

ADA  AUDIO  
Conference  
ADA NATIONAL NETWORK

ADA Audio Conference Series  
September 15, 2015

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2:00pm Eastern Time

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## Customize Your View *continued*



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  2. **By Email** [webinars@ada-audio.org](mailto:webinars@ada-audio.org) ; or
  3. **Call** 877-232-1990 (V/TTY)

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# Welcome!

## Reporting Clearly and Accurately About Disability

Wendy Gower, Cornell University  
Hannah Rudstam, Cornell University  
Mary Catt, Cornell University  
Peter Quinn, Cornell University  
Dot Marinaccio, ACCES-VR



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## Our Partners



*K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan*  
Employment and Disability Institute



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# Northeast ADA Center

**1-800-949-4232**



## Northeast ADA Center

**...providing training, consultation and materials on a broad range of topics related to disability in the United States**

[www.northeastada.org](http://www.northeastada.org)



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# Our Panelists



**John Robinson**  
President  
Our Ability, Inc.



**Allison Weiner Heinemann**  
Lecturer, Dept of Labor  
Relations, Law & History,  
ILR School, Cornell University



**Peter Quinn**  
Multi-Media Specialist  
Employment & Disability  
Institute,  
Cornell University



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## Our purpose & plan



### Part I (30 min): Nuts & Bolts

- What you most need to know about reporting about disability
- Your questions

### Part II: Panel Discussion (60 min)

- Deeper Issues: Reporting about disability
- Your questions



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## Disability in America



- About 57 million Americans have a disability\*
- Nearly 20% of the US population
- One of the largest diversity populations in our country today
- Many disabilities are not obvious to others
- Number of people with disabilities is likely to increase in the future

\*US Census Bureau (2014). Facts for Features. Anniversary of the ADA. Accessed at <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff15.html>.



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## Disability in America



Rate of 2013 full-time/full-year employment:\*

- With disabilities: 20.9%
- Without disabilities: 56.4%

Of people with disabilities who are unemployed, nearly 70% are striving to work\*\*

The most significant barrier faced by people with disabilities seeking work is not the disability itself...

**It's the attitudes of others\***

\*Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2013). Disability Status Reports: United States and New Jersey. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute(EDI). Accessed at <http://www.disabilitystatistics.org>.

\*\*Kessler Foundation. (2015). National Employment & Disability Survey. Accessed at [https://kesslerfoundation.org/sites/default/files/filepicker/5/NESurvey2015\\_ExecutiveSummary.pdf](https://kesslerfoundation.org/sites/default/files/filepicker/5/NESurvey2015_ExecutiveSummary.pdf)

\*\*\*Kaye, S., Jans, L. & Jones, E. (2011). Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation. 21(4): 526-536.



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## The nuts and bolts: Five key points



**What do media professionals most need to know when reporting about disability?**



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## The nuts and bolts



# 1.

## Use person-first language



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## Phrases to avoid

*How can museums help  
the blind to learn about  
their world?*

*How do the disabled  
fare when travelling  
on airplanes?*

*Many insane people  
have been forced to  
live on the streets after  
de-institutionalization.*



*The paraplegic was  
forced to crawl up the  
stairs to the court  
house.*

*Epileptics now can do  
almost anything other  
people can do.*

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## And what about these?

*How can museums help people with visual disabilities to learn about their world?*

*How do people with disabilities fare when travelling on airplanes?*

*People with psychiatric disability have been forced to live on the streets after de-institutionalization.*



*A man who uses a wheelchair was forced to crawl up the stairs to the court house.*

*People with seizure disorders can do almost anything other people can do.*

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## “The disabled”



- It's all about the disability
- They're all alike
- Their talents, likes/dislikes, achievements all take a back seat



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## The nuts and bolts



# 2.

## Avoid a victim mentality



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## What's wrong here?

*When he communicates,  
he is **bound to** a  
computer.*

*The man in question is  
**confined to** a  
wheelchair.*

*The doctor, who is herself is  
a **stroke victim**, pledges to  
make life better for people  
like her.*



*The teacher who was  
named in the suit  
**suffers from** epilepsy.*

*Two of the children in  
the family are **cripples**.*

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## And what about these?

*He uses a computer  
when communicating.*

*The man in question  
uses a wheelchair.*

*The doctor, who has had  
a stroke herself, pledges  
to make life better for  
others who have had  
strokes.*



*The teacher who was  
named in the suit has a  
seizure disorder.*

*Two of the children in  
the family use mobility  
devices.*

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## Avoid these loaded terms...

**Normal**

(as opposed to "disabled")

**Handicapped**

**Lame**



They hit like a hammer for  
people with disabilities

**Retarded**

**Crippled**

**Insane**

**Deaf &  
Dumb**

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## The nuts and bolts



**3.**

**Not objects of  
inspiration; not  
sources of pity**



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## The pity/heroism paradigm

**Pitiful**



**Brave  
Heroes**

**What about just being  
human?**



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## Subtle But Powerful Negative Messages



- People with disabilities held to a higher moral standard
- It's all about the disability
- All people with disabilities are desperately wishing they were "normal"
- "If she can do it, anyone can!"
- "Jerry's Kids" presumably would all grow up to live lives of sweetness and dependency

*This automatic mindset about disability has cost people with disabilities innumerable jobs, opportunities and independence*



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## The nuts and bolts



# 4.

**About disclosure:  
Ask before you tell**



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## Disability disclosure

For legal and human reasons, do not disclose a person's disability without their permission



Ask the person how and whether they want a disability to be portrayed

- Some do not want to identify as a person with a disability
- Others take an "out and proud" stance
- Many are somewhere in-between

Consider the role of disability in the story—Is it relevant to the story? Is it necessary to include it?



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## The nuts and bolts



# 5.

**People with disabilities succeed every day; this shouldn't be a surprise**



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## ***Why is it so surprising when we're successful?***



*"I'm a lawyer and I have an obvious visual disability. So many times I've had people be surprised by this. It's like people are going...Wow! He's blind and he can think too!"*



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***"She doesn't let her disability get her down. She shows up for school everyday and completes her homework."***

***"Even though he has a disability, he exercises three times a week."***



***"Even though these people have disabilities, they're working just like anybody else."***

***"Despite being disabled, she completed a college degree!"***

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## New Fact Sheet:

### Guidelines for Writing about People with Disabilities

<https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing>

### Directrices Para Escribir Acerca De Personas Con Discapacidades

<https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing-esp>



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And now...



**Any questions  
or thoughts?**



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## Meet Our Panelists



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## Panel Discussion



What are the major issues/challenges/dilemmas you see when disability is reported in the media?

Any real-life examples?

What is the mindset or the assumptions that give rise to these issues?

What needs to happen to bring about change?

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John Robinson

**Twitter - @getoffyourknees**  
**Web – ourability.com**



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## What is Our Ability?

- Creating New York Business Leadership Network (USBLN)
- Mentoring People with Disabilities
  - Employment
  - Entrepreneur opportunities
  - Education
- Disability Etiquette
- Self ID Campaigns
- Video Production



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**And now...**



**Your thoughts/  
questions?**



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## **Contact for More Information on this Topic:**

**ADA National Network**

**800-949-4232 (V/TTY)**

[www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

(to locate the Regional Center that serves your area)

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Thank you for participating in today's  
ADA-Audio Conference Session

The next scheduled session is:

**October 20, 2015**

***"Social Media and Accessibility"***

Register at: [www.ada-audio.org](http://www.ada-audio.org) or call 877-232-1990 V/TTY

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