



**American Council
of the Blind**
Together for a bright future

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Dear Mr. Rubin,

This email is inspired by your impressive presentation at the recent Academy Awards ceremony regarding the development of The Academy Museum and four other issues important to our organization.

I am the president of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) which is comprised of approximately 70 state chapters and special-interest affiliates. We are proud to represent a diverse range of groups within the blind community, including students, families, teachers, attorneys, governmental employees, entrepreneurs, vending stand operators and the LGBTQ community. During its nearly 60-year history, ACB has become a leader in national, state, local and even international advocacy efforts.

One of our principle priorities is the ongoing development of audio description (AD). AD is a technique for "making the visual verbal"—it involves access to verbal descriptions of essential visual images which, for film and performing arts, are provided in the pauses between lines of dialogue or other critical sound elements. It has proved to be valuable in allowing the visual elements of film, television, live theater, museum exhibitions--and many other endeavor--to be made accessible for people who are blind or have low vision. AD goes a long way toward making our culture more fully accessible for all people. Our Audio Description Project was founded 10 years ago to advocate for AD access and provide information on AD throughout the nation and in its various genres (www.acb.org/adp).

The Academy Museum

Film is such a major part of the American cultural experience and we are eager to build further access for our members and all people who are blind or have low vision. We are eager to work with you to ensure that The Academy Museum and its magnificent visual displays will be accessible to film-lovers who are blind or have low vision. This is most often accomplished via audio described tours and the training of docents and/or museum staff.

Please let me know how we can provide support for the development of accessibility at The Academy Museum.

Best Picture Nominees Should Include Captioning and Audio Description

For this year's Best Picture nominations – all but one film (Parasite) the winner of the Academy Award for Best Picture -- were released in the theaters and on DVD with audio description. ACB believes that it is time for the Academy to step up and take a leadership role to ensure that all nominations for Best Picture in the future must demonstrate that they have captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing, and audio description for people who are blind or visually impaired. We believe that by implementing a requirement that films nominated for Best Picture include both captioning and audio description encourages inclusion and accessibility of movies for people with disabilities, and will involve and engage more people to watch and participate fully in viewing these select films.

AMPAS Award Recognition for AD Writing, Voicing, & Audio Editing as a technical category

Also, you may know that audio described access to film has made great strides over the last 10 years; almost all feature films released in the United States now have an AD track that people who are blind can access via headsets provided by a movie theater. Under development is an app that would allow moviegoers to access the AD track via their own smartphones and alleviate the need for theaters to maintain as many headsets. The development of an AD track is a specialized art form in its own right and we ask that AMPAS consider offering awards or recognition for the creation of AD and its writing, voicing, audio editing, and so on as a technical category. Perhaps you saw the following piece in “The Conversation” regarding the Academy Awards and audio description:

<http://theconversation.com/oscars-audio-description-brings-film-to-life-for-blind-people-it-deserves-an-award-too-112247>

Incidentally, we are already working with ABC to provide live AD for the broadcast of the Academy Awards ceremony in 2021!

Initiative for the Creation of Audio Description for Older Films in Studio Libraries for Greater Access

Finally, AD for film is only about 30 years old. We would like to discuss with you an initiative that would facilitate the creation of AD access for older films in studio libraries and/or films that are now in the public domain.

Thank you for your consideration of the proposal for access at The Academy Museum and the other initiatives we’ve suggested. I look forward to hearing back from you and working with you and the Academy to ensure meaningful access to film for all people who are blind or have low vision.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Spoone", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dan Spoone
President
American Council of the Blind