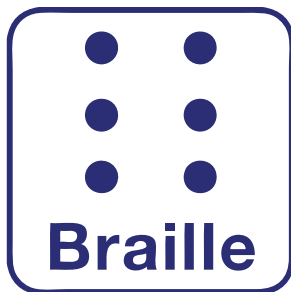


disabilities Handbook

a guide to radio accessibility
disAbilities Handbook



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www.ncra.ca/abilities



Cam Wells and Stephane Bertrand
at CHUO-FM during the Ottawa Production Weekend.

Introduction

This project was sparked by an idea from Stephane Bertrand at CKUT-FM in Montreal.

At the 2009 National Campus and Community Radio Conference in Montreal, he helped host a panel on accessibility and community radio that featured people from his show, *The Avalanche*, and other people with disabilities from across the country. The session was packed and almost everyone had questions and stories from their own stations.

Later that week, Stephane said he had been thinking: about how to help more stations become accessible, how to encourage stations to start shows done by people with physical and intellectual disabilities, and how to get more people with disabilities involved in community radio.

He suggested creating a handbook (with an accompanying CD — we

are radio people after all) that would help support this important work.

Later that year Cameron Wells, host of *Handi-link* at CJAM-FM in Windsor, came on board — helping host another panel discussion, this time at an Ontario regional conference in Kingston.

So we scraped together some money, assembled an editorial committee, held a planning and production weekend in Ottawa, found an editor and now, three years after Stephane first thought it up: you're holding the result!

This handbook and the website will help you create an open and safe space, adapt your station set-up, training and policies to be more accessible to everyone, and get a glimpse of the awesome work people with disabilities are doing in the sector.

But this is only a starting point — talk to people with disabilities already working at your station and advocacy groups in your community and regularly review your progress.

Finally, keep us posted. We're already talking about the *disAbilities Handbook* version 2.0!

Accommodation Basics

Accessibility means having equal opportunity to use and navigate a space. Ideally, a station would have all accommodations for people with disabilities from the blueprints, though many stations are unable to do this because of their current space and financial constraints. This doesn't mean that stations can't work on being more accessible now. The following list is some of the things to consider.

Ramps and elevators

The best gradient for a ramp is 1:20. This means that for every 20cm there is 1cm increase in height. The ramps should have a non-slip surface and be in well-lit areas.

- ° Ramps should be in place leading to all points within a station not at ground level. This includes all studios, music libraries and washrooms.
- ° Elevators should be readily available to provide access to stations in basements or on upper levels. Make sure all elevators are on accessible routes in the building and are in operation all hours people need them and during emergencies.
- ° Buttons should be at a height that is easily reached by someone in a wheelchair and be in braille or raised.



Spacing

Every studio within a station should provide between two to two and a half metres extra space around corners and doors to accommodate people with wheelchairs or mobility aids.

- ° Position mixing boards so anyone seated in front of them can easily reach them along with any necessary equipment (CD players etc). Mixing boards should also include labels in both written and braille forms. Ideally, all buttons should provide an audio read out of its function when pressed.
- ° The station floor, hallways and other high traffic areas should be free of any clutter (especially trailing cables) that may impede mobility or present obstacles to people with vision impairments.
- ° Avoid putting rugs, tape or having any ripped carpet on the station floor, as they can be tough terrain for mobility devices and wheelchairs.
- ° Don't rearrange station equipment or furniture without warning — people with vision impairments may have memorized the layout of the room and abrupt changes can lead to injury. Beware of low hanging lights or fixtures.
- ° Doors should be a different colour than the walls to help distinguish them. All signs should be large and have high contrast.

Transportation

There should be at least one reserved parking spot for people with disabilities near the station. Ideally there should also be accessible public transit nearby, whether it is a bus stop



or space for pick up/drop off. Be ready to call the transit authority, city or university to work out a way to facilitate this.

Entrance

- ° The station needs to have a clearly marked entrance.
- ° Doors leading to the station should not be too heavy or hard to open and ideally have push button access.
- ° Navigating mazes of hallways or reading small print on a door create barriers for people with low vision.
- ° Signs should include pictographs for people with learning disabilities or low literacy.

Shelving units

- ° Make sure important documents and commonly used items are easy to reach.
- ° All shelves should be secured tightly so that they cannot be knocked or tipped over.
- ° All shelves containing CDs or other media should be within easy reach, as seeking assistance to obtain a CD can be time consuming, and could interfere with live to air work. The station's computer could also contain a folder of station IDs and PSAs to minimize the physical strain on an individual with a disability.
- ° Music libraries and archives should be spacious enough to accommodate mobility aids and include braille labels.

Emergency Procedures

All emergency notifications should be audio and visual (for instance, CKDU-FM in Halifax has a blue light that flashes when the doorbell is ringing). Install these alarms in common areas throughout the station, including washrooms. Distributing vibrating pagers to people with hearing impairments is another way to communicate an emergency.

- ° Fire alarm activation levers should be reachable by someone in a wheelchair.
- ° Post evacuation plans no higher than 120 centimeters (47 inches) from the ground and in at least 14 pt. font in a prominent place. Have a copy of the plan available electronically as well. The plan should include a map of all accessible exits from the station. In an emergency, they elevators may not work and a person with limited mobility may need to be carried down stairs. Train staff and volunteers on how to transport someone with limited mobility.

•° If necessary, assign an able-bodied person to help a person with a disability in case of an emergency. This can mean assisting them out of the building or alerting them of a situation. Though having this partner system in place can help in a crisis, everyone should be trained in providing support evacuating in an emergency.

•° In a worst case scenario, there may be no one around to help a person with limited mobility leave the station in an emergency. In this instance, a person with limited mobility can use an area of refuge. This is a fire resistant area through an accessible route, typically near elevators or stairways, where they can wait for assistance from emergency crews.

•° The refuge area should include a communication device, such as an intercom, that connects with the rest of the building so that emergency workers know where to find someone who requires help leaving. Tell local fire and police stations where the area of refuge is located and post the location so all staff and volunteer know where the area is.

•° Assistive devices, such as ramps and blankets (to help carry those with limited mobility) should be stored in the station where everyone can reach them.

•° To ensure that everyone is comfortable with these procedures, emergency drills should be carried out at least once a year with the participation of all volunteers and staff.

Special Events:

Outings such as volunteer appreciation days, community fundraisers or even getting some drinks after a show should be fun for everyone.

•° It's important to not only to call an establishment regarding their accessibility but to actually visit first to confirm. Many movie theatres have stairs at the entrances and bars may have washrooms in the basement. Venues may claim that they are accessible simply on the basis of having accessible parking spaces or washrooms. It's important to check to ensure the venue is accessible and all accommodations are functioning.

•° Make inclusivity a priority. Annual meetings, committee meetings, fundraisers and parties should be held in places that are accessible.

•° Confirm that despite *no pets* policies at establishments, they cannot refuse any person with a service animal. A service animal is not a pet, but a personal aid. Many provinces have legal protections.

David Robbins-Singh “DJ Squeaky Wheelz”

CJAM-FM, co-host Handi-Link

Windsor, ON

Robbins-Singh started at CJAM-FM during a year-long high school co-op placement, helping produce ad campaigns and PSAs, dabbling on some sports and music programs.

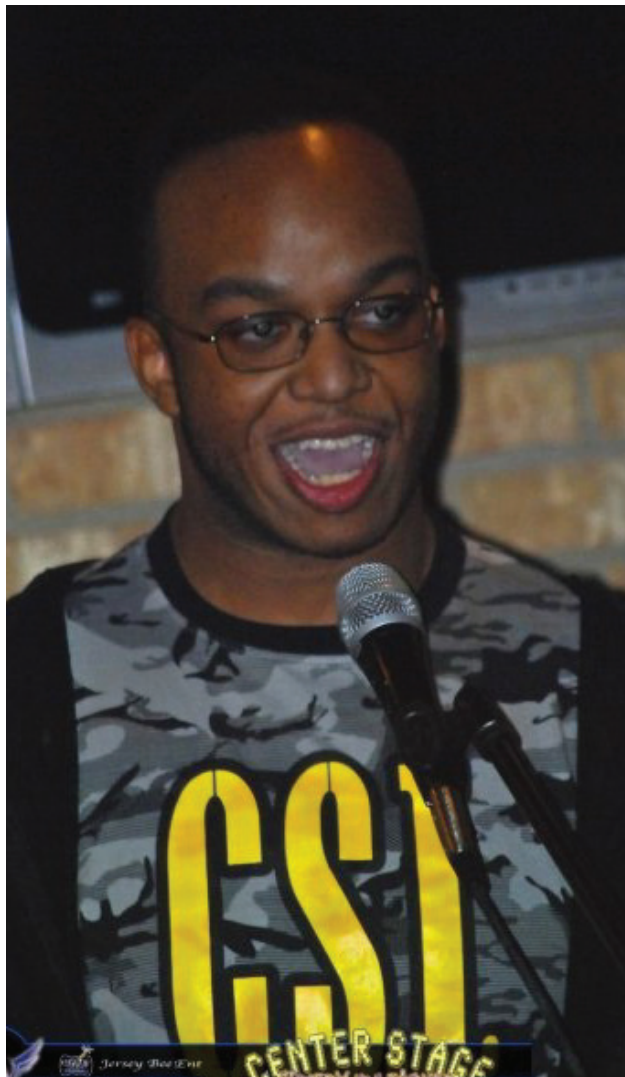
Feeling that he could also offer valuable insights into disability issues, he was interviewed on CJAM-FM’s disability program Handi-Link. He quickly became a regular contributor and co-host.

“People don’t like to talk about disability,” he says. “They always say you can’t make a joke about this or talk about that. A lot of people don’t talk about disability because they think people are sickly and dependent. But we’re able to break that taboo.”

For instance, he says the name “DJ Squeaky Wheelz” is a way to spoof on stereotypes about people with disabilities.

He also says some people have told him they don’t see his wheelchair as a way to show that they believe in equality. But Robbins-Singh says he doesn’t need to erase his disability.

“It’s about seeing the chair but not caring, and treating me as they would someone who’s not in a wheelchair,” he says. “I hate it when people throw a pity party for people with disabilities, it goes against everything I’ve fought for.”



Though Robbins-Singh had hosted events in the community and is a comedian, he says he was worried he wouldn’t have a radio voice. CJAM-FM has given him the confidence to be himself.

“Radio has helped me come out of my shell.”



Tech and Tools

It's essential to provide accessible station equipment. Technological innovation has made it possible to modify gear to accommodate people with disabilities.

Software

Individuals with disabilities should be able to participate in all aspects of radio operations. This includes writing radio copy. To this end, stations should have speech to text, screen reading and transcribing programs. Much of this software is multi-purpose, as people with learning disabilities or people with vision impairments can use speech to text aids.

Assistive Devices

One simple and cheap way to make computers more accessible is through assistive technologies. This means using only a keyboard or mouse to work the

computer, rather than multiple implements.

- ° Many operating systems (*Windows, Mac*) also include accessibility functions such as increasing the size of icons or text on the screen.
- ° All computer desks should be wide enough and at a height that can accommodate a wheelchair underneath.

Website

The station's website itself should be accessible. By doing so, stations broaden their audiences while also helping encourage people with disabilities to volunteer.

- ° The website should include features such as changing the size of the font, navigating the site using only a keyboard or mouse, changing the contrast and be able to be read using a screen reader. The website W3C (<http://www.w3.org/>) can help you tweak your website or blog to accessible standards.

Modified phones

For anyone who may have low vision, stations should have either a braille or large display phone on hand. Position the phone as close as possible to mixing boards. Phones with adjustable screens that can be tilted

higher or lower may be useful to people with mobility aids.

Microphones

In creating any broadcast, it's essential that the audience be able to clearly hear the speaker. Check if existing studio microphones can be tilted or lowered to reach someone sitting in front of the mixing board. Wireless microphones and lapel microphones are also good options to consider.

- Many stations have portable recorders available

for field recording. Digital recorders should be small and have the ability to be operated by a single hand. Many types are available. Station staff and volunteers should be able to train anyone who wants to use them in their work.

Advocacy

One of the greatest tools at a station is the willingness of staff and volunteers to push for accessibility.

- Staff and volunteers can talk to landlords, city or town councils or their university to

discuss what modifications are needed and what can be done.

- Be active in bringing accessibility issues of the station to your community. Talk to local disability groups for support.

- CHUO-FM in Ottawa realized that they didn't have accessible washrooms near their station. They lobbied the university, advocating on behalf of students, volunteers and staff with disabilities who used the station. The university agreed, renovating the washrooms.

Maintaining Accessibility

Understandably, not all stations can make all the changes mentioned — though it's important to see what is possible. Modifications should be prioritized based on community demand, specific needs of volunteers with disabilities and budgetary allowance.

But creating an accessible environment is only the beginning. After accommodations are in place, your station must also evaluate and maintain them. There are many ways to do this:

- Review disability policies at general or annual meetings. Encourage volunteers with disabilities to attend.

- Have in-station surveys asking volunteers about accessibility or try a suggestion box. This way

volunteers can recommend improvements, whether they have a disability or not.

- Establish a committee within the station to review accessibility. Beyond legal compliance on equal access, it is also a way to let people with disabilities know that their opinions are vital to the station.

- The committee should be led by people with disabilities, but encourage able-bodied people to join as well. Make sure people with disabilities are assessing accessibility that is relevant to them. Be careful to not embarrass anyone who is not comfortable openly discussing their disability or may not self-identify.

- Be comprehensive in proposing solutions. A ramp can help conquer a set of stairs, but when the doorway it leads to is too narrow for a

person with a mobility aid, permanent modifications have to be put in place. Create and update a list of these problem areas which require funding to improve.

- Make accessibility upgrades a part of the station's budget. Set aside a few hundred dollars to make small changes each year, or save the money for larger modifications.

- Apply for grants from your provincial or municipal government for accessibility renovations. Make sure that the Accessibility Committee at your station has accurate financial information so they can set realistic goals. Universities may fund changes at campus stations as part of their own accessibility improvements.

Rebecca Robb

**CFUV-FM, Access Live
Victoria, BC**

Rebecca Robb began volunteering at CFUV-FM while studying philosophy and medieval history. When she first went to get trained at the station she says staff weren't sure what to do.

"I did get the impression that the disability made everyone nervous," she says. **"The first reaction did seem to be one of 'Oh my god, a disabled person! What do we do?'"**

"Being dyslexic, having a disability, doesn't really pose any barriers in my life," she says. "It's just sometimes **people's attitudes are hard to get around.**"

In the end the station adjusted its training for her, which included a written test and an orientation of the mixing board.

"It's looks a bit like the inside of a jet or something, there are a lot pulleys and levers and being dyslexic it's hard to figure out abstract symbols."

Now, she has an assistant, Donald, who techs for the show which is run by Robb and other members of the campus disability rights group Access UVic.

She says the program is a fun way to bring the disability rights movement to the average listener, as it's not as recognized as other areas of difference in Canada —



which leaves many people with negative stereotypes and hang-ups about disability.

"It's very exciting to have a radio show. It's very empowering for my guests who come, because **being disabled isn't always seen as this hugely fabulous thing, and when they come on Access Live, it is.**"

Respectful Disability Language

Historical Context

How we talk about people reflects how society perceives them. People with disabilities share a dark history of dehumanization and institutionalization. Starting in the 1800s, many people with physical and intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses were forced into institutions where they had no control over their daily lives and were often subject to abuse, isolation and inhumane living conditions.

In the 1960s, people with disabilities and their families began to organize in Canada and fight for independent living and inclusion. Through this movement, disability activists made significant legal and social gains. Despite these efforts, legacies of forced sterilization, euthanasia and devaluation are evoked by disrespectful language and draws upon the stereotypes that are supported by these recent histories.

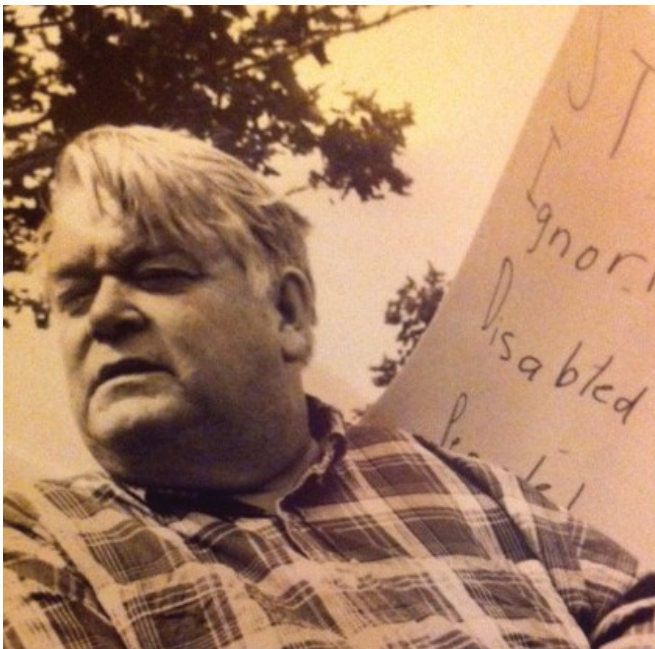
Though many terms discussed here are still a part of common language, they can hurtful

and offensive. It's not about being afraid of what to say, or being politically correct; it's about showing respect. Stations should encourage inclusive language.

Ableism is a form of discrimination against people with disabilities characterized by the notion that people with disabilities need to be fixed or cannot function as members of society. Ableism can be intentional or accidental but is not tolerable, in the same way that sexist, racist, or homophobic comments are unacceptable.

It's also worth noting that in its 1987 Statement of Principles, NCRA member stations committed to "encourage programming policies that prohibit material that is sexist, racist, ageist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, or that maligns persons with disabilities or economically disadvantaged peoples."

Also, not everyone with a diagnosis or impairment identifies as having a disability. It's important to allow people to self-identify.



Allan Simpson, Canadian disability rights activist, protesting on Parliament Hill, 1996



Disability activists protest poverty at the End Exclusion rally on Parliament Hill, 2007

Words to Avoid

Below is a list of unacceptable or outdated words relating to people with disabilities. Some guests may use one of the words mentioned without understanding its offensive nature or as a means of reclaiming it in a positive context. Make sure that programs that contain these offensive words are preceded by a warning or are put in context.

“Cripple” or “Crip”

An able bodied person should never use this term, even as a metaphor (ie. patriarchy is crippling) as it's objectifying and ignores diverse experiences. However, like many pejorative labels (queer, bitch etc.) some people with these identities are working to reclaim these words, taking away their negative power and empowering the person who uses it.

“Condition”

Some disabilities are temporary, such as the effects of severe illnesses, but others are permanent. They aren't conditions, but a natural part of life.

“Disabled person”

People are described by their disabilities, not defined by them. People are also not their mobility aids. Space allowances around doors

don't accommodate wheelchairs but people in wheelchairs. When asking someone about their disability, don't ask “what's wrong with you?” The answer is nothing! Instead ask is if they are comfortable explaining their disability and what they prefer. Most people like when you simply use their name.

“The Disabled”

Not all people with disabilities are the same. This generalization defines people by their disability and objectifies them. Instead, use the term “people with disabilities”

“Freak” or “freak show”

People with physical disabilities were put on display for the purpose of entertainment through carnival acts called freak shows throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

People paid to stare at the people with disabilities in these shows who were advertised as “monsters” and “freaks.” These terms are unfortunately still used today.

When Stephane Bertrand from CKUT-FM interviewed the artistic director of Famous People Players, Diane Dupuy said that critics claimed she would create “a freak show” by including people with developmental



disabilities in the show. This ableist fear, that performances by people with developmental disabilities would be without artistic merit, was never realized. Famous People Players is instead one of Canada's most respected and widely enjoyed theatre companies.

“Invalid”

Used as a noun, this term means exactly what you'd think: that a person is not a valid human being, that they are helpless and infantile. This word is not offensive when describing an object (“your argument is invalid”) but it should not be used to describe a person.

“Lame” or “Gimp”

Many people use the word lame to mean something is uncool. Gimp is sometimes used as slang for people with difficulty walking. Originally, these words were used to describe people with disabilities. Equating someone's mobility with something that misses the mark implies that they are not fulfilling expectations of able-bodiedness.

“Midget”

The preferred terms are little person or person with dwarfism. Again, take your cue from the person.

“Normal”

This word should not be used to refer to able-bodied people. The definition is so subjective that it is impossible to say what is common for

one person is the same as another. Normal also implies the natural. Disability is as natural as able-bodiedness and should not be seen as deviation from the norm.

“Retard”

The R-word was first used in the medical community to label someone with an intellectual or developmental disability and is still in regular use in some parts of the world. Using medical terms to describe a person is a way to dehumanize them.

It is also often used as a comparison to something which is stupid or unfair, at the expense of furthering stereotypes about real people. This is similar to calling something “gay” to mean it's stupid or worthless. Both are misplaced and offensive.

It's unacceptable to equate antiquated labels for people with disabilities to devalue them as a group. The R-word campaign was started by Special Olympic athletes to stop this use of the word. More information can be found at <http://www.r-word.org>

“Short Bus”

In some places smaller buses with wheelchair access were used to transport students with physical and intellectual disabilities to school. This slang is often used to say someone is stupid and is extremely ableist.

“Spaz”

Some disabilities involve uncontrollable muscle spasms or seizures. This slang term, shortened from “spastic,” is another instance where having a disability is equated with being foolish or acting out.

“Visually Impaired”

When you call someone called visually impaired it's as if you're saying more about her/his visual appearance than their vision, their ability to see. Some people are truly blind, while others may have partial vision, low vision or a vision impairment.



Thrift Store Music

CFUV-FM

Victoria, BC

In 2002 support worker Bill Schmuck noticed participants at the Frederic Ozanam Center, which runs a day program in Victoria, BC for people with developmental disabilities, were often able to find their favourite records at the center's thriftstore.

With the help of CFUV's volunteer coordinator at the time, Schmuck drafted a proposal for Thrift Store Music, a show that would give participants a chance to air their love of music. The program has grown since then, from a half-hour slot to a full hour every Tuesday afternoon, with around 40 participants in groups of three that rotate weekly.

Participants on the show bring in their own music to play, and sometimes play a little themselves. Chad Russell, a veteran of the show, brings in his guitar to jam sometimes. He says they play "any kind of music, country, rock, you name it."

And Bill White, who has been involved since the beginning, says it's one of the best parts of his week.

"It just gives me a good feeling being on the air. Some day I'm hoping to have my own show."

Now co-hosted by support workers Graham "Shotgun" Boardman and Chris McIntyre, the show includes music, spoken word, news updates, a call-in fanclub segment and sing-a-longs.



"Strangers have come up to me and talked to me about the show on the street," Boardman says. **"It's very popular."** The show has also had callers from as far away as Port Angeles, Washington.

He says that shows their message is spreading.

"Part of the difficulty with people with developmental disabilities is that people are pretty well ignorant of what they can achieve," he says. "This show gives the people who are listening the opportunity to know what people with developmental disabilities are like."

Russell agrees.

"I think everyone should be on the radio, all disabilities."

Disability pride

Having a disability is an identity that people can be proud of despite negative stereotypes and oppression. Just as someone can be proud to be a woman, a person can be proud to have cerebral palsy or a hearing impairment. Like other areas of difference, disability has been attributed with negative connotations by society, that aren't accurate.

There are different ways to show pride. Some people with disabilities attend disability pride rallies, others use language to show their pride. In Britain, they say "disabled people" to put their identity first as a source of pride.

Colloquialism

Don't be scared of language. It's not offensive to say to someone with a vision impairment that you'll "see" them later or to express to someone with a hearing impairment that you're happy to "hear" from them.

- Don't try to adapt normal verbs. Don't ask people with vision impairments if they've felt any good book lately or if a person in a wheelchair goes for nightly rolls. Although again, the person with the disability can refer to it however they like.

Jargon

Be aware that many people with disabilities dislike euphemisms such as "differently-abled", "handicapable", "special needs", or "physically challenged". Though well intentioned, this jargon can be very condescending.

- Some terms, such as special needs are associated with treating a person like a child.

- Many people also dislike the term handicapped as the person is defined by their ambiguous handicap. Ask the person with a disability you're speaking to what terms they prefer.

Pity Watch

On the show Access Live at CFUV-FM in Victoria, BC, they host a segment called *Pity Watch*. They take stories from the mainstream media, like when a person with a disability is constructed as a martyr for doing everyday activities, and by reading the story in mournful tones and adding sappy violin music to the background they show how pitying a person with a disability is ridiculous and laughable.

People with disabilities don't "suffer" from their impairments nor are they "victims" of them. It makes people with disabilities sound dependant, sick or in pain. This is not true of all people with disabilities.

Also, avoid describing someone as being "confined", "limited" or "bound" to a wheelchair.

Having a disability often isn't a barrier for someone while society's attitudes and inaccessibility is. Don't say how a person was able to accomplish a task "despite" their disability or assume everyday life is a constant struggle.

Not all people with disabilities are heroic or brave for just living their lives. When Cam Wells from CJAM-FM in Windsor, ON went to a hospital, a woman with a broken thumb looked over at him and said "I'm not as brave as you," to which he replied "we all come from different experiences." Not everyone with a disability is an inspiration.

Context and warnings

The language used in Canada today, though progressive, is not universal. Around the world, many people still use outdated terms to describe people with disabilities. This includes the R-word, handicapped, invalids, etc.

You may interview people who use this language, whether they are disability activists who are reclaiming a word, comedians trying to push boundaries or people who either don't know better

or are intentionally being offensive. The best way to handle this is to include a disclaimer at the beginning of the show, indicating that the station does not necessarily share the views of all guests. In the case of people with disabilities reclaiming language, you can also ask the guest to contextualize their comments.

Etiquette

Follow these common sense tips on proper etiquette when communicating with a person with a disability:

Talk directly to a person, not their interpreter or attendant. You don't need to ignore the interpreter, but face the person who you are speaking to.

Never grab someone who is vision impaired. Ask if they would like to be guided and then offer your arm. When guiding someone, describe the surroundings. When a person has low vision, make sure to introduce yourself and indicate when you are ending a conversation, or leaving the room.

Do not disturb a service animal when it is working. However, if a service animal is at rest, ask their owner if you may approach the animal.

If possible, sit down when talking to someone in a wheelchair so they don't have to look up at you.



The Avalanche

CKUT-FM
Montreal, QC



Photo by The Montreal Gazette

In 2005 Cathy Inouye was making a documentary about people with intellectual disabilities who start self-advocacy groups when it hit her.

“I was just sitting there in the dark, cramped confines of studio B, when I thought what a great idea it would be to actually have a group of people make radio who have intellectual disabilities.”

“Because of the nature of our society, people who have intellectual disabilities are often segregated.”

She started contacting groups in Montreal that work with people with intellectual disabilities — though only one got back to her — and soon had a handful of interested people.

Stephane Bertrand, one of the original members of the group, remembers the first meeting.

“I was thinking about my walk to the station, and I was told our transmitter is on top of Mount Royal. And you know the transmitter is coming down to Montreal, **so I said why don’t we call ourselves the Avalanche?**”

They decided to make their show a disability news program with interviews that aired once a month. The other three weeks a month they host the station’s Long Term Memory Radio show. Over the

years the Avalanche has interviewed the break dancer Lazy Legz, comedian Gordon Paynter, Montreal city councillor Lise Poulin, the band Flame and hosted two panels on disability rights.

Inouye was involved the first two years and then, once everyone was trained and the show went live with a regular timeslot, she stepped away.

She says stations can adapt training for volunteers with intellectual disabilities by simplifying equipment (keeping the same pre-sets, adding a large green button on the mixing board), **never assuming someone can’t learn something** and going over material until volunteers understand completely.

“The real winners when shows like these are on air are really the people who are listening, because they get the chance to hear these voices they don’t normally hear, voices they should hear,” she says.

Host Kevin Ley agrees. “It helps people know that there’s a place where they can go on the air and know that they can be heard. **We have a voice and we’re not shy to use it.**”

In photo: Jason “JaSonic” Crevier , Tim Tassinari, Kevin Ley, Stephane Bertrand, Matthew “DJ Dragon” Fewes, and David Sula.



Inclusive Training

Diversity helps a station grow and thrive. So although this handbook focuses on increasing access for people with disabilities, anti-oppression training shouldn't just be about confronting ableism. Talking about accessibility is a great opportunity to look at the range of barriers that make it hard for anyone, particularly people from marginalized and under-represented groups, to get involved at the station.

This is reflected in the NCRA Statement of Principles that says, our stations serve “an audience that is recognized as being diverse in ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical and mental ability.”

Safe Space

A safe space is an area that is free from hate or prejudice. In this space, everyone feels comfortable being themselves. There is a collective understanding that others in the space will not question how a person chooses to identify, discriminate against any group or use any hateful language/gestures/stereotypes.

As a station, make a list of safe space rules that will ensure everyone feels comfortable. Post these ground rules in a common area in accessible formats.

It's easy for people to dismiss this kind of work as "unnecessary," "politically correct," "over-sensitive," or "humourless." Instead, it's a way for your station to stay true to its mission of representing the communities you serve. So it's important that everyone understands why the safe space rules are important.

In a safe space, there are always allies. These are people who align themselves with marginalized groups by challenging oppression, without being a member of those groups. Allies don't speak on behalf of other people, but support their efforts and help preserve safe space.

Calling someone out on ableist language or behaviour

If someone breaks the safe space agreement, don't be confrontational. Be aware of your tone so you don't sound like you are talking down to someone. An able-bodied person may have never thought of the implications of certain words. Try to strike a balance between being overly critical and brushing off ableist remarks.

- ° You don't want to accuse a person of being ableist, as this is a personal attack and is often dismissed by claims of having friends or family members who have disabilities. Rather, explain how what the person said or did is ableist and suggest better alternatives.
- ° It's important to call out ableist words and actions even if you are able-bodied and no

one with a disability is around. This isn't a matter of politeness but creating a space free of ableism.

- ° Keep in mind; you don't want to start policing language. This isn't about censorship, but about creating a space where everyone feels validated and respected.

Basics of Anti-Oppression Training

Anti-oppression training is recommended to make sure all staff and volunteers are ready and skilled in creating a safe and inclusive station.

Creating an anti-oppression environment is about more than knowing all the "isms." It means actively acknowledging and critically analyzing how society gives power to some groups while marginalizing others.

Personal identities are understood as political identities that affect how a person is treated in mainstream society. Race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, and ability all play a role in a person's identity. How communities are oppressed varies depending on their histories and experiences. The goal of anti-oppression training is to work collectively towards accessibility, meaningful inclusion and social justice.

Prepare for training

Find an anti-oppression facilitator from outside the station, who is uninfluenced by station politics. They can also give an outsider's perspective of station environment. It's important that as many people as possible attend these sessions so that everyone at your station is on the same page.

- ° Hold training for all volunteers and staff in an accessible space.
- ° Offer snacks, sign language interpretation as well as free child care. (A cheap way to do this is to organize a potluck.)
- ° Incorporate pictogram-based, braille and large print handouts.

Checking Privilege

Having more power than others, based solely on your identity, is privilege. Feminist theorist Peggy McIntosh defines privilege as any “unearned advantage and conferred dominance.” This is not a value judgement: being privileged doesn’t make you a bad person or guilty.

People who “belong” to a privileged group are part of the “dominant culture.” This culture is used as a standard of society that all other cultures, practices and ways of life are compared to. This privilege can come in many forms: white privilege, straight privilege, able-bodied privilege etc.

For example, an able-bodied person has the privilege of not having to worry about whether the washrooms are accessible when they go out to eat. A white person can use band-aids in “flesh” colour and have them more or less match their skin colour.

Privileged groups also have access to information and resources that oppressed groups do not. For example, the version of Canadian history taught in most classrooms is from the perspective of white European male colonialists. Most buildings are constructed with the accessibility needs of able-bodied people top of mind.

Though there are powerful systemic inequities at work, acknowledging your privilege can make a difference. But identities are always complex and in flux — and privilege does not always mean the same thing in all situations. Don’t try to create a hierarchy of identities to show who has the most or least privilege and recognize that privilege and oppression sometimes overlap. Allow people to self-identify and respect what they chose to disclose.

Chinese workers built the Canadian Railway but history was told by white men who had power. Last Spike in transcontinental railway 1885, Library and Archives Canada.

Who Can Help

Disability rights groups, campus support centres and public interest groups may be able to arrange anti-oppression training. Reach out to organizations in your community. Activists are also a wealth of knowledge when it comes to horizontal organizing and may offer anti-oppression training sessions for free.



Kevin Shaw

**CHRY-FM, Technical Production Co-ordinator
Toronto, ON**



After creating his own closed-circuit radio station in high school, Kevin Shaw took his passion for radio to Ryerson University where he got his degree in audio and technical production. Then in 2005, he got his current job at CHRY-FM.

“When I came here, I was used to working with bigger budgets. We didn’t really have a lot. I had to get very creative with managing resources. **I also had to figure out how to make all that accessible to me.**”

He says technology, especially screen-reading, has made the station much more accessible for him and that there are other

things stations can do to accommodate people with disabilities from anti-oppression training to making space for people with mobility aids.

He says getting around campus and doing remote broadcasts is sometimes hard but one of the great things about community radio is that your work stays interesting.

“I get to do something different every day,” he says, “one day I come in and train volunteers, the next day I’m working on a creative ad campaign, the next day I’m mixing for a live band playing in studio. It’s just a real pleasure.”

Invisible Disability Audit

Not everyone learns the same way. Furthermore, some people may feel uncomfortable disclosing their disability.

Here are some tips to improve your stations volunteer and technical training for people with invisible disabilities such as learning disabilities.

- ✓ Speak in terms that are clear and relatable to everyone at the station. Using overly complex terms can lead to misunderstanding and ultimately boredom though over-simplifying terms can make volunteers feel as though their intelligence isn't respected.
- ✓ It can be difficult to maintain focus if a task seems too large or disorganized. Some people with disabilities, such as Attention Deficit Disorder have found they like structure. It might be helpful to have the option of giving a daily list outlining tasks step by step.
- ✓ Allow volunteers to go at their own pace during training and encourage them to ask questions. Offer clarification and further explanations.
- ✓ Let a new volunteer shadow a veteran programmer. They can figure out which areas suit them best. In the case of a person with a disability, this also allows them to observe accessibility throughout the station and recommendations accordingly.
- ✓ Some people learn by listening, some by doing. Ask volunteers how they like to learn and alter training accordingly.



Training

Knowledge

Physical Accessibility Audit

This checklist is a guide to get you thinking about what your station can do to be more accessible for all your staff, volunteers and guests.

Station Set Up

- Do you have all necessary ramps and handrails in place?
- Is there elevator access at all times people may need to come in or leave?
- Is the station well lit everywhere including hallways, music libraries and studios?
- Are bathrooms accessible?
- Is the station free of clutter that may impede mobility?
- Can someone at the mixing board reach all gear?
- Are water fountains low enough for someone in a wheelchair?
- Are emergency procedures posted in large font with high contrast and include pictograms?
- Are all alarms visual as well as audible?
- Are loose carpets and wires taped down to avoid tripping people?
- Do you avoid rearranging office furniture to make it easier for people to memorize the layout and navigate?
- Does the station accommodate service animals?

Studio Set Up

- Is there enough space around desks and corners to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility aids?
- Is there enough space when doors open to navigate around with wheelchairs and mobility aids?
- Do buttons have an audio readout?
- Can you change the studio lighting from high to low? (ie dimmer switch)
- Are labels printed in large font and in braille? (Be careful, people may peel off braille stickers while fidgeting.)
- Are all shelves easy to reach and secured so they won't tip over?
- Are phones easy to reach? Do they have a large display and braille on buttons?
- Are microphones wireless or able to extend out to guests and hosts?



Computers

- Do they have a version of a screen reader loaded?
- Are they functional with assistive technology? (ie. used only through a keyboard or only through a mouse)
- Is a speech to text program loaded?

Emergency Procedures

- Does your station have an evacuation plan that considers the needs of people with disabilities?
- Is the evacuation plan posted in a common space and do staff and volunteers know how to carry it out?
- Is the plan reviewed to ensure it still applies? Is there a process to amend it?
- Do you ever do emergency evacuation drills including staff and volunteers with disabilities to ensure it is truly accessible?
- Does your station have both visual and audible alarms?
- Is there a safe accessible exit or will people have to use the stairs?
- Does your plan include evacuation devices?
- Does everyone know where to find these devices?
- Is there an area of refuge for people with disabilities who require assistance to wait for help?
- Is there an intercom or other communication available in the area of refuge to other parts of the building?

Special Events

- Is the venue for conference/general meeting/fundraiser/community event accessible?
- Does the venue have accessible washrooms?
- Does the venue have ramps at the door or elevators?
- Have you double checked the accessibility of your event venues? (make sure accessible washrooms are working etc)
- Are there emergency procedures in place that include evacuation of people with disabilities?

Documents

- Are they available in a variety of formats? (ie. braille, electronic, large font, audio and pictogram)
- Are they easy to reach?
- Are they direct and easy to understand?
- Did you use respectful disability language? (For more check out: Disability and Language)



Resources

Here are some of the sites and organizations we found useful. There is a more complete list online.

Voiceprint Canada

http://www.ami.ca/ami/A.M.I_Home.aspx

Media Dis & Dat

<http://www.media-dis-n-dat.blogspot.com/>

Totally ADD.com: ADHD information hub

<http://www.totallyadd.com>

Access Uvic Student Disability Advocacy

<http://www.accessuvic.ca/>

Independent Living Canada

<http://www.cailc.ca/>

Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex

<http://www.ldawe.ca>

For more information, check out www.ncra.ca/abilities.

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