not work. A sighted poll worker assisted me with my ballot. The problem with the AutoMARK was promptly reported.

I am anticipating voting in the September primary for city council, and the November 8, 2016 presidential election. The AutoMARK provides people who are visually impaired the opportunity to actively participate in America's political process. Never forget, "voting is a right and a privilege."

A Perspective on Voting from Quincy by Chris Devin

My first experience with accessible voting occurred on Nov. 7, 2006, when I independently voted for the first time. After almost 35 years of voting with assistance of one kind or another, I cast my first independent vote for Ted Kennedy for Senator. If he'd known that, being the disability advocate that he was, he would have been pleased.

There have been mixed results and it has not been perfect, but the positive attitude of the Quincy city officials and their concern always make me proud to live here. One time my wife Kathy went to vote and the machine was speaking Chinese. By the time I got to the same polling place later that day, it was fixed and speaking English and I could vote independently.

A couple of our friends have had times when the poll workers weren't aware of the machines, and they were in boxes in a corner, but people from the city clerk's office came to the polls and got them working and they were able to use them to vote. Again, it's not perfect, but the city clerk's office here in Quincy takes this part of their job very seriously. Since nothing is foolproof, we'll always have some incidents, but when our public officials care about resolving any problems, we will all benefit from this access technology. Kudos to BSCB and other advocates who made it possible.

A Perspective on Voting from Revere by Alice Dampman

First and foremost, I want to express my continuing overwhelming thrill every time I use an accessible voting machine and vote all by

myself, and cast a private secret ballot just like everyone else. I guess I thought that thrill would end after the first time I was able to do this. But no, I feel it each and every time I vote.

Sadly, the thrill is somewhat diminished by the struggles with the machine itself. More often than not, there are technical difficulties, seemingly usually related to the printing mechanism, the cartridge or whatever it is. The machines are used so seldom that it seems that the ink dries up, the thing gets clogged, I'm not sure exactly what happens with the internal workings of the machine, but the ballot will not print, and after making all my selections, no ballot. Because I so staunchly support the right of blind people to vote independently, I have waited, sometimes for hours, for the elections official to get to my polling place to fix the machine. No one at the polling place knows how to do this, and, now, having gone through this several times, I have sometimes been able to instruct them about what to do to fix it. However, there have been several occasions when I have had to give up. Either the elections official could not get there, or, even with everyone's best efforts, the issue could not be resolved, and I have been forced to have one of the poll workers fill out my ballot for me, an experience that has always made me extremely uncomfortable and rather humiliated.

Solutions? Have someone on site who understands how to do some basic maintenance. I have always been assured that the machine was tested before it was set up, but... I also find it very sad that the machines are not used by all blind voters. Some blind people stick to their old ways and go to the polls with a sighted friend or relative and allow that person to mark the ballot for them. Obviously, this is their choice, but, nonetheless, it does sadden me.

I know what the HAVA mandates, but, as I so often say about the ADA, the one word everyone seems to want to ignore is the word

“reasonable,” as in reasonable accommodation. I find it an unnecessary expense for there to be an accessible machine in every polling place, even when there are no voters in those particular precincts who need the accommodation. Wouldn't it make more sense to install the accessible machines only in the precincts where they are needed? I realize this would necessitate a little more planning than plunking one in every precinct, but I think it is wasteful to purchase these machines for each and every polling place, some of which sit unused in precinct after precinct for election after election. They're not cheap, and I think the resources could be better used.

I suppose at some juncture, this will all become a moot point...I think online voting might be implemented in the future, and with our screen readers and other accessibility tools, again, we will be able to vote like everyone else, securely, privately, and independently.

A Perspective on Voting from Reading by Steve Dresser

When accessible voting machines were introduced in Massachusetts, two things struck me. For the first time ever, I would be able to exercise the inalienable right of every American to vote in secret. No more having someone looking over my shoulder as I cast my ballot, or wondering if my choices had been properly recorded by that same person. It seemed like the dawn of an exciting new day for me, and for other blind and visually impaired people who valued their right to participate in democracy. But I couldn't help wondering how many of us would actually get the access we were entitled to, and that was so long in coming. The machines were expensive, and not everyone shared our enthusiasm about their use.

Fortunately, for those of us who live in Reading, the new machines were installed as soon as they were mandated, and have been available to us in every election since. At first, there was some confusion on the part of poll workers about their use, but with each passing election, the training improved, and today when I enter the voting place, I am immediately directed to one of the two accessible voting machines. I can recall only one instance in the last several years when a machine malfunctioned, at which point I was directed to the other machine, which worked perfectly.

Reading town officials deserve high praise for their handling of accessible voting machines. The machines have been tested to ensure that they work properly, and poll workers can usually tell voters where they are located. If we expect to see similar results in other towns, we need to show town officials how important accessible voting is to us. The best way to do that is to use the machines at every opportunity. Accessible voting may be our right, but it will quickly slip away if we don't exercise that right.

MBTA/Ride Pilot Program Launched

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 16, 2016

Governor Baker, MBTA Launch RIDE Pilot Program with Uber, Lyft

Innovative ride-share partnership offers on-demand options for paratransit customers

WATERTOWN – Governor Charlie Baker joined Massachusetts Department of Transportation Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack, MBTA managers, disability advocates, and executives with Uber and Lyft today to launch a first-of-its-kind innovative

pilot program with ride-share companies to save costs and deliver customers of the MBTA's, THE RIDE, options for on-demand service through their smartphones.

“The reliability of our transportation system depends on the MBTA’s ability to improve its core infrastructure and provide efficient, innovative transit options that meet the needs of the system’s one million daily riders,” said Governor Baker. “This initiative represents the MBTA’s efforts to increase accessibility in a more cost-effective and efficient way that also delivers more convenient service for its paratransit customers.”

The On-Demand Paratransit Pilot Program will allow the MBTA to learn and understand the opportunities and challenges of incorporating on-demand paratransit options into public transit, and follows a program launched in January with multiple Boston-area taxi providers to subsidize trips for RIDE users via cab. Customers unable to use a smartphone or without access to one can book rides by using a phone-in option from Lyft or obtain a smart phone from Uber on a limited basis.

“We want to meet the needs of our customers to help them get to where they are going efficiently and that is why we are increasing investments in the core transit system and introducing innovative options for our paratransit customers,” said Secretary Pollack. “This pilot takes a major step toward providing the kind of flexibility, responsiveness and on-demand customer service that has been the focus of our reforms, and that our paratransit riders deserve.”

The pilot is also part of the MBTA’s efforts to deliver more efficient and cost-effective service. Current RIDE service comes at a variable cost of \$31 to the MBTA, a \$3.15 set fare for customers and a minimum of one day advance notice required. Ride-share pilot participants will have on-demand service available via their

smartphone app or the phone-in option and pay the first \$2.00 of the trip. The MBTA will pick up the next \$13.00 of the trip, with the customer picking up any remaining trip costs.

Today's event was held at the Perkins School for the Blind which helped initiate the pilot, working closely with disability advocates and the MBTA. Joining Governor Baker and Secretary Pollack for the announcement were MBTA Interim General Manager Brian Shortsleeve, Perkins' President and CEO Dave Power, Perkins' Chief Financial Officer Lisa Calise (who was appointed to the MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board by Governor Baker last year), and the Boston General Managers for Uber and Lyft.

"This collaborative effort between the MBTA, our partners at Uber and Lyft, Perkins, and so many others shows how we can use private market innovation and emerging technology to enhance service and accessibility for our riders," said Interim General Manager Shortsleeve. "The MBTA will continue to explore opportunities like these to reduce costs and provide flexible transit options while investing in the core system."

As part of the pilot, Lyft will partner with a local Americans with Disabilities Act/Non-Emergency Medical Transportation firm to provide wheelchair accessible rental vehicles to Lyft drivers. To incentivize the supply of wheelchair accessible vehicles on the road, the MBTA will offer an additional \$12 per completed trip to those Lyft drivers using an accessible rental. Uber currently has wheelchair accessible vehicles through its UberACCESS program that will be available for the MBTA pilot.

"We are honored to be working with the MBTA to improve convenient and reliable transportation options for their customers, our riders," said Uber Boston General Manager, Chris Taylor. "Uber's technology has helped expand access to convenient

transportation options, while improving mobility and independence for thousands of people across the Commonwealth.”

“Lyft is proud to bring on-demand transportation to customers of The RIDE,” said Tyler George, General Manager of Lyft Boston. “This partnership with the MBTA marks an exciting next step in enhancing and expanding THE RIDE’s service by reducing passenger wait times and increasing access to jobs, education, errands, and social activities.”

Driver-partners will undergo third-party safety screenings, vehicle and criminal background record checks, and receive educational materials on providing service for RIDE customers with accessibility needs. Uber and Lyft will also offer sessions to train driver-partners to better serve pilot customers.

“Independent, reliable transportation is critical for people with disabilities to get to work, school or other community activities on time,” said Dave Power, President and CEO of Perkins School for the Blind. “Para-transit riders can now access the same on-demand services enjoyed by people without disabilities – bringing us another step closer to inclusive public transportation.”

Interested RIDE customers are encouraged to participate by visiting the MBTA’s website for more information and signing up with both Uber and Lyft to maximize participation. RIDE-eligible users approved for the pilot will receive app access to request on-demand services.

“We are excited to see THE RIDE expand customer options and efficiencies, with a commitment to long-term accessibility options,” said Bill Henning, Director of the Boston Center for Independent Living.

“Thousands of seniors who are no longer able to use fixed route service rely on THE RIDE for their transportation needs but as costs have escalated it has become important to explore new options to meet those needs,” said Carolyn Villers, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council. “This pilot is an important step forward because it has the potential to improve access to responsive service while also providing a more cost-effective model.”

“AACT is looking forward to working with Lyft/Uber and the MBTA in providing an additional transportation resource to the disability community on THE RIDE program,” said James White, Chairman of the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA.

For more information, contact William Pitman at william.pitman@state.ma.us.

Disability: Becoming Disabled by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson

[Rosemarie Garland-Thomson teaches English and bioethics at Emory University, where she is a founding director of the Disability Studies Initiative.]

Not long ago, a good friend of mine said something revealing to me: “I don't think of you as disabled,” she confessed. I knew exactly what she meant; I didn't think of myself as disabled until a few decades ago, either, even though my two arms have been pretty significantly asymmetrical and different from most everybody else's my whole life.

My friend's comment was meant as a compliment, but followed a familiar logic -- one that African-Americans have noted when their

well-meaning white friends have tried to erase the complications of racial identity by saying, “I don't think of you as black,” or when a man compliments a woman by saying that he thinks of her as 'just one of the guys'.

This impulse to rescue people with disabilities from a discredited identity, while usually well meaning, is decidedly at odds with the various pride movements we've come to know in recent decades. Slogans like “Black is beautiful!” and “We're here, we're queer, get used to it!” became transformative taunts for generations of people schooled in the self-loathing of racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Pride movements were the psycho-emotional equivalents of the anti-discrimination and desegregation laws that asserted the rights of full citizenship to women, gay people, racial minorities, and other groups. More recently, the Black Lives Matter and the LGBT rights movement have also taken hold.

Yet pride movements for people with disabilities -- like Crip Power or Mad Pride -- have not gained the same sort of traction in the American consciousness. Why? One answer is that we have a much clearer collective notion of what it means to be a woman or an African-American, gay or transgender person than we do of what it means to be disabled.

A person without a disability may recognize someone using a wheelchair, a guide dog or a prosthetic limb, or someone with Down syndrome, but most don't conceptualize these people as having a shared social identity and a political status. “They” merely seem to be people to whom something unfortunate has happened, for whom something has gone terribly wrong. The one thing most people do know about being disabled is that they don't want to be that.

Yet disability is everywhere once you start noticing it. A simple awareness of who we are sharing our public spaces with can be

revelatory. Wheelchair users or people with walkers, hearing aids, canes, service animals, prosthetic limbs or breathing devices may seem to appear out of nowhere, when they were in fact there all the time.

A mother of a 2-year-old boy with dwarfism who had begun attending Little People of America events summed this up when she said to me with stunned wonder, “There are a lot of them!” Until this beloved child unexpectedly entered her family, she had no idea that achondroplasia is the most common form of short stature or that most people with the condition have average-size parents. More important, she probably did not know how to request the accommodations, access the services, enter the communities or use the laws that he needs to make his way through life. But because he is hers and she loves him, she will learn a lot about disability.

The fact is, most of us will move in and out of disability in our lifetimes, whether we do so through illness, an injury or merely the process of aging.

The World Health Organization defines disability as an umbrella term that encompasses impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions that reflect the complex interaction between “features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.” The Americans with Disabilities Act tells us that disability is ‘a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities’.

Obviously, this category is broad and constantly shifting, so exact statistics are hard to come by, but the data from our most reliable sources is surprising. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one in five adults in the United States is living with a disability. The National Organization on Disability says there are 56 million disabled people. Indeed, people with

disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States, and as new disability categories such as neurodiversity, psychiatric disabilities, disabilities of aging, and learning disabilities emerge and grow, so does that percentage.

Disability growth areas -- if you will -- include diagnostic categories such as depression, anxiety disorders, anorexia, cancers, traumatic brain injuries, attention-deficit disorder, autoimmune disease, spinal cord injuries, autistic spectrum disabilities and dementia. Meanwhile, whole categories of disability and populations of people with certain disabilities have vanished or diminished significantly in the 20th century with improved public health measures, disease prevention, and increased public safety.

Because almost all of us will experience disability sometime in our lives, having to navigate one early in life can be a great advantage. Because I was born with six fingers altogether and one quite short arm, I learned to get through the world with the body I had from the beginning. Such a misfit between body and world can be an occasion for resourcefulness. Although I certainly recognized that the world was built for what I call the fully fingered, not for my body, I never experienced a sense of losing capacity, and adapted quite readily, engaging with the world in my preferred way and developing practical workarounds for the life demands my body did not meet. (I used talk-to-text technology to write this essay, for example.)

Still, most Americans don't know how to be disabled. Few of us can imagine living with a disability or using the technologies that disabled people often need. Since most of us are not born into disability but enter into it as we travel through life, we don't get acculturated the way most of us do in our race or gender. Yet disability, like any challenge or limitation, is fundamental to being human -- a part of every life. Clearly, the border between 'us' and

'them' is fragile. We just might be better off preparing for disability than fleeing from it.

Yet even talking about disability can be a fraught experience. The vocabulary of this status is highly charged, and for even the most well-meaning person, a conversation can feel like stepping into a maze of courtesy, correctness and possible offense. When I lecture about disability, someone always wants to know -- either defensively, earnestly, or cluelessly -- the 'correct' way to refer to this new politicized identity.

What we call ourselves can also be controversial. Different constituencies have vibrant debates about the politics of self-naming. "People first" language asserts that if we call ourselves "people with disabilities," we put our humanity first and consider our impairment a modification. Others claim disability pride by getting our identity right up front -- making us 'disabled people. Others, like many sign language users, reject the term 'disability.

The old way of talking about disability as a curse, tragedy, misfortune or individual failing is no longer appropriate, but we are unsure about what more progressive, more polite, language to use. "Crippled," "handicapped," and "feebleminded" are outdated and derogatory. Many pre-Holocaust eugenic categories that were indicators for state-sponsored sterilization or extermination policies -- "idiot," "moron," "imbecile," and even "mentally retarded" -- have been discarded in favor of terms such as 'developmentally delayed' or 'intellectually disabled'. In 2010, President Obama signed Rosa's Law, which replaced references to 'mental retardation' with 'intellectual disability' in federal statutes.

The author and scholar Simi Linton writes about learning to be disabled in a hospital after a spinal cord injury -- not by way of her rehabilitation but rather by bonding with other young people new to disability. She calls this entering into community "claiming

disability.” In *Sight Unseen*, an elegant explication of blindness and sight as cultural metaphors, Georgina Kleege wryly suggests the difference between medical low vision and blindness as a cultural identity by observing that, “Writing this book made me blind,” a process she calls gaining blindness rather than losing sight.

Like them, I had no idea until the 1980s what it meant to be disabled, that there was a history, culture, and politics of disability. Without a disability consciousness, I was in the closet. Since that time, other people with disabilities have entered the worlds in which I live and work, and I have found community and developed a sturdy disability identity. I have changed the way I see and treat myself and others. I have taken up the job of teaching disability studies and bioethics as part of my work. I have learned to be disabled. What has been transformed is not my body, but my consciousness.

As we manage our bodies in environments not built for them, the social barriers can sometimes be more awkward than the physical ones. Confused responses to racial or gender categories can provoke the question “What are you?” Whereas disability interrogations are “What’s wrong with you?” Before I learned about disability rights and disability pride, which I came to by way of the women’s movement, I always squirmed out a shame-filled, “I was born this way.” Now I’m likely to begin one of these uncomfortable encounters with, “I have a disability,” and to complete it with, “and these are the accommodations I need.” This is a claim to inclusion and right to access resources.

This coming out has made possible what a young graduate student with a disability said to me after I gave a lecture at her university. She said that she understood now that she had a right to be in the world.

We owe much of this progress to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the laws that led up to it. Starting in the 1960s, a broad disability rights movement encouraged legislation and policy that gradually desegregated the institutions and spaces that had kept disabled people out and barred them from exercising the privileges and obligations of full citizenship. Education, transportation, public spaces and work spaces steadily transformed so that people with disabilities came out of hospitals, asylums, private homes, and special schools into an increasingly rebuilt and reorganized world.

That changed landscape is being reflected politically, too, so much so that when Donald Trump mocked the movement of a disabled reporter, most of the country reacted with shock and outrage at his blatant discrimination, and that by the time the Democratic National Convention rolled round, it seemed natural to find the rights and dignity of people with disabilities placed front and center. Hillary Clinton's efforts early in her career to secure the right to an education for all disabled children was celebrated. Tom Harkin, the former Iowa senator and an author of the Americans with Disabilities Act, marked the law's 26th anniversary and called for improvements to it. People with disabilities were featured speakers, including Anastasia Somoza, who received an ovation for her powerful speech. President Obama, in his address, referred to “black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, young, old, gay, straight, men, women, folks with disabilities, all pledging allegiance, under the same proud flag.”

Becoming disabled demands learning how to live effectively as a person with disabilities, not just living as a disabled person trying to become nondisabled. It also demands the awareness and cooperation of others who don't experience these challenges. Becoming disabled means moving from isolation to community,

from ignorance to knowledge about who we are, from exclusion to access, and from shame to pride.

[Editor's Note: This article was reprinted from the Sunday Review Section of the *New York Times*, August 21, 2016.]

How to Locate and Access Audio-Described Content by Paul Ferrara

Can people who are blind enjoy movies and television shows? Many people have asked me this question; perhaps you've heard it or even asked it yourself. While audio-based forms of entertainment like audio books and music are important to persons who are blind, people who are blind often enjoy video-based entertainment like movies, documentaries, and television shows of varying types.

What exactly is audio description? The Audio Description Project (ADP) website, which we will discuss further, says the following: Audio Description (AD) is the descriptive narration of key visual elements of live theatre, television, movies, and other media to enhance their enjoyment by consumers who are blind or have low vision. AD is the insertion of audio explanations and descriptions of the settings, characters, and action taking place in such media, when such information about these visual elements is not offered in the regular audio presentation.

The initial goal for writing this post was to list most, if not all, of the major sources of audio-described content. While attempting to gather the information into some sort of usable groupings or categories, however, it became obvious that it would be nearly impossible to put it all together in one post, especially if we attempted to elaborate on it in detail. As a result, we will direct

you to resources with information about the history and availability of audio-described content and also mention a few resources which are not yet described on these larger sites including a service that calls itself the audio-described version of Netflix and an independent video developer who chose to make their documentary with audio description.

The Audio Description Project

This website is an initiative of the American Council of the Blind and is a comprehensive site detailing what audio description is, who does it, how to get it, and much more. It contains a list of DVDs and television series with audio description as well as schedules for watching television shows with audio description and lists opportunities for individuals to train to become audio describers. It even includes listings of iTunes and Netflix programming with audio description.

Although the entire project's history is described in detail on the site, a brief synopsis of ADP's history is as follows: The Audio Description Project's website collects and provides information on audio description in all its forms: live theatre, television, movies, DVDs, and more. Started in 2002 by AD International, funding and direction for this website now come from the American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project (started in March 2009).

Since new audio-described media is released regularly, interested persons should visit the ADP site at <http://www.acb.org/adp/> and sign up to receive page changes/updates via email.

The Federal Communications Commission

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) also provides a dedicated guide to audio description. This guide explains what

audio description is, the laws and regulations that are related to its implementation, and how one can utilize it. It includes broadcast networks' and cable networks' audio described programming and schedule information and a detailed description of what steps to take to hear the audio description on most television service providers. It also includes information on closed captioning, receiving information related to emergency alerts that the government issues, and communication devices for persons who are deafblind. Taken together, these sites should provide most of the information you need to become more fully informed about audio description. Read the FCC's guide at <https://www.fcc.gov/general/video-description#block-menu-block-4>.

Zagga Entertainment

This service calls itself, "Descriptive video on demand!" "We are Zagga Entertainment — a video-on-demand service featuring movies and series with described video. Whether you love a gripping thriller, a probing documentary or a hilarious buddy flick, we'll feature it on our fully accessible website and mobile apps (which are coming soon)." Zagga Entertainment provides sample videos on their site and may provide some videos at no cost; however, their service is similar to Netflix because they are a video-on-demand service so you can watch programming at any time.

How much does their service cost? We have two membership packages from which the user may choose. Our Basic Membership is \$6.99 per month and gives you access to our independent content, classics, and documentaries. A Premium Membership costs \$9.99 and gives you access to all of Zagga, including Hollywood content.

Zagga's creators have stated that their site is still under construction and that more content is soon to be added. Visit <http://zagga.tv/> for more information, or email info@zagga.tv.

Independent Films/Documentaries

We, of course, are not aware of the actual number of independent filmmakers who add audio description to their work. One of them, however, chose to inform us about their film and to ensure that we knew that the film included audio description so we mention it here to show our appreciation for its inclusion as part of the film. "Mind/Game: The Unquiet Journey of Chamique Holdsclaw," directed and produced by two-time Academy-Award-nominated documentary filmmaker Rick Goldsmith, and narrated by Academy-Award-winning actress Glenn Close, follows Holdsclaw through her legendary basketball career and her roller-coaster journey with mental illness.

Mind/Game is now available on DVD, and comes with video description for the visually impaired, Closed Captioning and SDH subtitles in English and Spanish. Director Goldsmith has long been committed to full accessibility in his films. He personally presented Mind/Game at this year's Michigan Association on Higher Education & Disability (MI-AHEAD) conference, and at a special Department of Labor screening of Mind/Game in Washington D.C., to commemorate the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Home use, professional use and educational use DVDS of Mind/Game are available for purchase, and you can read a more detailed description of the film at <https://kovnocommunications.org/>.

While full implementation of audio description into all movies and television series is still far from complete, its usage seems to be increasing. With all of the available materials, perhaps you can watch something new or revisit something you've watched

previously—this time with a much better understanding of the visual happenings thanks to audio description!

[Editor's Note: This article was reprinted from Fred's Head, Friday September 2 2016 <http://www.fredshead.info/search?updated-min=2016-01-01T00:00:00-05:00&updated-max=2017-01-01T00:00:00-05:00&max-results=50>. Paul Ferrara is Social Media Coordinator, American Printing House for the Blind.]

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