

June 2020

**ACB's Audio Description Project – 2019 Annual Report
Submitted by: Joel Snyder, PhD, Director, ADP**

The purpose of the American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project (ADP) is to boost levels of description activity and disseminate information on that work throughout the nation. Its major goal is to sponsor a broad range of activities designed to build awareness of audio description among the general public as well as its principal users, people who are blind or have low vision.

Steering Committee

Our Steering Committee consists principally of leaders from the American Council of the Blind and other audio description advocates. They include:

Kim Charlson, MA, Audio Description Steering Committee Co-Chair; Conference Sub-Committee, Chair

Carl Richardson, MA, Audio Description Steering Committee Co-Chair; Media Sub-Committee, Chair

Renee Arrington Johnson, OH

Jo Lynn Bailey-Page, CA

Pshon Barrett, Esq., MS

Fred Brack, NC

Eric Bridges, NC

Berl Colley, WA

Denise Decker, PhD., Washington, DC; Chair, Performing Arts/Museums/Parks Sub-Committee, Chair

Judy Dixon, VA

Margie Donovan, CA

Susan Glass, CA; Benefits of Audio Description in Education Sub-Committee (BADIE), Chair

Mary Hanks, TX

Sajja Koirala, HI

Doug Powell, VA

Patrick Sheehan, MD; Section 508 Sub-Committee, Chair

Claire Stanley, VA

Anthony (Tony) Stephens, VA

Jeff Thom, CA; Awards Sub-Committee, Chair

Officer Liaison: Dan Spoone, FL

Staff Liaison: Clark Rachfal, VA

Joel Snyder, PhD., MD, Director

Fred Brack, NC, Webmaster

Sebastian Andrade-Miles, CO, Website Television Listings Coordinator

Objectives

The Steering Committee established objectives for ADP for the calendar year 2020:

Steering Committee -

HIGH PRIORITY

1. Maintain current information on the acb.org/adp website with at least two new articles each month highlighting audio description activities through December 31.
2. Share information on the Leadership list and at the annual Presidents meeting regarding the availability of AD for performing and visual arts events and on media.
3. Plan, schedule, market and conduct Audio Description Institute courses during 2020.
4. Provide template for use by sub-committees to provide twice-per-year reports on activity to be shared on the ADP website—twice per year, by the end of July and the end of December.
5. Deliver Audio Description Institute courses and the ADP Conferences within the expenses approved in the ADP budget by July 30, 2020.
6. Submit the 2021 budget for the ADP by September 30, 2020.

MEDIUM PRIORITY

1. Prepare and publish at least one announcement each month highlighting the ADP on ACB Leadership and ACBL list during 2020.
2. Prepare and publish three articles involving audio description in the Braille Forum and e forum during 2020.
3. Participate in at least three state affiliate conferences and conventions promoting and educating the ACB membership on audio description activities during 2020.
4. Monitor, maintain and grow the audio description discussion list during 2020.
5. Maintain and promote social media through Facebook and Twitter with at least two new Audio Description postings each month during 2020— (currently at over 2500 “likes” on FB and over 700 Twitter followers).
6. Advocate for Audio Description worldwide with contacts at five international organizations promoting Audio Description during 2020.

7. Maintain/monitor ACVREP/Subject Matter Expert certification process.

Responsible:

LOW PRIORITY

1. Work with WBU on collaborative projects (by December 2020).

Performing Arts/Museums/Parks subcommittee -

HIGH PRIORITY

1. Maintain current listing of known performing arts centers/theaters, museums, and national parks offering audio description services during 2020/follow-up on survey to affiliates with a goal of increasing listing by five sites in each area and the number of states represented (currently at 22 states and D.C. represented under Museums; 34 states and D.C. represented under Performing Arts).

2. Contract, plan and implement the Audio Described Tour of the Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution/Museum of Natural History "Insect Zoo" by July 2020.

3. Follow-up on contacts with management / facilitate another meeting at the 9/11 Museum in New York to express concern regarding the availability of audio description and other access services, including films, videos or interactive displays and staff access/audio description training, on behalf of visitors who are blind or have low vision by September 2020.

4. Finalize and distribute a survey to AD consumers regarding accessibility at National Park Service facilities and the UNI-D project by May 2020 and do pilot field visits to 1-3 NPS facilities by December 2020.

5. Provide reports on activity to be shared on the ADP website—twice per year, by the end of July and the end of December.

MEDIUM PRIORITY

1. Propose an informational session on AD and "touring AD scripts" at the Association of Performing Arts Professionals' annual conference. By January 2021.

2. Propose an informational session on AD and "touring AD scripts" for The Broadway League. By December 2020.

3. Renew an effort at collaborating with the American Association of Museums to encourage its members to provide AD at its facilities/propose a session for the next AAM Conference. By December 2020.

4. Develop an AD training project for secondary school students who could then develop AD for secondary school performing arts presentations-by December 2020.

LOW PRIORITY

1. Work with advocates to pursue the re-establishment of the AD tour of the White House as per the ACB resolution. By December 2020.

Media subcommittee -

HIGH PRIORITY

1. Maintain audio description listings of all television programs on the major broadcast and cable networks with updates each week for 2020 and twice-per-year updates on cumulative statistical analysis through December 31.
2. Maintain current listing of audio described programs on DVDs, Netflix, amazon, Hulu, iTunes, Apple, Disney+ and other new streaming services with at least monthly updates throughout 2020.
3. Investigate proposal to have a system for establishing whether AD is transmitting properly in movie theaters prior to the start of the film via a universal audio file and possibly involving audio description for movie trailers/previews. By December 2020.
4. Follow the implementation of the Disability Rights Advocates structured negotiation with HULU, HBO, HBOgo and HBOMax to make its video streaming platform accessible and to include all of the shows that used AD on broadcast to include it online as well. By December 2020.
5. Develop a strategy to deal with the growth of streaming services. This includes having the many streaming services be fully accessible to screen reading platforms and to have the ability to play titles with audio description. This strategy will be evolving as this is an area that changes daily. This may include working with the FCC, creating a standardized letter to send out to streaming providers, and more. By December 2020.
6. Provide reports on activity to be shared on the ADP website—twice per year, by the end of July and the end of December.

MEDIUM PRIORITY

1. Pursue producing AD (by the ADP or others) for live national “special” events like NBC’s live musical events (“Hair” in spring 2019), ABC’s Dancing with the Stars, or broadcasts such as Macy’s Parade, political party conventions, State of the Union presentation, inaugurations, state funerals and ACB Radio delivery of AD for other special events. By December 2020.

2. Follow-up with the FCC to implement a Disability Advisory Committee recommendation for an accessible directory for all described television programs facilitating the reposting of the data and maintaining an accurate listing of all audio described programming on the ADP website (as resolved by the ACB in July 2018). By December 2020.
3. Advocate with the FCC to create a database of contacts of individuals at affiliate stations and distributors of video programming responsible for audio description issues, similar to the rule that exists for closed captioning (as resolved by the ACB in July 2018). By December 2020.
4. Collaborate with Amazon and other parties to create a) a mechanism on ECHO/Alexa to request a listing of all programs with AD and b) explore initiation of programs with AD by voice commands played in an audio book format. By December 2020.
5. Educate ACB members re. the FCC complaint process with ACB supporting individual advocacy requests for assistance throughout 2020.
6. Work with studios and develop funding for a project that would produce AD for selected public domain films and/or films in studio libraries. By December 2020.
7. Work toward the development of an app that would allow home users of AD to access description via headphones, separate from the original soundtrack available to others in the same room. By December 2020.
8. Reach out to Hallmark regarding the implementation of audio description with its programming. By December 2020.

LOW PRIORITY

1. Contact the Library of Congress to explore the development of an initiative to produce description for films on the National Film Registry. By December 2020.
2. Plan for a 2021 “summit” with appropriate stakeholders to propose revisions/updates to the CVAA (21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act)—a “CVAA 2.0”—using language for mandating captioning. By December 2020.
3. Promote the establishment of a National Audio Description Day (Week? Month?)/work with movie theater chains re. its implementation. By December 2020.
4. Work with audible.com and others regarding the development of “audio films”; intersect with studios re copyright/legal issues. By December 2020.

5. Develop informational PDFs and PSAs re. AD and other access services for use by performing arts spaces and/or movie theaters (consider a segment on AD by “First Watch”). By December 2020.

Conference subcommittee -

HIGH PRIORITY

1. Plan schedule and implement the 2020 ADP Conference in conjunction with the ACB annual conference and convention in Schaumburg, IL by July 2020.
2. Promote and publicize the 2020 ADP Conference in conjunction with the ACB annual conference and convention in Schaumburg, IL by July 2020.
3. Plan break-out sessions on AD for the Presidents Meeting by mid-February 2020.
4. Plan break-out sessions on AD for the 2020 ACB Convention by May 2020.
5. Provide reports on activity to be shared on the ADP website—twice per year, by the end of July and the end of December.

BADIE subcommittee -

HIGH PRIORITY

1. Plan, schedule and implement the BADIE contest for 2021—application process open in Fall 2020 with awards by February 2021.
2. Coordinate all finances with Nancy Becker in the Minneapolis (purchase and delivery of prizes and certificates, travel for Grand Prize Award winner, etc.).
3. Provide reports on activity to be shared on the ADP website—twice per year, by the end of July and the end of December.

Awards subcommittee -

HIGH PRIORITY

1. Plan, schedule, promote and implement the ADP Awards with final selection by May 31, 2020
2. Consider revisions to guidelines annually. For 2020, by February 2020.

3. Provide reports on activity to be shared on the ADP website—twice per year, by the end of July and the end of December.

508 subcommittee -

HIGH 1. Schedule quarterly ADP subcommittee meetings focusing on 508 regulations regarding federal agencies and Audio Description.

HIGH 2. Provide reports on activity to be shared on the ADP website—twice per year, by the end of July and the end of December.

2019 Activity

Our eleventh year of activity was particularly varied. Here's a summary of that work organized generally according to the ADP subcommittees:

Performing Arts/Museums

- with support from the DC Aid Association for the Blind, developed an AD tour of the Smithsonian Institution's Insect Zoo – we worked with Sarah Studer and Dr. Francisco Lima (a blind professor/AD expert in residence at the museum) – the test of the tour was conducted by ACB executive Director Eric Bridges

- working with the 9-11 Memorial and Museum regarding concerns with the museum's accessibility efforts

- working with The Broadway League regarding the possibility of AD scripts for professional touring productions including the possibility of shows hiring a "cast" member to provide AD and tour with shows

- issued a performing arts questionnaire to ACB affiliates in an effort to build our listings of performing arts space AD offerings – we plan on following-up with questionnaires to the Theatre Communications Group (producing entities) and the Association of Performing Arts Professionals (arts presenters)

- worked with ACB headquarters regarding follow-up on the ACB resolution expressing concern about the absence of our audio described White House tour

Media

- Carl Richardson, Anthony Stephens and Joel Snyder appointed to the FCC Disability Advisory Committee: ongoing work with the Committee on a directory of described programming, the use of the phrase "audio description" in lieu of "video description", and overall access to described programming

- Following the development of Charter Communications' Spectrum Access and SoundFi (Actiview was acquired by Charter Communications) and considering possible collaborative initiatives

- Subcommittee member is pursuing information regarding AD with commercials

- Following the establishment of a new group—"ADNA-AD Narrators of America" with a website at: <https://theadna.org/>

- Shane Burgett, a blind reporter and NPR contributor based in South Korea, interviewed Joel Snyder and Denise Decker regarding AD for foreign films with subtitles

BADIE

- 26 entries for the 2019 BADIE contest received and winners were selected, contacted and prizes distributed along with certificates with Braille labels; a formal press release was posted in conjunction with our contest partner, the Described and Captioned Media Program; the Grand Prize winner delivered read essay at the February 2019 ACB Leadership and Legislative meeting:

Grand Prize Winner: John Xander Holstein – West Virginia School for the Blind-Romney, WV - Review of Snowflake Bentley and Voyage to Mars

Senior Category (ages 16 to 21):

First Place – Michael Gast, South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired-Aberdeen, SD – Review of Sister Act 2

Second Place – Kimberly Drudge, Goochland High School-Goochland, VA – Review of America's Symbols

Third Place – Alyssa Spillum, North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind- Grand Forks, ND – Review of Work Ethic: A Commitment to Work

Junior Category (ages 11 to 15):

First Place – John Xander Holstein, West Virginia School for the Blind-Romney, WV - Review of Snowflake Bentley and Voyage to Mars

Second Place – Edward Freer, North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind-Grand Forks, ND – Review of My Brand New Life: Ballet Dancer/Hockey Player

Sophomore Category (ages 7 to 10):

First Place – Hunter Knotts, West Virginia School for the Blind-Romney, WV – Review of The Magic School Bus in a Pickle

Second Place – Wyatt Kunch, West Virginia School for the Blind-Romney, WV – Review of The Magic School Bus Cold Feet

Third Place – Noel Marinaccio, WV School for the Blind-Romney, WV – Review of The Magic School Bus Works Out

Alternate Assessment Category:

First Place –Hayden Miller, West Virginia School for the Blind-Romney, WV – Review of The Night Before Christmas

- the subcommittee updated the 2020 BADIE guidelines; new guidelines for the 2020 contest were posted on the ADP and DCMP websites and posted to our Constant Contact mailing list; created a 30-second PSA for ACB Radio

- a record 40 entries were received from 7 states for the 2020 BADIE contest

Conference

- a partial recording of the ADP 2018 Conference luncheon was posted highlighting Marilee Talkington's remarks

- sessions for the July 9, 2019 "mini-conference" were set for Rochester, NY ACB Conference and Convention

- loaned data projector for use by Apple at its session, at BPI's presentation of "Boy Erased", at the ADP workshops and at the ADI

- over 100 registrants to date for the film presentation of "Green Book"

- conducted two Audio Description Institute training session—3 days each in February 2019 (Washington, DC) and in July 2019 (Rochester, NY)

- delivered ADI materials to ACB Alexandria, VA office for shipping to Rochester (as noted earlier, we have 16 registrants to date)

- Kim Charlson now chairs the Conference subcommittee—developed a preliminary agenda for the 2020 "full" ADP Conference and considered keynote speaker possibilities

- pursuing corporate sponsorships with Margarine Beeman for the 2020 ADP Conference

Section 508

- considering the development of a questionnaire regarding AD vendors to be distributed to government AD purchasers
- planning sessions on AD for 508 coordinators and the interagency forum; considering the production of an AD primer for government agencies
- looking at accessibility of video players used by the federal government (the capacity to toggle on/off AD)
- considering updating guidance on AD for accessibility videos under 508

Awards

In conjunction with ACB's 58th annual conference and convention in Rochester, NY, the awards were presented at a plenary session of the conference before over 1000 people who are blind, ACB members/convention attendees. The prestigious awards included:

- Achievement in Audio Description – Performing Arts: Hunter Gullickson of The Guthrie Theater
- Special Recognition Achievement in Audio Description — Performing Arts: Montclair State University
- Achievement in Audio Description – Media: Microsoft/Xbox Live
- Achievement in Audio Description – Visual Art / Museums / Visitor Centers: Hannah Goodwin/Museum of Fine Arts-Boston
- Achievement in Audio Description – International: Vera Arma
- Dr. Margaret R. Pfanstiehl Memorial Achievement Award in Audio Description – Research and Development: Dr. Brett Oppegaard
- Barry Levine Memorial Award for Career Achievement in Audio Description: Jon P. Skaalen

The Achievement Awards are made to individuals and/or organizations for outstanding contributions to the establishment and/or continued development of significant audio description programs. The Barry Levine Memorial Award for Career Achievement in Audio Description recognizes an individual for outstanding contributions to the field of audio description over an extended period of time, leading, inspiring or providing significant service to others.

- ordered awards/affixed Braille labeling prepared by the Perkins School
- drafted remarks for Chris Gray's presentation of the awards
- distributed press release to all nominees and nominators

- coordinated awards presentation—all but one awardees were in attendance at the Rochester, NY ceremony
- the subcommittee is planning for the 2020 round of AD awards and considering new award possibilities focused on recognizing the quality of AD for specific activities or projects
- spoke with Deborah Calla of the Media Access Awards re recognition for AD via the performing arts unions
- Jeff Thom of California was appointed Chair of the Awards sub-committee

Website

- Every week, the website provides extensive updates to all AD listings for television, movies, DVDs, theaters and museums

Feature articles on AD are posted each week—in 2019 the articles included:

- 10th Anniversary ADP report
- Marilee Talkington's Luncheon Address (2018 keynote address ADP Conference)
- Audio Description in Israel
- CVAA Accessibility Rules Now Apply to Video Games
- Inaccessible Specialty Video Websites
- The Slate highlights how GOOD audio description can enhance ANYONE's enjoyment of a film
- Survey of Worldwide Audio Description Activity
- Podcast Interview With Roy Samuelson
- Smithsonian American Art Museum Offers Tours for Those with Visual Impairment
- the AD Institute, July 10-12 in Rochester, NY (our 17th!)
- Audio Description in China
- Is AD the Future of TV Viewing?
- The Wizardry of Audio Description by Kate Avery
- ACVREP Audio Description Certification Subject Matter Expert Committee Formed
- ActiView at the Movies
- FCC desiring input on video description In preparation for a report to Congress
- WMU Student Helps Launch AD for Theatre at the Kalamazoo (Michigan) Civic Theatre
- Hulu Begins Audio Description
- USA Network's request for a waiver of FCC description rules
- Input request re the effectiveness of TV AD Listings
- Technology and museums
- Audio described TV in Australia
- Game "The Vale" arriving with access for gamers who are blind
- The 2019 ADP Achievement Award Winners
- Netflix Now Allows Describer Identification

- A Survey on Describing Diversity by VocalEyes (a London-based organization which provides audio description)
- Voicing of TV Subtitles
- Paramount Studios Releases 150+ New AD Tracks for Old Movies
- Audio Recordings of July's Mini ADP Conference
- CBS All Access App Begins Offering AD
- Updates to the Streaming AD Page
- Cord-Cutting and AD
- Commercials With AD
- Edinburgh Festival: Many Performances With AD
- Audio Description For Small Dance Companies
- Lisa Helen Hoffman passes
- Article in The Hindu regarding my recent AD workshop in Chennai
- Audimance: Immersive Audio Description
- Apple TV+ Will Describe All Original Content
- The 2020 BADIE Contest is Open
- "What Just Happened"?--the words of many blind individuals watching a movie or play
- The FCC Second Report To Congress on TV Description
- Halloween Videos With Description
- AD Titles Milestones Reached--Netflix and Amazon Prime Video breaking 1000 titles each this week
- FCC Grants Limited Waiver to USA Network
- Nomination for Audio Description Narration from SOLAS, the Society of Voice Artists and Sciences
- FCC Disability Advisory Committee Recommendations
- Over 250 Disney+ Described Titles Added
- New ADP website navigation and listings (the Master AD List now contains over 3350 titles)
- "A Look Back at Audio Description in 2019"
- Roy Samuelson's Facebook "Birthday Fundraiser" Yields Over \$600 to Support the ADP
- Year-End Report Card on DVDs by Studio
- Actiview Acquired by Charter Communications

Special Initiative: Certification

- 25 applications for membership on the Subject Matter Expert Committee were received—ACVREP selected SME Committee members and Advisory Committee members

Walk Team Established—"The Describers"

- appeals were made for support of "The Describers" at this year's Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk—over \$1,000 raised

Overall-Activity/Travel by ADP Director

- appointed a Fulbright Scholar”—conducted three weeks of AD training in Athens in November/December
- wrote and distributed ACB-World Blind Union Audio Description Survey--final press release posted on the WBU and ADP websites
- working with Jose Viero at the WBU on a range of possible collaborative issues
- working with Christopher Lee and Axel LeBlois of the IAAP (International Association of Accessibility Professionals) on possible collaborations
- conducted the February and July Audio Description Institutes
- interviewed by the NY Times for a possible article on the audio described tour of The White House
- interviewed for a feature on the west coast-based radio program “World According to Sound”
- conducted AD training in Los Angeles
- conducted interview with Carla Ruschvil on our 10th year anniversary for SoundPrints
- presentation to Prevention of Blindness Association in DC
- attended FCC’s Disability Advisory Committee meetings and sessions of its Video Description Information working group
- attended/spoke at screening of “Moonlight Sonata” a film about disability shown at the National Endowment for the Arts
- conducted live real-time/extemporaneous description for Microsoft’s April 2019 Inside Xbox event—also on-site at the Microsoft CELA gathering in Bellevue, WA
- co-chaired meetings of the ACVREP Certification Body of Knowledge working group
- conducted test of Insect Zoo AD tour
- provided live AD at Microsoft Ability Summit
- spoke on the ADP at the annual meeting of the Florida Council of the Blind via Skype
- conducted a three-day training of describers at the Indiana Repertory Theater in Indianapolis
- spoke on AD and ADP for “Tek Talk” via conference call
- recorded an interview for later broadcast on “Speaking Out for the Blind”
- conducted a workshop on AD at the Media For All Conference in Stockholm, Sweden
- led an AD workshop for the Estonian Association of the Blind in Tallinn, Estonia
- spoke on AD at the American Association of Community Theater annual conference in Gettysburg, PA
- spoke on AD and the ADP at the annual Maryland Arts Summit in Baltimore
- co-wrote resolution on broadcast information distribution and the FCC’s of “audio description” (as opposed to “video description”) for the FCC’s Disability Advisory Committee review
- led ADP workshops, AD Family Film Night and the Audio Description Institute in Rochester
- conducted workshop on AD and the ADP at the Intersteno Congress in Cagliari, Italy
- conducted workshop on AD and the ADP for the Malta Society for the Blind
- led presentations/workshops in India (Mumbai and Chennai—on behalf of the State Department); Sri Lanka; Nepal; and Budapest (on behalf of the International Telecommunications Union)

- met with visitor from China re audio description/visit to the Star-Spangled Banner exhibit at the Smithsonian
- presentations/led AD-ADP workshop for the American Translators Association in Palm Springs, CA
- half-hour interview on the radio program "The Blind Side" focused on our Halloween videos and the BADIE contest
- recorded an interview with Jason Stark for Council Connection
- prepared first draft of 2020 Objectives
- prepared/distributed announcement of the sixteenth Audio Description Institute in conjunction with the President's Meeting and Legislative Seminar, February 2020
- presented a session on universal design and media description at the Accessible Europe conference (International Telecommunications Union) in Malta
- spoke on AD at meeting of the Ukrainian Society of the Blind in Kyiv, Ukraine