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SPEAKERS

Ryan Fleury, Rob Mineault, Steve Barclay, Colleen Connor, Lis Malone

R Rob Mineault 00:06
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

R Ryan Fleury 00:25
Banter, banter.

R Rob Mineault 00:28
This is of course the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault, and joining me today, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R Ryan Fleury 00:45
I'm Mr. Ryan Fleury, thank you very much.

R Rob Mineault 00:51
And hey, it's Miss Lis Malone.

L Lis Malone 00:55
Joining you intermittently from the dog kennel here in North Carolina.

R

Rob Mineault 01:00

Yeah, clearly. I feel like there's a story there somewhere. And hey, Steve Barclay is not here.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:09

Nope. He's down at CSUN looking at all the new toys.

R

Rob Mineault 01:12

Yeah, that's right. So yeah, we expect some CSUN talk next next week when he's when he's back. I'm really curious to hear about what what's down there. I suspect it will be a lot of AI stuff. AI everything.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:31

Are you surprised?

R

Rob Mineault 01:32

The whole, the whole conference is probably just AI run.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:36

There may be definitely some new braille displays that had been released and are being talked about.

R

Rob Mineault 01:42

Stay tuned. We'll have lots to talk about. We shouldn't really tease the audience about next week's show, because then they'll just be like, well, I'm just gonna screw it, screw this episode. I'm just gonna wait for next week.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:52

While that might not be a next week. We don't know.

R

Rob Mineault 01:56

What do you mean?

- R** Ryan Fleury 01:57
Lis is having computer issues still. You're having computer issues. She's still maybe next week it'll be my turn.
- L** Lis Malone 02:04
That's extremely apocalyptic of you.
- R** Rob Mineault 02:08
Right? Mr. Apocalyptic? I feel like he's sitting on a huge case of like water and he's got his like little hand crank radio.
- L** Lis Malone 02:23
Down in his dungeon. Yes.
- R** Rob Mineault 02:25
Surrounded by batteries and Chef Boy-Ar-Dee
- L** Lis Malone 02:27
Do you do you have prepper tendencies Ryan?
- R** Ryan Fleury 02:31
Do I have what tendencies? Prepper tendencies?
- R** Rob Mineault 02:36
Yeah, Domsday prepper.
- R** Ryan Fleury 02:41
Somewhat Yeah.
- R** Rob Mineault 02:42
Okav. There you go. Well. listen. that sava it. All right. I will if thinas go sidewavs. Which thev

okay, there you go. Well, honestly, that says for all right. I wish if things go sideways. When they may, we may get some heat waves this summer. We're having a really warm spring up here. So 100 forest fires already, not a good sign. Yeah. I don't know. Maybe Ryan's the smart one.

L Lis Malone 03:07
Maybe, maybe.

R Rob Mineault 03:09
Hey, okay. Well, that's enough for that. Hey, Ryan?

R Ryan Fleury 03:14
Yeah, Rob?

R Rob Mineault 03:15
Let's go right to the show. Because you know, this is part two of last week's show, so let's just get right into it. What are we doing?

R Ryan Fleury 03:23
Today we are welcoming back Colleen Connor from Blind Inspiration Cast. Colleen, thanks for coming back.

R Rob Mineault 03:32
Yes, thank you Colleen for coming back. We had such a great time with you last week talking all kinds of audio description talk and I didn't even get through a lot of my questions. So thanks for coming back to talk some more.

C Colleen Connor 03:48
Yeah, I am still working on my excessive chattiness as I get older, I don't know that it'll improve but hopefully in the professional settings and group settings I at some point won't talk my companions ears off.

R Rob Mineault 04:09
It's fine. We love we love chatty guests around here. Now where to start?

R Ryan Fleury 04:14
Okay, well, question 1

R Rob Mineault 04:26
Shut up, Ryan.

L Lis Malone 04:29
Why don't we start with a yes or no question?

R Rob Mineault 04:33
I don't need help. I don't know why you guys are trying to help. Like, I was fine. I was great.

C Colleen Connor 04:40
Do you have glasses?

R Rob Mineault 04:45
No, listen, I was just gonna say we're not gonna we'll make Colleen goes through the whole intro again. Because really, people should just listen to last week's show. So she needs no introduction. So let's just dive in and let's talk some more about about audio description. So let me ask you this, start with a sort of a big general question. So what are what are some types of things that you're noticing changing in the realm of audio description? We're seeing a big uptick in things like inclusion and equity and diversity, and all of that. Has that sort of influenced some some changes when it comes to audio description?

C Colleen Connor 05:32
Yes, I think a lot. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion thing gets thrown around a lot and I think some people have good intentions. I think, as I mentioned last time, other people are trying to check a box. And this same desire to say, oh, look, we are being diverse, we want equality for everybody, and we want to be inclusive of everyone. Then go back, you know, a month later and say, have you done anything or did you just have a speaker come in, and be like, hey, disabilities! Or, hey, I'm a person of color, or, Hey, you know, it, it is something that both in the industry in the arts as well as, you know, the more government side of things, it kind of bleeds into everywhere, especially with the pandemic, and, you know, Black Lives Matter, and the different movements. Indigenous people trying to make themselves more known, and, hey, let's find community. People, especially White people, trying to recognize their privilege, or not knowing how to address anything whatsoever. I think that the desire, again, is good intentions,

like people want diversity, and they want cultural competency, and they want inclusion in all of art. And that includes audio description, and includes storytelling of many different cultures. But then how do we do that? And I think it comes back to another thing that I think I touched on last time, which is that people do not like being uncomfortable. And a lot of a lot of times, we are taught, especially as a female presenting white person, I was taught, you know, avoid conflict at all costs, keep your mouth shut. And so the idea of wanting to be agreeable to everything is sort of this. It sort of erased everybody. And now everyone who is erased, wants to be like, hey, we don't want that. Especially from the blindness community with audio description for a long time, even up through, you know, several years ago. And I bet it still goes on in various places. It's something called colorblind casting. And you were taught as a director or again, I went to musical theater, school and theater school. So you're taught, you know, hey, colorblind casting means that anyone of any race can play any role, and we're not, we're not going to focus on that at all. That left the audio describers in a place where in the trainings that they would receive the rule in style guides for film, or television for live theater for any performance. It's written in documents do not mention race, or any racially defining features, hair texture, color, any of that unless it is relevant to the plot. And what happened was people of other races, as we all started to be able to, again, communicate more with the internet and audio descriptions started to be more available and thus more people were aware of it - people were going, yeah, but if you don't describe it, it's not there. So, what you've done is instead of respecting everyone, you've erased everybody. And so when you want to bring diversity, equity and inclusion into audio description, you have to be willing to admit, when, hey, I'm not the right person for this narration. This is, you know, something that I think you should get a black Trans person to voice this, because the whole series is about black Trans lifestyle and everything. Hey, this is all about a Latina, in New York, and that experience, you should get a Latina, you know, Americans who voice the description. And so a lot of it comes down to, you know, the person that you end up hearing. And that's not always the writer or anything else. Sometimes, you know, often, the narrator is the only, you know, person you're hearing. And that's not really the describer in the states most of the time. You know, that's why defining the roles differently becomes important. More likely, in the theater you're describing is the person who's just, you know, saying what they see. So they're watching the show with you and describing it. And again, if you, you know, want to go experience art, and you want to see art, and you are there in the audience, or at a museum, or in a live situation, it's the same as film and television - you want to go to experience something. Everyone deserves to see themselves in art, everyone deserves to see themselves in a story. And to not know that certain actors or actresses or you know, certain people are of color, or heavy people as well, or, you know, someone, you know, is actually a wheelchair user on stage. Like, if you just don't say any of that, to try and be polite, we don't know that it's there, and we don't know we're being represented, and that we can't relate to something even more. And so professionally, it comes down to not only the listeners saying, you know, patrons of audio description, especially the blind community, saying, hey, you know, we want to know what people look like, we want to know if they look like us, we want to know race and hair texture and color and what what's going on. We want to know those things. And the argument of the higher ups for a long time has been, but it's not relevant to the plot. And if you speak to anyone, of any marginalized community, especially race will say it's always relevant.

L

Lis Malone 13:27

Colleen I just want to interject, if you don't mind, because I just want to go a little further what you're saying. So a production or storyline is focusing around let's say, a character with a disability. So does that mean that you only feel that a disabled voice actor is capable of doing

the voice narration?

C Colleen Connor 13:48

No, I don't think that's true. I think that it is an opportunity to have the writer be disabled, or to at least have a paid someone that you pay as a consultant on this script.

L Lis Malone 14:10

Because you mentioned that somebody that I think you said, if someone was, you know, African American and trans, possibly as a character or or that you feel that that's who would should narrate. So where do we draw the line of who we feel that somebody who, as a narrator identifies with the storyline and is like, where do we say who is acceptable and who isn't? And who really is the arbiter of making some of those calling those balls and strikes about who should be really the one who's voicing the story?

C Colleen Connor 14:46

I mean, ultimately, you want feedback from your audience. And you want to voice narration that is going to blend into the story that is being told, and not necessarily blend in so much that you're confused with their voices. The best compliment you can get as a narrator is someone forgetting that you're there at all, because you're just part of it. I think because you have people who have training in audio description, they know what it is, other people are just given a job, and they just read the script, and they don't really know what it's for. A lot of people were, who are still working, were trained originally to do the neutral read, audio description should always be a neutral, you know, sort of not really have a lot of inflection and sort of be this neutral sort of voice. But people are now giving feedback, that, hey, we would really like the voice to have more subtlety in it. We want the voice to match what's going on, and to not necessarily act it. But you know, give it a little into the scene. And, you know, if if something is romantic, you know, you describe it a little softer and gentler than you would an action scene where you're going to put more tension in your voice and kind of hit your consonants harder. And so I think, where the debates happen at all, is certainly the higher profile projects, because they get noticed more. So, for instance, you know, when Marvel released Black Panther, the audio description was voiced by a white British man. Now, people's feedback on that was passionate. And it was, this is an African black superhero. Do you know how many people want to hear that these characters are black? Like you can hear it in the story, but like, you're not describing that. And then to hear sort of this, you know, historically colonial sort of feel. People really thought, wow, that would have been a great opportunity to have the script consulted on by someone who's a Marvel fan, who was Black. somebody who, you know, was African American, or African, or, you know, at least consult on that. And then, you know, hopefully, maybe voice it as well, so that it blends in better with the the overall performance. Yeah, I think what people are trying to do now is recognize that, as you said, recognize that line. Recognize, you know, that there isn't a lot of people to choose from right now. Because there isn't a lot of people who have training. There are not a lot of people in various communities who've had any kind of accessibility offerings. Some don't even know what something like audio description is because the resources aren't there. And so, that's where that willingness to be uncomfortable comes in of saying, hey, I think overall, there should be more like, Indigenous people in audio

description. We would like to, you know, sponsor training or we would like to, you know, and actually bring something to community and stay involved, or bring something to accompany and stay involved or pass the baton in a way where you know, something is being done. Because, again, it comes back to the DEI thing. A lot of people now hear the diversity, equity and inclusion and they cringe, because they think it is that "check the box" mentality, You're just saying this to be you know, look, we're so diverse look, we have a rainbow. And we've hired one person of color. Whereas, you know, having these conversations on how do we change within a huge process that's already changing all the time. That's the other thing with audio description and technology is that even within the rules and regulations and the talent that's already doing this, much less than new talent that's coming in and trying to be recognized, much less the blind community who wants to be professionals, with an audio description, and not just the audience. So all of these things are kind of meeting. And I think it, it causes some of those most uncomfortable conversations, and I find that some of the time, even without meaning to. I believe people are just so not used to being uncomfortable, that they're not sure what is happening, or what's the best thing to say, or, you know, put your foot in your mouth and then apologize. Like, just do your best kind of thing.

R

Rob Mineault 21:24

So, well, you know, what I find really interesting about about audio description, much more than something like close closed captioning is that audio description is very much a part of the content, it becomes a real central part of whatever the show is. That narrator is as much of a character in that show, as the all of the actors and stuff. And it's so it's very, it can be very different than something like closed captioning, which is just very straightforward. It's just, you know, you're just transcribing what's being said. So I think that these discussions are really important. And I think that there's kind of two prongs to this, right? There is a whole representation thing, which, you know, obviously is important. But I think at the end of the day, hopefully, what a lot of organizations will come down on is just what's best for the content. When the narrator is a character in the content, and you have clearly a white British guy, and he's narrating Black Panther- that's a big disconnect to anybody who's listening to it, representation stuff aside. Yeah, just in terms of the quality of that content, there's going to be a disconnect to the viewer. And so hopefully, that's sort of where things will go. And I think that that even plays into the whole idea of the whole AI discussion of synthetic speech versus human speech. There, it's always going to be better to have a human doing it, because it's just, it's just becomes better, more engaging content.

C

Colleen Connor 23:12

Yeah. And I think that's what people are really afraid of, too. The processes people are trying to have AI write audio description. People are really terrified of that, like right now. And I wouldn't be. It's not super right there yet. Yeah, narration is one of those things where ultimately companies think I'm saving money. So how can I cut costs, do it faster, and it's like, oh, we'll have an automated voice. Or we'll have someone's voice that they've sold to a company will have that actor's voice do this, you know, this whole film. That voice cannot be taught the subtlety. It can't be taught the nuance of emotion. And the, you know, type of accent or the feel of, you know. Again, you don't want a voice that's so dissonant from the content. Audio description, your primary job is to convey the artists intent. And, you know, do it well. And if if any of those pieces are missing even the best Narrator can't save a script sometimes. The

voice actor, you can't stand it and you turn it off. That's what I will say here. And people think, Oh, well, it's okay. Because we got it done. You have the content. And as you know, professionals, as people who want to train others in this art, and you want to have a standard, you want to raise that standard. We shouldn't have to compromise on quality for quantity. We should not have to, because sighted people don't have to.

R

Rob Mineault 26:08

That's probably a big disconnect with, we'll just call them the Suits. I think everybody who's in charge of anything like that, like they need to actually try to consume the content the way that their customers are going to. Have any of these guys ever sat down and tried to watch something that has bad audio description? Probably not. Yet, you know, they're the ones making the decisions. So, you know, that's, I can totally see that being a really frustrating pain point, especially when you have to argue cost. And when you have to say that, yeah, this is going to cost more, but it's going to be better. You know, I'm sure that that just gets gives you blank stares as a result of that.

C

Colleen Connor 26:53

And honestly, it's one of those things where it's not that much more expensive. It's honestly not. It's not that much more time. It's not that much. But it's any number - people want to talk in numbers, they want to talk in delivery, they want to talk in, you know, that's how they want to talk. And so how do you meet them there? Or how do you get someone to be impacted differently? Oh, all the sudden, this producer's Mom is going blind. And so wait a minute, now this person's really interested because you know, people until they're affected by something, we really are just trying to get in the right meeting room with the right people. I will say when the strikes happened when the Writers Guild was on Strike, and the actors were on Strike, especially being in LA, you know, the picket lines are there that people are, you know, not working. And audio description writing was on the table for the first couple of weeks of of debate. So it got in there. It got it got out almost immediately in edits, but it's getting in there.

R

Rob Mineault 28:24

Well, well, let me ask you this. Let me flip the question around. Do you see a place for AI in here somewhere? Is there somewhere where it could actually be used in the right way to augment the process?

C

Colleen Connor 28:41

Oh, I think AI would be extremely useful in a couple scenarios. One would be as far as editing, to save someone a lot of time. AI figuring out where audio description can go and just placing the time codes for you. Analyzing something enough where it will basically be like, an audio description could go here, here, here, here, here. And again, you're gonna have to double check that, but it can be very helpful to help you with a script to put in your time cues. The time codes, you know, one hour and 32 minutes and one second. Often when I'm writing with a sighted person and we're collaborating on a script or I'm editing someone's script I just have

the script and the audio of the piece. So whether it's a commercial or a TV show or it's a painting, I only have the alt text that someone has given me or the script. And I can't hear it so much of audio description can often be the timing. And so, if I then used TTS for a blind person to literally, you know, boop, boop, copy paste in a voice just to read the script at the appropriate times, it would be very helpful in editing someone's script, doing quality control, if you didn't have the actual narration, which is often the case. So I think that, you know, when people are working on the script, depending on what stage of the process you're in, AI could be very helpful in accessibility, I think. Certainly, I think in education. Would I rather have had an AI voice with audio description of all of the films that I watched in high school? Yeah, that would have been okay. I am okay with that being the not theatrical performance. But when I go to the movie theater, I want a human. And I think, again, there is places where AI can be of assistance, even in learning your lines. Basically, some people you know, you're listening to your screen reader, and then you repeat the line yourself, and you record it. So I think in certain workflows, it could be advantageous for people's jobs. I think it's when it comes into the creative space, that people get scared and people start to say, hey, audio descriptions as objective as possible, but nothing is truly objective. It's going to be subjective. Even AI.

R

Rob Mineault 32:14

Okay, well, listen. Let's talk this will be fun. Lis and Ryan will love this. They've been waiting a week for this. So I want to talk to you a little bit about what some people call it quote, sensitive material. I want to talk a little bit about like sex and sexuality in audio description. I mean, are there sort of guidelines for that? How do you how do you sort of approach that in the training?

C

Colleen Connor 33:43

Yes I do for sure. So, I am a huge proponent, much like culturally competent description. Again, your job is to serve the art. Your job is to serve what people are watching. Even if that is a really, really corny scene where a pizza guy comes to deliver a pizza and it's just a porno. Someone is going to watch this and love it and want to see it. And you, I always tell people I train, treat every project the same. Every project is different. Treat it with the same amount of, you know, love and care and, and, you know, no matter what the content is, a lot of times similar to erasing, you know, representation. Other things that have been erased definitely. Is sexuality, sex, explicit material, anything that's overly violent. Just the sheltering that has gone on for people with disabilities in general, I think it carried over into audio description big time. I always will say, let the again let the material guide you. You want to stay within, you know, the, the material. If it's Puppetry of the Penis, then have fun coming up with as many words as possible to describe penis and scrotum and shapes. And then, you know, is it 50 Shades of Grey? Where the point of it? Was to be sexy? Is it Deadpool? Where it's sexy but it's fun? Is it funny? Is it anatomical, for a class? That's all described differently. If we're already in a rated R movie, we're old enough to be seeing the rated R listening to the rated art material.

R

Rob Mineault 36:07

I was thinking about ratings when I was kind of putting together the question, because that seems to me, that's got to be a factor as well. And almost harder because if you think about it, in say, PG movies when the sex is depicted, it can be very, like subtle. Like it's very subtext,

right? It's not explicit. But in a way, then you have to sort of describe that in a way that's still PG but you can still you're still explaining what's going on. So for example, is you know, watching a TV show or whatever the other day and, you know this couple is in in like a truck or something, and you know, they're in conversation and then you see her head just kind of disappears off screen. So it's a very subtle thing. Adults, obviously no know what's going on. But it's still safe for kids or whatever. Like, how would you navigate something like that in in the description.?

C Colleen Connor 37:18

So in that type of scenario, you just describe what you're seeing. So always go back to literally say what you see nothing else. And so it depends on how much time you have between lines. Are there particular sounds that need to be heard? Are there things that just what you said, when you said, you know, a couple faces forward in the truck, they're talking, they're chatting, her head disappears in his lap? He grins. Yeah, I mean, the context of the scene, again, we're gonna get it in the context of the scene. But it all needs to work together to be quality, in my opinion. And that, again, means if it's comedic, then those elements can be there. If it's, you know, use the vocabulary that is appropriate. If someone is being assaulted on NCIS, don't say he made love to her. Don't say, you know, they kiss. If that's not what's going on. You want to always let the art and the intention of the art guide you. And you don't want to take someone out of the space. And the other thing I will say is you should not censor anything. Meaning that in, in my judgment I try to go with is if I have to ask you what's going on, you're not doing it, right. So if everyone is supposed to be having a moment of like, oh, cool. and you're going, what happened? So what's happening because the audio description just says he thrusts and then you're just hearing the soundtrack and you're like, cool. He thrusts what, where? And I don't know. So, again, coming back to the logistics of how much time do you have, literally the space between dialogue and sounds? How much of the sound matters? And do you need it? Do you need to hear it? Do you need to let a song establish itself because it has lyrics or something like that. And then describing what you see, and keeping it within the piece. For instance, if the whole thing is, again, it's like a gangster movie. And everyone's like, you know, oh, you know, using foul language and stuff, and you say, we see his buttocks. That's really distracting, because it's like, that you said buttocks in a porn scenario. Don't say an anatomical term that's really going to pull people out of the point of it.

R Rob Mineault 40:56

So, context really is everything, it sounds like.

C Colleen Connor 40:59

It is. And timing is another, and vocabulary word choice. And as far as the narration, again, might be another person or if it's you that's a whole job. Depending on what type of explicit material it is, depending on if it's sexual, or if it's again, violent. A lot of human activity in general is who initiated, who pulls away first? What are we doing? Who's in the room? Who's left? Put people in space and what and how are they relating to each other? And, you know, if we have to ask some sort of fundamental question in there, I think someone has done a disservice, unless there was no time to describe anything.

L

Lis Malone 41:58

In just listening to all this. I, I wrote a screenplay a while back. And a lot of the notations that end up in a screenplay as well as even then the director's shooting script, will have a lot of these details in there of what's supposed to be happening. Does the audio description team on a project ever get access to some of those original pieces, because sometimes a lot of the homework is actually done for you, because a lot of the intentions are already written out that could maybe even aid in that. I'm just curious.

C

Colleen Connor 42:41

Wouldn't that be lovely? They don't, and it sucks. Oftentimes, you're lucky if you get a character list. It sucks because it's not part of production. Audio description is still this post production thing that gets added at the end, like captions. And so again, trying to train people teach people make directors and, and other people aware of, hey, audio description is a thing, then the director can be thinking about it the whole time. And again you don't necessarily need the audio describer to be there in the first edits of everything in the first B roll of this or whatever. But, you know, it would be great to have more collaboration between departments that are involved with writing or directing. It's a lot of times why sometimes the screenwriter will be asked to write the audio description because they don't have anyone else to do it. And they need it tomorrow. And so get the screenwriter to do it.

L

Lis Malone 44:07

Yeah, because there are so many there are so many components that are already written into a screenplay. Those are some of those little subtleties where you know, you say, like "he gently runs his hand across his cheek to wipe away a small tear", you know, I mean, things like that are already in many cases already written out and it has that emotion and the intention, because it's meant to be conveyed to the director who then you know, takes this and creates the scene from it. So it's just a shame that because i It seems like so many of the pieces are there to make it so much easier for this process.

C

Colleen Connor 44:48

To be a part of having audio description be part of production would be a huge benefit, both financially and for the process itself, just the workflow. Like you're saying, you know, being in the, at least the final production meetings and before the final cut of the film, where, again, you don't want to start explaining the emotions, you don't necessarily want to read the stage directions entirely. But could you pull words from there or pull the intention from there. Oh, that red dress is a theme this whole time. So let me pull out and make sure we mentioned it just offhandedly, and a couple scenes, the red dress so that at the end, it's the red dress the whole time. You know, that kind of stuff is a huge project for the audio describer, who's only viewing it, or you know, the writer who's only looking at it on their computer screen. And until they get to Episode Six, they don't get the thing about the red dress. And so there hasn't been the

reference the whole time, because they didn't get to talk to the person who wrote it, or the Director. And in fact, the Director doesn't even know that their thing has audio description, and they've never heard it.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:19

Well, I was just gonna say that a lot of times, still, years after something hasn't made it to the mainstream audio descriptions being added to it. So it's not a part of the process yet.

R

Rob Mineault 46:31

And you know, just think of how much you know how much more engaging it would be if it was. Because if you think about any given scene, you got the Screenwriter who's written the scene, and then you have the Director, the who's in charge of the cinematographer, and eventually the editor, and they're all crafting the scene in order to evoke something. So you could have literally a scene where it's two characters talking to each other, but the way that it's shot, and it's edited, and it's lit, it's meant to sort of instill like, maybe unease or tension or something, and you're only really going to pick up on that, it's very visual. So having having your audio describers sort of in the middle of that process so they know that, okay, this scene is supposed to be tense, it's supposed to be unsettling. So we're going to work in the way that we're that we build the audio description to also instill that sense.

C

Colleen Connor 47:35

And that's part of what I teach people, especially as you get continuing ed like higher up, you know, more and more stuff under your belt is almost the point where you get to film studies and theater studies. Because it's like, you have to be a continuity editor, and a dramaturg, and a translator, and a subtitle person, and the writer, and the audio description, awareness person, and the disability advocate. And I've just given you seven jobs. Do you have it, I need it in four days. And that's, that's all of these little things are a process in which there needs to be change. But there's a few of us who are starting to try and do this. And I think this is what the, again, like with the certification, there's some moves trying to be made of how do we change this? How do we fundamentally flip this thing into different spaces? And it's not easy.

L

Lis Malone 47:37

But I'm just thinking about something that we touched upon, in the first part of this conversation, especially when we were talking about film, and Colleen I want to make sure I'm not putting words in your mouth. But if I recall correctly, you had said something to the effect of when we were just tossing around ideas that, you know, maybe if films had to have audio description in order for them to be qualified for awards and things of that nature. So I'm sort of thinking couldn't maybe be a lower step on the rung to reach is to see if there could be some lobbying done to have audio description actually become like a Technical Awards category, as opposed to just saying, like, you have to have this if you want to be considered? Because it's sort of like that balancing the carrot and the stick, where if you're giving them something where this is something where they can demonstrate some technical excellence, and it's

another award that they can qualify for. And studios love awards, and people love patting themselves on the back in the industry, I mean, is that ever been something that has been thought of or worked on? Or even in the works that maybe that could be one of the inroads?

C

Colleen Connor 50:12

Yeah. So the one of the things that was a huge initiative of Roy Samuelson's was with the voice actors awards, audio description and narration is now a category. And in the Emmys to be considered for voting in the Emmys, you now have to have audio description, so that people who are on the blindness spectrum can be members of the Emmy committee and vote. And so it's kind of this back backdoor process of saying, in order to be considered, you need to have audio description. But it now has an award, the award side of it as well. So I think, you know, going with the the Emmys and and the Oscars, you know, now that they are described live, and they have description, and almost all of the main films have description, it will be raising awareness of that and saying, what you're saying, which is, you know, hey, let's give awards for this thing. Because I think right now, it still has that flavor of accessibility. This is for disabled people, this is for blind people. Whereas it's like, this is a whole other art. And if someone or a team of people who's really good gets a hold of this thing, then it can be something that's almost like an audio book of a movie, or a TV show. And there are plenty of people who discover audio description, and are like, Oh, this is cool. And it's like, yeah, like, yeah, so kind of getting all of those people on board also to say like, what you were saying, which is, this is a technical category in and of itself. Yeah, numbers matter in this.

R

Rob Mineault 52:50

Yeah, no, I think I think that's a brilliant idea. I mean, you get the creatives involved, you know, as opposed to the suits. You know, that you're because you're absolutely right, this adds so much more to the content, it's a whole other layer, that you can actually be very creative and really play around with it.

C

Colleen Connor 53:10

Which is amazing. And under appreciated. That and when someone's telling you no, it's done like this. It's science and art, it's audio description. You could have four audio description tracks for the same film, and how cool would that be? The cinematography track, where the AD is just telling you about the camera and the lighting, the whole time. The costuming and character track where you're just hearing about the appearance of the set and the costumes and the hair. Then you have the main like character plot driven one, and you have there could be so many audio description could be so creative. And so, you know, its own major in college. I am trying to create something that is like, what can we take this to universities where people who are in the arts, in the the film and the writing and any of that and say you need to take an Accessible Media class, because this is not just check a box. And it's not just captions. The other thing is captioning audio description. Is that a whole thing? Like it's all there's so many things you could do with it and people are trying to automate the process or just see it as a, again, I think it comes down to that wheelchair ramp effect. You know, that people say like, oh, well, we put in wheelchair ramps for people in wheelchairs because disability, and then people with strollers and suitcases and grocery carts were like, oh, this is great. It's the same you know? You put a

ramp to get into the theater or ramp to get into the museum. We're blind and we don't have a ramp. You've built us no ramp. And sometimes the ramps we do have are shoddy at best. So, you know, again, there are people who are naturally good at it, there are people who take to things, but there's not a consistent training. And, you know, that's where, I'm trying to make a difference, because that is where I saw the most need. And where I felt like I needed to have the most focus.

R

Rob Mineault 55:38

I think that you go after the creatives, you go you go into film schools, it's just like, you know, we talked about accessibility all the time in terms of apps and software and programs. We're always like, yeah, this is you gotta you gotta go to the schools, go to the up and coming engineers or coders and teach them the value of accessibility and how to build it into your product at the beginning. Same thing here, man, you gotta go after those creatives, because I really think I really do think that if you sell it to, to some of the up and coming creatives and pitch it in a sense that yeah, this is this is a whole other level of, of, of creativity and content, and you can breathe extra life into your movie. I don't know, I think that all it will take is is somebody to run with it and to do something really creative and engaging and meaningful for everybody with it and everybody else is going to jump on board.

C

Colleen Connor 56:35

And this this past year, I worked on the audio description for the American, the AFP, the American Federation for the Blind is did a Helen Keller documentary, but it got transformed into basically sort of a framework of Helen Keller documentary. That was interviews with a ton of blind professionals all over the world. And kind of where we are now when how far we've come and what her legacy sort of, and how far we still need to go. And it is the first film that we know of that has Open Audio Description. So I wrote the script with Roy Samuelson. And then Sanatana Howery voiced it. And Serena Gilbert, did the QC. There was a lot of blind individuals involved and wanting this to be how do we bridge, you know, the director that inherited the film after the first director. I mean, the whole project was just this labor of love of craziness. But it was trying to figure out how do we integrate audio description as a department in this from the beginning. And there was a lot of bumps in the road. But I think we we learned a lot throughout the process. And I know I feel the director and he had had a great final product of saying, hey, this. This has an impact. Like he mentioned that now seeing it at premieres and different film festivals and stuff. He's like, listening to the audience react to it, especially blind people is really amazing. And to have sighted people be like, what is this thing? And I guess it's it's been well received, and it's more laughs than he thought it would and stuff that. When you're immersed in a project for a long time, is this even going to work? Is this crazy? So having a documentary, not to say it's like an easy audio description, but it's less you know, of a fantasy world or a fictional something. And it's, you know, straightforward description, but trying to include it in a way that it's in there. It's open audio description, everybody's going to hear it and kind of bridging a gap for sighted people. And it was an interesting endeavor. So I'm, I'm hopeful that these these things will continue. But I it's slow going. I think that's the most frustrating part is right how to how do all of us be in 10 places at the same time? How do we do that?

R Rob Mineault 59:58
Here's what we do. We lend to lend our hands to the industry and maybe we have the AT Banter audio description awards. We'll have a gala have an online gala right here.

R Ryan Fleury 1:00:12
We're gonna compete with the ADP Audio Description Project.

L Lis Malone 1:00:17
And can we pick the best mature movies?

R Ryan Fleury 1:00:27
I think that's all we do is we critically watch the Pornhub audio description.

C Colleen Connor 1:00:34
I will say that was the biggest boost in audio description awareness in a very long time, was Pornhub. On June 17 2018, they announced that it was going to describe stuff and it was on every late night show as a joke. And it also was my birthday. So I don't know if that says something about my life. Sex sells, you know?

R Rob Mineault 1:01:08
This, this is why we have high bandwidth. This is the only reason the only reason that you know the IP companies invested a lot in fiber optics and high speed is is for the porn industry. So it has driven technology forward for many, many years. So there you go, why not?

L Lis Malone 1:01:26
I think I think we should each write or pick a script for someone else on the show to have to read.

R Rob Mineault 1:01:35
Oh man the bits are writing themselves.

L Lis Malone 1:01:38
Or pick a scene that you know we have to assign to another show host to describe.

R Ryan Fleury 1:01:45
Well, there's our anniversary show.

C Colleen Connor 1:01:49
A bonus content for the Patreon.

L Lis Malone 1:02:00
We'll have Colleen be the judge.

R Rob Mineault 1:02:02
Yeah, I love it.

L Lis Malone 1:02:03
Oh, good lord, Colleen you can judge us on our on our description writing and are reading. Oh, like, Oh my God, why did I come back on this topic?

R Rob Mineault 1:02:14
Yeah, we'll pick we'll pick famous movies.

L Lis Malone 1:02:16
Good, like very, very mainstream, but filthy.

R Rob Mineault 1:02:28
This is her. This is what we have to deal with.

L Lis Malone 1:02:30
I know there there are some really good classics, you know, like, I've seen and fatal attraction when you know, Glenn Close says, uh, you know, think dirty dishes under her buttocks. She's thrashing around Michael Douglas. Classic.

C Colleen Connor 1:02:50

I did not know that one.

L Lis Malone 1:02:53

Oh, yeah. Yeah, um, see I've ruined it. I should have never use that one as an example but yeah, well there are so there's a lot of other really, oldies, but goodies that we can choose from

R Rob Mineault 1:03:05

Yeah, no, for sure. All right, let's, let's, let's release Colleen from this. Thank you, once again, for coming. Obviously, we're gonna have you back sooner than later because believe us, these stupid ideas that you think are just stupid ideas, we'll probably do them. So yeah, we do we actually do them.

C Colleen Connor 1:03:28

I love it. That's is if you have the time, Do all the things. That's what I say.

R Rob Mineault 1:03:35

All right, well listen. We'll have you back to help out. In the meantime, if people are interested in finding out more about you finding more about the Audio Description, Training Retreats, where the heck can they go?

C Colleen Connor 1:03:50

You can go to www.blindinspirationcast.com If you're interested in my podcast, that also links to my YouTube series. I update that much less than I would like to. That's just true. But my social media for Blind Inspiration Cast is [blind_I_see](https://www.instagram.com/blind_I_see). For ad training retreats, pretty much that's that's your way in so it's www.adtrainingretreats.com. You can email info@adtrainingretreats.com But pretty much everything's listed there for LinkedIn and for Twitter / X.

R Ryan Fleury 1:04:42

And you have classes coming up in April too.

C Colleen Connor 1:04:46

Yes, yeah. I have classes coming up in April and June. April sold out. June is almost sold out for participants and observers. But I think for June there might still be some observer spots. I have

more announcing to do, we'll see if I we put some proposals forth for the LEAD conference in Seattle this year. See if there's anything there and trying to do some stuff, you know, trying to get the good word out there.

R Ryan Fleury 1:05:27
Bye

C Colleen Connor 1:05:31
Goodbye friends

R Ryan Fleury 1:05:35
She's gone.

R Rob Mineault 1:05:36
No, that was that was that was epic. It was an epic discussion on audio description. I know we talked about a lot about audio description, especially in the past year but it's really fascinating to get that real insight deep dive into some of this stuff. I'm curious about a lot of this stuff and how it all really works. And so and I think Lis I have to say your idea was brilliant because they you've creatives you say one thing about them they do love their awards.

L Lis Malone 1:06:08
They love their awards.

R Rob Mineault 1:06:11
I mean yeah, I think that you hang that over their head to be like wait, I can get another award? Let's do this.

L Lis Malone 1:06:17
Those technical categories rack up because they love saying you know 14 nominations you know and then they named like the you know, couple biggies but then you're like okay, wait, you're 14 categories of what the heck is in 14 categories. And then you're like oh, yeah, like best key grip.

R Ryan Fleury 1:06:36

Best Boy grip, best key grip, it's like oh come on to 14 year old kid running cable across the film set or whatever it is.

L

Lis Malone 1:06:46

I mean don't don't they they probably they is never an award for like Best Makeup. I mean you know there's everything so you know, costumes, makeup, lighting, music, Best Sound Effects, best whatever. Probably best subliminal messages. Who knows? I It should have like most subtle product placement.

R

Rob Mineault 1:07:19

Yeah, that's right. That's right. Although I do have to say this kind of this kind of snuck in and I want to circle back to it, but who knew that Lis wrote a screenplay?

R

Ryan Fleury 1:07:38

I did. She may have told us some way back.

R

Rob Mineault 1:07:40

I don't think I knew that. Can we hear it? Better yet, here's what we do.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:07:47

We act it out?

R

Rob Mineault 1:07:48

We act it out. We turn it into a radio play.

L

Lis Malone 1:07:52

I'm working on converting it to a novel. So then you'll have to buy the book

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:01

Whatever.

L

Lis Malone 1:08:04

Oh my god, god forbid anybody support any of my endeavors outside of this show?

R

Ryan Fleury 1:08:09

I could narrate the audiobook.

L

Lis Malone 1:08:12

Ryan you can definitely do some soundtrack music for sure. I have to audition with your fancy shotgun microphone for the narration/

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:24

How about we can just do a scene from it? We need stuff, we need me material for the anniversary show.

L

Lis Malone 1:08:33

Oh great. Yeah just butcher my heart and soul that I put on paper. Yeah that's great idea.

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:41

All right, well whatever by write us something.

R

Ryan Fleury 1:08:46

There you go, write a script for AT Banter. 50 Shades of Idiots And the last three years you've spent with us.

R

Rob Mineault 1:08:52

Shall we get out of here?

L

Lis Malone 1:08:59

We better wrap it up Ryan's getting bored

R

Ryan Fleury 1:09:01

Thta'll about do it for us this week.

R Rob Mineault 1:09:04
Oh no it's not it's not gonna do it for us because we have to go - hey Lis

L Lis Malone 1:09:18
Yes, Rob they can find us at www.atbanter.com.

R Ryan Fleury 1:09:21
That's what keeps the show unique and original. You just never know what's going to come up.

L Lis Malone 1:09:26
Never.

R Rob Mineault 1:09:28
It's like a box of chocolates. And whether they can also email us if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com Everybody email to demand to hear our radio version of Lis's screenplay. Okay where else?

R Ryan Fleury 1:10:06
They can find us on Facebook, X, Mastodon and soon at blind inspiration Porncast .com

R Rob Mineault 1:10:23
Sex sells so and need to make some money. Yeah, I'm not above it.

R Ryan Fleury 1:11:04
Say sexy Google.

R Rob Mineault 1:11:07
Sexy Google. See that's well worth your \$19.99 per month. Ah, all right. Well, that is going to do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course for to Colleen for joining us once again. And we will see everybody next week.

 Ryan Fleury 1:12:24
Bye.

 Steve Barclay 1:12:27

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