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Articles

Documenting Barriers, Transforming Academic Cultures: A Study of the Critical Access Literacies of the CCCC Accessibility Guides

Ruth Osorio

Abstract

This article situates the practice of composing CCCC Accessibility Guides in critical access studies (Hamraie) and introduces the concept of critical access literacies. I argue that CCCC access guides cultivate critical access literacies amongst the guide writers and disabled and nondisabled conference participants, empowering them to better observe access barriers and advocate for expansive access. To make this argument, I triangulate interviews I conducted with the authors of the first six years of the guides (2011-2016) with textual analysis of the guides themselves. The interviews illustrate how the guide's early authors re-imagined access to include expansive and intersectional access needs.

Keywords

access, critical access literacies, CCCC Accessibility Guides, disability, conference access

Each year, as the Conference of College Composition and Communication (CCCC) attendees prepare for our trip to the annual conference, we engage with several different genres, including the call for papers, the program, registration portal, hotel registration, standing group announcements on WPA-L, and more.¹ Starting in 2011, a new genre entered the conference scene: the CCCC Accessibility Guide. Initiated and written by disability rhetoric scholar Margaret Price, the three-page single-spaced document and accompanying Flickr photo album documented the access barriers and affordances of traveling to Atlanta and the conference venue and hotels. Price described the elevators in Atlanta airport, identified restaurants with gluten-free options, and photographed the hallways and bathrooms at the Marriott Marquis. The Accessibility Guide was celebrated not only by disabled CCCC members but also by the institution itself; program chair Malea Powell thanked Price “for her generous work in providing accessibility information and feedback to make the convention as accessible as possible for all participants” in her greeting in the CCCC 2011 program (6).

What was started by Price in 2011 is now a standard genre for conference organizers in the profession. Every year since 2011, the Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition (CDICC) identifies volunteers to write the guide and supports them through the process. The volunteers then perform an accessibility audit of conference spaces, documenting and assessing the different features – entrances, hallways, bathroom stall widths – in terms of accessibility. After the volunteers write up their findings, revise, and then finalize the guide, the staff at NCTE/CCCC post it on the CCCC homepage, promote it on social media, and share it in emails to conference attendees. Just as the guide's reach has expanded, so has the guide itself. Price's guide contained three pages of single-spaced written content and an online photo album. The 2019 CCCC Accessibility Guide,² for the last in-person CCCC meeting since the onset of COVID-19, featured 80 pages of written and visual content. The expanded guide features information on local pharmacies, the lactation room, carpet patterns, shuttle information, and pool access options at the conference hotels.

The guides have become both a source of pride and source of frustration for the volunteer guide writers. By anticipating potential access needs of conference attendees, the writers of the accessibility guides make known the presence of disabled, sick, and Othered bodies in the profession. The guides have become part of the genre system of the CCCC convention, a genre devoted to making visible what is so often hidden in academic spaces: that we scholar-teachers do indeed have embodied needs, and thus, experience frailty to varying extents. And yet, for some of the guide writers, the guides also represent the organization's eagerness to delegate access labor to volunteers rather than centralize that work into the organization's *ethos* and practices. In other words, why is the responsibility of making known the presence of disabled, sick, and Othered bodies in the profession the responsibility of a small group of volunteers? The Access Guides provide a case study of not only disability justice in community literacy contexts but also the tension between grassroots disability activism and organizational rhetoric.

At first glance, the guides might appear to be more informative, technical documents than radical manifestos. However, after analyzing the guides and speaking with the authors, I believe that CCCC Accessibility Guides cultivate critical access literacies amongst guide writers, disabled CCCC members, and nondisabled conference participants. By approaching access as a collective responsibility, the guide empowers its creators and interpreters to better observe access barriers and advocate for expansive access. Critical access literacies are informed by the principles of Disability Justice (DJ), which in the words of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, asks the question:

What does it mean to shift our idea of access and care (whether it's disability, childcare, economic access, or many more) from an individual chore, an unfortunate cost of having an unfortunate body, to a collective responsibility that's maybe even joyful? (33)

Piepzna-Samarasinha envisions disability as something to embrace rather than something to fix, and thus, approaches access as a collective responsibility rather than an

individual burden. Critical access literacies, then, are interactive processes of composing, circulating, and responding to texts that create spaces of belonging for disabled people. They do so by merging DJ principles with the practices of community literacy, the “literate action[s] taken to support agency, understanding, and justice; and a rhetorical act built on the social ethic; and a strategic practice of intercultural inquiry” (Flowers 7). Critical access literacies, thus, are literate practices that invite both the composers and the readers across disabled identities to critique manifestations of ableism and foster an intersectional, collective culture of access.

In this article, I argue that the CCCC Accessibility Guides demonstrate how critical access literacies can spark knowledge-making about accessibility in organizational contexts. By introducing the concept of critical access literacies, I aim to show how the processes of writing and circulating guides build knowledge about access as a collective responsibility and intersectional access within the writing studies profession. These claims emerge from a study I conducted of the first six years of the CCCC accessibility guides (2011-2016), triangulating close reading of the guides themselves and interviews with the early guides’ authors. In the summer of 2017, I interviewed Margaret Price (2011 Author, Atlanta), Muffy Walter (2012 Author, St. Louis), Tracy Donhardt (2014 Author, Indianapolis), Lauren Cagle (2015 Co-Author, Tampa), Ellie Browning (2015 Co-Author, Tampa), Casie Cobos (2016 Co-Author, Houston),³ and Jay Dolmage (CDICC Chair from 2011-2015 and uncredited author of the 2013 guide) over Skype or phone, depending on the preference of the author.⁴ While the guides themselves illustrate the possibilities of critical access literacies in the profession, the interviews showcase the literate practices that weave together disabled wisdom, intersectional awareness, and collaborative meaning-making. In the next section, I define what I call critical access literacies, literate practices that critique depoliticized ideologies of access and disability. Then, I analyze how the guide authors practiced critical access literacies informed by disability justice principles, focusing on collective access and intersectionality. In this analysis, I foreground not only the transformative possibility of the guides but also their limitations, particularly when institutions do not prioritize access in their decision-making processes.

Defining Critical Access Literacies

I will start with what critical access literacies are *not*: they are not bound by legalistic understandings of disability and liability. Critical access literacies counters mainstream access communication, in which access is typically defined in terms of accommodations granted to an individual by an institution. See, for instance, the disability policy for faculty at an urban, public university in the Mid-Atlantic, “Mid-Atlantic University will provide reasonable accommodation to a qualified individual with a disability in order to enable such individual to perform the essential functions of position for which he or she is applying or in which he or she is employed.” Much of this language comes directly from federal legislation that aims to quantify disability, reasonableness, and accommodations. Such federal legislation has been hard-fought by disabled activists and has opened opportunities for disabled people, especially in

educational and employment settings. However, a legalistic approach to access values productivity over humanity, individualism over community, and inclusion over justice. It manifests in what Jay Dolmage calls retrofitting: “to retrofit is to add a component or accessory to something that has already been manufactured or built. This retrofit does not necessarily make the product function, does not necessarily fix a faulty product, but it acts as a sort of correction” (“Mapping” 20). But it’s not disabled people who need to be fixed, as Dolmage argues, but rather the environment and culture that excludes them. In contrast to retrofitting, critical access literacies are the interactive meaning-making activities that foster anti-ableist critique of the barriers disabled people face and empower community members to create disability-affirming spaces. I aim to situate critical access literacies in critical access studies, an emerging field named by Aimi Hamraie that critiques dominant, white-centered and depoliticized models of access. Situating this practice within Disability Justice and community literacies, I define each word in the phrase *critical access literacies* in the following paragraphs.

The *critical* in critical access literacies emphasizes the need to go beyond merely communicating the process of gaining accommodations in a specific setting: to be critical requires analyzing and critiquing ableist structures in society. As Hamraie explains, critical conveys both urgency – robust access *is* important – and the need for critique (“Making Access Critical”). Any sort of critical literacy “has an explicit aim of the critique and transformation of dominant ideologies, cultures and economies, and institutions and political systems” (Luke 5). By practicing critical access literacies, creators and interpreters⁵ develop a more astute awareness of how ableist ideologies, systems, and design impede relationship-building for disabled people. But critical doesn’t just imply destruction; critical also invites imagination, a core practice of Disability Justice. Shayda Kafai describes the vitality of imagining in DJ work: “creating new realities requires imagination. It requires rousing inventiveness. Dreaming a reality that holds space for all our intersectional bodyminds is how we declare ourselves in a world that, as Audre Lorde writes, ‘we were never meant to survive’” (35). Being critical invites us to question the unquestioned, to see in between and beyond what is presented to us and imagine a new world. Critical access literacies cultivate disability consciousness by inviting creators and readers to deepen their understanding of disability as an embodied, political, and relational experience.

In a critical access literacy framework, *access* is envisioned as an act of love, a concept authored by disability justice activists Mia Mingus, Alice Wong, and Sandy Ho. Mingus expands in a solo-authored keynote speech, “Access for the sake of access or inclusion is not necessarily liberatory, but access done in the service of love, justice, connection and community is liberatory and has the power to transform” (“Disability Justice”). What Mingus, Wong, and Ho identify are the affective, relational dynamics of access. Within this framework, access isn’t just being permitted entrance into a space, but rather, access is a sense of belonging in the space. And disabled people need more than just ramps to feel cared for and loved; they need a recognition of their mindbody’s various needs and enthusiasm from the community to meet those needs. To create a sense of belonging, too, requires an acknowledgment

that disabled people also occupy different embodied identities, and thus an intersectional approach is necessary. Just as Hamraie's conception of critical access studies "centers intersections of disability with race, gender, class, and aging" in its study of access across space and time, critical access literacies also demand an intersectional approach (*Building Access* 14). Pulling together the affective, relational, and intersectional threads, a critical access literacies framework defines access as the dynamic, collective work of creating spaces where multiply-marginalized disabled people with a wide range of needs can engage, connect, create, and lead now and if they want.

Critical access literacies are the literate activities that bring this vision of access to life. As community literacy scholars have long argued, *literacy* encompasses so much more than the act of learning to read and write in a classroom setting. Indeed, the field is invested in studying the "constellation of people, practices, and institutions that inform how people work with (and are worked by) texts" (Sheridan-Rabideau 3). Literacy happens in activist settings, as change-makers develop meaning-making practices that foster survival (Richardson), identity-formation (Darnell Pritchard), and activist consciousness (Flannery) in an oppressive world. Like Elenore Long, I'm interested in behind-the-scenes work that enables ordinary people to intervene in public discourse, the "literacies [that] organize how people carry out their purposes for going public" (16). When marginalized groups are not granted platforms in the public sphere, they create their own literate practices to bring their knowledge, critiques, and visions for the future to the public. Long's emphasis on going public is key to this study; critical access literacies blur the lines between public and private, fostering individual and community consciousness in small group settings while also agitating against ableist institutions, ideologies, and cultures. Within CCCC, disability activists developed critical access literacies to address access barriers, educate the nondisabled membership about disability and access, and ultimately forward a more intersectional, radical notion of access within a professional organization.

The Critical Access Literacies of the CCCC Guides

Academia has not historically been kind or welcoming to disabled scholars, and conferences are no exception. As argued by Margaret Price, Jay Dolmage, Tanya Titchkosky, M. Remi Yergeau, and so many others, academia professes allegiance to rationality, mental fitness, and productivity – qualities that define able-bodiedness and able-mindedness. Titchkosky argues in *The Question of Access*, "within the everyday practices and procedures of university environments... disability [is seen as] a problem in need of a solution" (70). Academia's resistance to making space for disability is especially apparent at conferences. Margaret Price writes, "conferences are often among the least accessible spaces that people with disabilities encounter in the course of our work, since they combine the typical inaccessibility of public spaces with the fact that most participants are on unfamiliar ground" ("Access Imagined"). And yet, scholars of all levels, from graduate students to senior scholars, are expected to present their research consistently at conferences. This expectation puts disabled scholars in the uncomfortable situation of choosing between navigating potentially unfamiliar

and inaccessible spaces or missing out on opportunities to network and further develop their research projects—and thus their careers.

For the authors of the CCCC Accessibility Guides, writing the guides can be a way to confront the overwhelming inaccessibility of conference experiences by compiling and delivering access information to anyone who wants it. The guides work to flip the script on access; so often, access is framed as an individual responsibility, with the burden placed on the disabled person to request accommodations from the organization. Critical access literacies, informed by disability justice principles, envision access as a collective responsibility, one in which everyone is committed to moving “together as people with mixed abilities, multi-racial, multi-gendered, mixed class, across the orientation spectrum – where no body/mind is left behind” (Sins Invalid 19). Lauren Cagle frames her work on the 2015 CCCC Accessibility Guide as redistributing access labor and countering oppressive structures:

We hoped that we could produce something that would free up time and space for people to engage in the other kinds of self-advocacy they might need to do. [...] [The guide] changes the discourse around this event more broadly but in a very specific individual level. We want to take action to enable other people to save themselves time and energy. Because so often that's what we demand of disabled people just to exist in the world. [...] We demand their time and energy, and that's oppressive. It's oppressive. There's no way around it.

Cagle describes the critical function of the access literacies practiced in the guide: by consolidating and sharing access knowledge, guide authors counter oppressive frameworks of disability that demand disabled scholars devote time and energy to simply exist in the conference space. Rather than placing the responsibility on individual CCCC members with disabilities to find essential access information on their own, the existence of the guides argues that sharing access knowledge is a collective responsibility.

By consolidating access information from various sources about various needs and various spaces, the accessibility guides act as a resource hub for disabled CCCC members. Because the guide authors didn't have the power to actually alter the conference venue layout to be more accessible, they envision the information-sharing of critical access literacies as a move toward collective access. As Cobos explains, “I couldn't change the space. I couldn't change the carpet, for example, but I could give people a heads up: ‘hey, this carpet is busy or not busy. Here's what it looks like or here's a description of what it looks like.’” While the guide authors are limited in what they are able to do to enact access on a physical level, they also recognize the importance of alerting conference-goers to the obstacles so that they can plan ahead of time. To that end, the 2011-2016 accessibility guides included information about transportation to and around the conference city, basic information about the conference venue – such as the carpet pattern for those with sensory needs –, basic information about the conference hotel – such as the availability of wheelchair accessible hotel rooms –, and local restaurants that accommodate different dietary restrictions.

Walter recalls disabled scholars thanking her, saying, “having the guide online – this is helpful to be able to see this information before I got here.” Though the information in the guide might initially appear benign – it’s often written in a neutral tone that doesn’t condemn the accessibility obstacles it identifies – Cobos’ and Cagle’s reflections illustrate how providing this information gives disabled scholars the ability to prepare for the space, and free up spoons⁶ for engaging with the conference experience. Thus, the guide is a tool for resisting ableism, a way for volunteers – both disabled and nondisabled – to share the load of ensuring access.

Because CCCC distributes the accessibility guide to all conference-goers through emails, social media, and the conference website, the information is theoretically circulated beyond disabled scholars who identify as needing this information. By speaking about disability access to a general audience, the accessibility guides invoke the pedagogical potential of critical access literacies. While disabled CCCC members were the priority, they were not the only intended audience. As Dolmage explained in our Skype interview,

I think there’s another group of people who didn’t necessarily think they’d use [the guide] but now really do use it because it just becomes a good way to navigate—thinking through where they’re going, what the space is like for a wide variety of reasons.

Many of the guides’ authors echoed Dolmage, expressing that they wanted their guide to be useful for people who did not necessarily identify as disabled. One of goals in creating the guide was to “speak to as many different people who might be reading that guide for as many different reasons as they might be.” All of the guides I studied included information that might not initially seem disability-focused, and thus, be seen as more general interest:

- Price’s 2011 guide included information about local attractions with notes about crowded each can be.
- Walter’s 2012 guide directed attendees on how to find quiet meeting spaces at a conference hotel
- Dolmage’s 2013 guide describes the inconsistent length of city blocks on the Las Vegas strip
- Donhardt’s 2014 guide alerts readers that the marble floor of the conference venue becomes slippery when wet
- Cagle and Browing’s 2015 guide lists the locations of two pharmacies close to the conference venue
- Cobos and Canino’s 2016 guide identified free recreational activities close to the conference venue

Though these references did not mention disability explicitly, the accessibility guide writers understood these all as access issues. The ability to find a quiet space is key for some people with mental disabilities (Anglesey and Cecil-Lemkin) but also people who just need a place to collect their thoughts or read messages from home without interruption. The location of nearby pharmacies could be crucial information for

people with chronic illness but also people in need of over-the-counter remedies for headaches or seasonal allergies.

The guide authors centered disability in the guides while imagining a broader audience, so as to include everyone in the mission of creating access. Walter calls this the “mantra of accessibility,” invoking a core principle of Universal Design: “if things are as inclusive as they can be in regards to disability, they’re as inclusive as it can be for everybody.” Universal Design rhetoric has been recently critiqued for erasing disability in its focus on the universal (Hamraie *Building 7*). The accessibility guides navigate that critique by speaking about access expansively to a wide audience while also naming and identifying barriers specific to disabled people. In this way, critical access literacies, like other forms of literacy, are pedagogical. The guide serves as an educational text, informing both nondisabled and disabled conference-goers about the diverse and various needs of disabled scholars. Cagle observes that each time the guide is released, people discuss it on social media: “My sense is that the online conversation . . . around disability, accessibility has become bigger. And also there are people who get involved in that conversation who wouldn’t necessarily have before.” Cagle believes that the guide’s presence sparks a conversation among conference-goers about access and disability. Thus, more broadly, the authors of accessibility guides invite conference goers, even those outside of disability studies, to develop critical access literacies by teaching them how to identify access issues and talk about disability access.

The critical access literacies of the guides also serve an argumentative function: by attempting to make the conference experience accessible for disabled scholars, the guides argue for the value of disabled wisdom. As discussed earlier, academic conferences have historically been exclusive and even hostile to disabled scholars. Such overwhelming and constant inaccessibility sends a message to disabled scholars: you are not welcome here. The Accessibility Guide combats that messaging by asserting that disabled scholars are valued members of the community. Walter insists, “just doing [the guide] every year for the conference makes a statement to the organization: this is important and this is something that matters.” Walter highlights the rhetorical power of critical access literacies: the guides assert that disabled scholars have something vital to contribute to the profession, and thus, deserve access to conferences. Critical access literacies cultivate an awareness that disabled people exist, that they are often excluded, and that institutions should make an active effort to include and affirm them. And such awareness extends beyond how CCCC operates. Cobos recalls conversations with CCCC members about the guide’s impact outside of the conference: “people said, ‘this would be really useful to have at my school because we don’t think about some of these things.’ Others said, ‘this has challenged me in how I think about my students and how can I change the classroom setting.’” The culture shift is not necessarily limited to just the conference space of CCCC, then. As the authors and interpreters develop critical access literacies through their engagement with the guide, they are able to transfer those literacies to other spaces. Given that CCCC focuses on the teaching of writing, the guide presents an exciting opportunity to

prompt CCCC members to consider how they can bring critical access literacies on their campuses and in their classrooms.

Over the years, the guides expanded because of increased content and the incorporation of images and captions. This expansion has allowed the guides to highlight the intersectional aspect of access, a key Disability Justice principle. As several disability studies scholars and justice activists have argued, access knowledge that focuses solely on disability only focuses on the access needs of white disabled cisgender men (Hubrig and Osorio 94). An intersectional approach to access prompts us to consider how different raced, gendered, nationed, and other Othered disabled bodies navigate a space. 2015 marked a significant year in the evolution of the guide, especially in its focus on intersectional access. Powered by a full committee of volunteers and greater institutional support from CCCC, the 2015 guide became a more dynamic, interactive genre, including photographs and captions as well as more extensive access information. Browning explains, “we were trying to really give as much information as we could about the conference sites and where folks were going to be going potentially and speak to as many different people who might be reading that guide for as many different reasons as they might be.” The 2015 guide spoke to various disability access needs, including extensive photographs and descriptions of the pool lifts in the conference hotel, carpet patterns (for people with sensory needs), and building entrances. In addition, the guide provided information on how to find gender neutral bathrooms, how to find the lactation space, where and when to find Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Thus, the guide provides critical access information addressing the needs of trans scholars, nursing parents, and folks dealing with addiction. Disability rarely operates in isolation of other identities. As the performer-activists of *Sins Invalid* explain, “each person has multiple identities, and each identity can be a site of privilege or oppression” (16). Disabled people have babies, they need gender neutral bathrooms, they deal with drug addiction. The CCCC Accessibility Guides I studied do not address race explicitly, so there are intersectional access needs that are overlooked. Still, in 2015, the CCCC Accessibility Guides began to overtly recognize that disabled people occupy different types of bodies and live different types of lives, and thus might need intersectional forms of access.

Cobos and Canino followed Cagle and Browning’s lead by also including material about gender neutral bathrooms, lactation spaces, and NA/AA meetings in the 2016 CCCC Accessibility Guide. In addition, they included a list of free recreational activities in the conference city, which Cobos explains in our interview was a response to the high cost of conferences. Cobos hopes that future CCCC organizers and guide authors will “make sure this conference is not just for the people with money and faculty who have tenure track jobs.” The Free Fun and Relaxation section of the 2016 guide identifies “things [people] can do on a budget to improve [their] conference experience” (38). By framing finances as an access concern, the 2016 Accessibility Guide emphasizes that the high costs can be barriers to access. Class intersects with disability in profound ways, as disabled people live in poverty “at twice the rate of people without disabilities” (National Council on Disability). While Cobos couldn’t

control the cost of conference registration or travel, she *could* frame cost as an access issue. Cobos, Canino, Cagle, and Browning all demonstrate the importance of integrating an intersectional awareness in critical access literacies. They understand that trans, nursing, and poor disabled people need dynamic and multilayered access to participate in knowledge-sharing at CCCC.

As accessibility guides have become more and more commonplace in writing studies, other conferences in the field have incorporated them and built upon the foundation of the early CCCC guide writers. In 2018, the Rhetoric Society of America (RSA) conference offered an accessibility guide, authored by Stephanie Larson. The guide included similar information as the early CCCC guides, but Larson also included a tribal welcome and land acknowledgment early in the guide. Katie Bramlett followed this practice for the 2019 RSA Institute, and I did as well for the 2019 Mid-Atlantic CCCC Conference at ODU, adding a slavery acknowledgment and a note for those observing Ramadan. These more explicit references to colonialism and race within the context of accessibility illustrate the potential for foregrounding intersectionality in critical access literacies. I read these inclusions in accessibility guides as a recognition that colonialism and racist violence are themselves sources of disability, frailty, and trauma. The ongoing threat of state violence against Black and Indigenous people *is* an access issue, as it impedes the free movement of minoritized people targeted by white supremacy. This is a place in need of further expansion in future CCCC Access Guides; information about local policing and immigration policies, for instance, can enable BIPOC and undocumented CCCC members to make decisions about how or if to navigate the conference city.

Despite the ability of access guides to attend to disability access, they are limited in how much they can transform an academic organization. Friend, colleague, and co-conspirator Margaret Fink once asked me, “can academia, with its love of productivity, efficiency, and its investments in gatekeeping, ever truly embody Disability Justice principles?” This question has stuck with me since. After all, DJ is inherently an anti-capitalist, anti-settler project. The accessibility guides themselves illustrate this tension between the activists’ attempt to enact radical access and the institutional barriers to such transformation. While the guides’ authors overwhelmingly articulated that the guide has helped to change CCCC culture, some also noted the limitations of the guide in enacting true structural transformation. As Cobos stated, she didn’t have the authority to physically change the space or lower registration costs to make the conference more accessible. Dolmage echoes this frustration and goes further in our interview: the guide *allows* CCCC to continue choosing inaccessible spaces. He explains, “[The guide] may need to become a little bit more political. I think we may need to be thinking about the fact that we can’t keep just using the guide to cover for the inaccessible spaces CCCC chooses.” Earlier in our conversation, Dolmage noted the *cultural* changes within CCCC since 2011, such as increased participation in the Disability Studies Standing Group meeting. However, he also insists that the institution itself still does not prioritize accessibility in its conference planning. If it were to, he argues, it would make accessibility a core concern in choosing venues. But ul-

timately, cost is prioritized over accessibility, suggesting the accessibility guides serve more as a Band-Aid for inaccessibility than a true transformation.

Because the guide authors are often disabled, the guides also threaten to further burden disabled people and their accomplices with additional access labor. In our interview, Price discusses the lack of institutional memory and support faced by the guide authors:

There is sort of this constant tension between we're the ones who do access best (we being the disabled people and members of the CDICC), and yet every time we do this and do a great job, CCCC is unsurprisingly like, "great thanks!" We don't necessarily want that to be our role. That's an organizational responsibility. So I think that's led to problems with whether people doing the work are getting enough support.

Price and Dolmage observe that professional organizations often rely on volunteer labor to point out accessibility issues instead of embedding accessibility into organization's structure. Their observations underscore the challenges of practicing critical access literacies in professional spaces that historically have disenfranchised and excluded disabled people. In her 2009 study of conference disability policy documents, Price asks, "if we wish to create accessible ways to meet one another and share our ideas, what traditions of competitiveness and agonistic discourse, of academic hierarchies in general, will have to be dismantled?" ("Access Imagined"). Price speaks to the fact that for disability liberation to occur, it can't just be the folks who study disability who commit to it: deep systemic change is needed, and our fundamental assumptions about the culture and structure of conferences need to change. All levels of academic institutions must commit to critical access literacy practices in order to construct communities that truly embrace the presence and wisdom of multiply marginalized disabled scholars.

Conclusion

I imagine this article making two interventions: the first is defining critical access literacies and analyzing a case study of them in action within a professional context. In doing this, I aim to highlight how critical access literacies can be practiced to dismantle ableist structures while building a world for disability liberation. Despite the limitations of the Accessibility Guides, all the authors I spoke to believe in the power of the guides to transform culture in CCCC. Price recalls feeling, "It's so much work, but also hey! I'm really making a difference here. I'm really doing something that has a concrete good that I can look at and point to." By nature, Accessibility Guides are limited in what they can do, but they still are doing something by naming and valuing the presence of disability within CCCC. Vancouver's Radical Access Mapping Project (RAMP) speaks to the importance of auditing a space's access/lack of access:

And while [an accessibility audit] isn't everything, doesn't do everything, doesn't encompass everything and isn't without its limitations, it does add something, it does create dialogue and tangible change. I've seen it, experi-

enced it firsthand. And in a society that is pretty consistently telling variously disabled folks that our presence doesn't have an impact, that our lives are not worth making and sharing space with, that does mean something.

Both Price and RAMP remind us that even when institutions overlook disabled people, communities can respond by cultivating material practices that facilitate belonging, community, and affirmation. Critical access literacies empower the composers and interpreters to be aware of the myriad and intersecting ways spaces can exclude disabled people, just as they also enable us to imagine a world built to embrace multiply marginalized disabled people.

The second intervention builds upon the first: by detailing the labor and the impact of Accessibility Guides, I hope that academic institutions begin valuing critical access literacy practices in meaningful, material, and sustainable ways. A study of the Accessibility Guides shows how, in spaces traditionally hostile to disability, critical access literacies can foster knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing about disability, intersectionality, and embodiment. Critical access literacies elevate traditional approaches to access communication, such as the Mid-Atlantic University's disability policy, that seek to fix "disability" and avoid litigation. When composed through a critical access literacy framework, disability policy documents can be sites of rich world-making. And yet, because conference accessibility guides are not peer-reviewed publications, their knowledge-building power can be overlooked by academic institutions – in particular, hiring and tenure and promotion committees. How can we rebuild our organizations to not just permit the existence of disabled people but actually value and center the work of creating access? How can we position critical access literacies as the heart of an organization, so that collective access is seen as a life force that enriches every aspect of that organization's work? I believe critical access literacies have the power to transform ableist cultures into disability liberated zones. To get us there in writing studies, our departments, universities, and professional organizations need to invest in the development of critical access literacies as something *we all* do rather than something *those people over there* do.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Margaret Price, Muffy Walter, Tracy Donhardt, Lauren Cagle, Ellie Browning, Casie Cobos, and Jay Dolmage for sharing their experiences of composing the Accessibility Guides with me and offering feedback throughout the writing and rewriting of this article in its many forms. I am grateful for Stephanie Kerschbaum's feedback on a very early draft of this project, as well as the reviewers and editors of this special issue.

2. The 2019 CCCC Accessibility Guide was written by John Grant, Ya-Huei Chen, and Noel Tague.

3. Geneva Canino is the other co-author of the 2016 Accessibility Guide for Houston; I was not able to interview Canino.

4. I sought and received permission from the interviewees to include their quotations in this article, and I offered each of them the opportunity to review the manuscript.

5. Inspired by J. Logan Smilges work on neuroqueer literacies, I am de-centering reading in my approach to literacies; as Smilges explains, “neuroqueer literacies are an intentional and strategic positioning of neurodivergent meaning-making practices in response to an ableist model of reading pedagogy that is predicated on the exclusion of disabled bodymind” (105). Thus, I use phrases like creating rather than writing and interpreting rather than reading, to encapsulate the various methods people use to interact with texts.

6. Christine Miserandino developed spoon theory as a metaphor for the units of energy disabled and sick people expend on day-to-day activities, emphasizing that disabled and sick people often have limited “spoons” to use in a day and have to strategically decide how to distribute their units of energy.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What was your role in the crafting of the accessibility guide? How did the Accessibility Coordinator work with the Local Arrangements Committee?
2. Can you describe the behind-the-scenes labor that crafting this guide required? Who did the work and how was the labor delegated?
3. What was your guiding philosophy when crafting the accessibility guide? What did you want to emphasize and why?
4. Did you experience any challenges in creating the guide, and how did you overcome them?
5. What role did CCCC as an organization have in directing your work with the guide? What kind of support or feedback did they provide?
6. To what extent do you see creating the accessibility guide as activism?
7. To what extent has the CCCC Accessibility Guide changed the culture of CCCC in terms of disability awareness and justice?
8. What kind of service credits or recognition, if any, did you receive from your department for developing the guide?
9. Do you have anything else to add?

Author Bio

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