

2016 Annual Report
Audio Description Project activity/accomplishments

Submitted by Joel Snyder, PhD – Director, Audio Description Project, ACB
President, Audio Description Associates, LLC

2016, our eighth full year of activity, was yet another banner year for ACB's Audio Description Project (ADP). Here's a summary of that activity.

2016 – Sixth Audio Description Project Conference

- worked with VSA-MN, the principle provider of AD services in Minneapolis, regarding ADP and ACB Conference participation
- pursued sponsorships from communications companies and others with an interest in audio description / developed a master list of potential sponsors for the Conference
- ongoing updates to mailers announcing the Conference and the AD Institute (mailings on our Constant Contact mailing list-approx. 4,000 names-and posted on Facebook and website)
- final status: Conference—46 participants (19 paid, 29 speakers--eight nations represented and attendees from 16 USA states and the District of Columbia.); Institute—9 participants (all paid)
- developed ideas for Reno “mini-conference”—Monday, July 3, 2017 (tentatively); updates on CVAA; DOJ ruling on movie theater description; new ROKU streaming device and other technical developments; NPS (National Park Service); possible speakers from Reno or Sacramento/Los Angeles areas

An outline of the sessions is available on the ADP website.

2016 Audio Description Achievement Awards:

In conjunction with ACB's 55th annual conference and convention in Minneapolis, MN, the awards were presented at a plenary session of the conference before almost 2000 people who are blind, ACB members/convention attendees. The prestigious awards included:

- Achievement in Audio Description – Performing Arts: Arts Access, Raleigh, NC
- Achievement in Audio Description – Media: Fred Brack, Raleigh, NC
- Achievement in Audio Description – Museums: Dole Institute of Politics / Audio-Reader Network, Lawrence, KS
- Achievement in Audio Description – International: Bos Soluções e Serviços Ltda. – Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Special Recognition Achievement in Audio Description: Alice Austin, Eliot, ME
- Special Recognition Achievement in Audio Description: Mark Messersmith, The Visual Voice – Mountain View, CA
- Dr. Margaret R. Pfanstiehl Memorial Achievement Award in Audio Description – Research and Development: Disney / Pixar “Disney Movies Anywhere App” – Los Angeles, CA
- Barry Levine Memorial Award for Career Achievement in Audio Description: Dr. Francisco Lima – Recife, Brazil

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.

Audio Description Institutes

This year’s Minneapolis Audio Description Institute (our ninth!) trained 10 participants in the fundamentals of audio description including co-director Dr. Francisco Lima from Recife, Brazil.

In addition, we conducted a successful Audio Description Institute in Washington, DC in conjunction with ACB’s Mid-Year Meeting. A highlight was participation by Sao Paulo-based audio describer Andrea Garbelotti.

Our next DC-based Institute in Washington will be held February 25-27, 2017 in conjunction with the 2017 ACB Mid-Year Meeting .

ACB Movie Night

This year's screening of an audio described film, Spotlight, was presented to approximately 100 individuals. We continue our tradition of presenting each year's "Best Film" Oscar award winner with description.

Also--loaned equipment to BPI for presentation of film screening of "Carol"

Amazon.com fees

Some folks may not be aware that when you purchase DVDs (or anything else) when linked to amazon.com via the ADP website (www.acb.org/adp), ACB receives a small portion of each sale. The following data reveal the effectiveness of our arrangement with amazon.com / the benefit to ACB from amazon.com purchases generated through the ADP website:

- Since 2009 and the inception of the ADP: \$8,965.21
- in 2013: \$1,443.42
- in 2014: \$1,666.80
- in 2015: \$1,740,35
- in 2016: \$1,679.96

Web Site (www.acb.org/adp)

Our web site continues to be one of our most visible and successful achievements—all due thanks to Fred Brack, our webmaster, for his ongoing leadership. Throughout the year, we have:

- updated information on the ADP Conference, Institute, Awards, and other efforts;
- provided weekly updates on audio-described DVDs and Blu-ray discs (148 in 2016—that's well more than twice the described DVDs released by this same time in 2014 and a 20% increase over 2015!);

- provided updates on TV shows including video description and the resumption of our comprehensive listing of broadcast television programs with audio description, with the support of ADP friend Sebastian Andrade-Miles;
- made additions to live theatre, movie, and museum locations with AD;
- announced AD training opportunities in 2016;
- published a range of articles on AD: “Streaming Media with AD”; article on Pixar/Disney app development; announcements re. the development of description for select PornHub website videos, Zagga TV app for audio description, Comcast streaming availability, FCC NPRM request for comments, Actiview technology, Rio Olympics AD, FCC reminder re. responses to its NPRM re. accessible hardware and on-screen guides, the ACB Survey on media use, the “Visuals Into Words” project out of Barcelona, Spain; NBC Nightly News feature on The Washington Ear’s AD program; the FCC’s upcoming deadline for accessible television programming receivers, the “BADIES” contest (Benefits of Audio Description in Education); Gregory Frazier’s seminal Master’s thesis on AD (1975), update on increase of numbers of feature films being described, the FCC agenda deletion of discussion of increase in described broadcast hours, the Department of Justice clarification on AD in movie theaters, expansion of Comcast voice control access for Netflix, the airline ANA’s inclusion of AD within the company’s in-flight entertainment package, and initiatives with the National Park Service (Denise Decker)
- And we’re also pleased to announce that ACB’s 2014 publication *The Visual Made Verbal: A Comprehensive Training Manual and Guide to the History and Applications of Audio Description* by Joel Snyder, PhD, was released in Russian as well as a digest/abstract in Polish (full Polish publication and Portuguese and Spanish editions are expected in 2017)

Social Media

To date, the ADP Facebook page has received more than 1,786 “likes” and we have more than 200 Twitter followers

DC Aid Association grant award

\$15,000 was awarded to ACB for an ADP project supporting an audio described tour of two areas at the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Washington, DC. The tour has been finalized and will have gala inaugural during the 2017 mid-year meeting on February 24, 2017. A new application has been submitted for support of an audio described tour of the Smithsonian Institution/National Museum of Natural History's "Insect Zoo"

Subcommittees

Access to Media Subcommittee:

Present activities include--

- tracking and responding to the Department of Justice Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) on Movie Theater Access;
- work on the FCC Video Programming sub-committee efforts on creating a centralized listing for description on broadcast television and a dedicated AD secondary audio programming channel;
- work with Brody Hale of Tufts University regarding possibilities for description of public domain films
- coordinated the development of cumulative listings for broadcast description and its analysis (developed by Sebastian Andrade-Miles)—it will be updated in May/June and will include educational programming
- continued to advocate for and explore the development of an app for downloading AD in movie theaters or at home, most recently with Pixar/Disney
- Time Warner—drafted letter to Fernando LaGuarda at TW re concerns with service in NYC
- the ACB nomination of the Pixar/Disney app for downloading AD in movie theaters (written by Joel) was successful in having the FCC Chairman's Award for Advancement in Accessibility awarded to Disney/Pixar
- ongoing discussions with Warner Bros. re. the addition of AD tracks to classic movies and the transfer of AD tracks for theatrical screenings to DVD releases

- participated in the AFB-ACB teleconference re. the NPRM on proposed changes to the FCC rules implementing the 21st Century Video Communications and Accessibility Act

- attended the full-day meeting of the FCC's Disability Advisory Committee and a meeting of the Committee's Video Description Programming Subcommittee—along with Carl Richardson and Brian Charlson, emphasized the need for accuracy of AD listings by broadcasters and action toward establishing an additional "SAP" channel

- sent out notices regarding the deletion of the agenda item on the expansion of described programming from the FCC's November meeting

- sent out notices regarding the Department of Justice clarification requiring digital film theaters to have the capacity to screen films with description and captioning

Awards Subcommittee: see above for the list of 2016 AD Awardees

BADIES (Benefits of Audio Description In Education contest):

Present activities include—

- the 2017 version of the contest was announced in September 2016 with a November 30 deadline;

- *27* entries have been received from students ages 8-18—the subcommittee will meet on January 17 to consider all entries

Access to Performing Arts and Museums Subcommittee:

Present activities include—

- revised White House AD tour—added a room, updated instructions for audio player and re-recorded the entire tour

- submitted proposal to convene a panel on AD and museums at the 2017 meeting of the American Association of Museums in St. Louis

- provided AD at every performance of Open Circle Theater's production of "Tommy"
- publicized and attended performance by/consulted with dance company Jess Curtis/Gravity and Claire Cunningham re. AD for contemporary dance
- conducted a lengthy telephone interview with researchers at DePaul University on "Improving Museum Accessibility"
- expanding our state-by-state lists of performing arts venues and museums/National Park Service sites that currently offering AD for performances;
- developing a "star-based" list of criteria for the evaluation of museum access, i.e., "Five Stars" = excellent and "One Star" = poor – Eric Bridges and Joel Snyder to meet with the American Association of Museums in January 2017

Certification Subcommittee:

Present activities include—

- coordinating research on certification/accreditation programs
- first meeting to be scheduled

508 Subcommittee:

Present activities include—

- research the state of 508 compliance at federal agencies including his own Veterans Administration / possibility of working with the Blinded Veterans Association
- first meeting to be scheduled

Joel Snyder, PhD, Director of the ADP--travel/activity

- finalized 2016 ADP mission/services and goals/objectives document—newly updated for 2017

- “The Visual Made Verbal” released in Russian and in a digest/abstract version in Polish (full translation publication to come—Portuguese and Spanish translations in preparation) / assisted with ACB mini-mall requests for copies of the book (international shipping)
- finalized the recording of the ACB-published “The Visual Made Verbal” for the DC Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped—will be available via the NLS system in early 2017
- responded to over 100 phone and email requests for general information on audio description
- assisted Lord Colin Low (Chair of the Royal National Institute of Blind People) on his remarks regarding AD at a March gathering of audio describers in London
- responded on behalf of the ADP on the website and to AMI in Canada regarding the sudden passing of Robert Pearson
- attended farewell reception for Paul Schroeder-American Foundation for the Blind
- ongoing development of AD tours at: Saguaro National Park, Tucson, AZ; Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming; Dry Tortugas National Park, Key West, FL; Joshua Tree National Park, California; Merrill Photo Collection, Fairbanks, AK; Sleeping Bear Dunes, Michigan; Minuteman Missile Site, South Dakota
- conducted AD seminar at the World Blind Union Congress in Orlando, FL.
- led the ACB Audio Description Institutes in Washington, DC and Minneapolis, MN
- coordinated the 2016/sixth ACB Audio Description Project Conference in Minneapolis
- conducted audio description workshops for Pearson Canada and the Multi-Languages Corporation in Toronto;
- conducted audio description workshop at the Multiple Perspectives conference at Ohio State University;

- conducted audio description workshops and full trainings in Montevideo, Uruguay; Maceio and Sao Paulo, Brazil; Poznan, Poland; Tokyo and Osaka, Japan; Vientiane, Laos; Bangkok, Thailand; Manila and Naga City, Philippines and Havana, Cuba;
- presented quarterly reports on ADP to ACB board and the mid-year Presidents' Meeting
- attended the FCC Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility ceremony at the 2016 M-Enabling Conference (ACB successfully nominated Disney-Pixar for its new app facilitating the delivery of AD to smartphones)
- met with Frederic Schroeder, newly installed President of the World Blind Union, re. promotion for AD efforts world-wide
- met with Nakia Gray, Esq. of Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts re. posting of Gregory Frazier's seminal master's thesis on AD and legalities regarding downloads of soundtracks with AD from commercial films
- interviewed by Brian Fischler for the podcast "iAccessVO"
- conducted an hour-long Q&A session via Twitter for "AXS Chat"
- conducted an afternoon webinar on audio description for the Great Lakes ADA Center
- presented an AD workshop at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ
- conducted two radio interviews on audio description with correspondents in Maceio, Brazil and Poznan, Poland
- presented on AD and the Internet as a panelist for the 2016 M-Enabling Conference
- conducted two interviews (The Guardian-U.K., New York Daily News) on the implementation of audio description for select videos on the Internet site Pornhub
- conducted webinar on AD for IAAP (International Association of Accessibility Professionals)

- spoke on AD and literacy at IFLA in Louisville, KY (International Federation of Library Associations)
- appeared as a guest speaker on AD for two programs on Takoma Radio—WOWD-LP FM (online and at 94.3 FM)
- interviewed by “The Pulse,” WHYI-FM/NPR re. AD for film
- interviewed in article “Does Pornhub’s Porn for the Blind Actually Work?” published by vice.com
- interviewed by Brandon Charles for WERA-FM on AD
- spoke at the meeting of the PA and MD Councils of the Blind convention in Harrisburg/screened “The Martian” with AD
- conducted AD workshop as a part of NIH 508 Compliance Conference
- conducted AD training for Audio-Reader and the Spencer Museum in Lawrence, KS from November 18-20)

Upcoming travel/events:

February 2017:

- opening of AD tour at the US Holocaust Memorial and Museum
- Audio Description Institute, Washington, DC-February 25-27, 2017

March 2017:

- presentation at the Advanced Research Seminar of Audio Description, Barcelona, Spain
- presentation at the International Association of Professional Interpreters and Translators, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- presentation at the 3rd Annual Encontro on Audio Description, Recife, Brazil

May 2017:

- conduct AD workshop at the University of Trieste, Trieste, Italy

June 2017:

- conduct AD workshop at No Barriers Summit, Lake Tahoe, NV

July 2017:

- Audio Description Project meeting and Audio Description Institute, Reno, NV