CHAPTER 1.

PURPOSEFUL ACCESS: REINVENTING SUPERSYSTEMS THROUGH RHETORICAL ACTION

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Method begins in embodiment.

> – Byron Hawk, *A Counter-History of Composition*

She has thought about what could have been the intellectual history of any academic discipline if it had not insisted upon, or been forced into, the waste of time and life that rationalizations for and representations of dominance required—lethal discourses of exclusion blocking access . . . for both the excluder and the excluded

> – Toni Morrison, 2001

I [Matt] stand at the conference accessibility table, when a presenter approaches to ask about having a table placed in their presentation room on which they could place a laptop. Of all the details reviewed for accessibility, the room setup for presenters slipped through the cracks. The hotel's default room layout assumes presenters stand for the duration of their presentations, which privileges normative embodiment. After retrofitting the room to "accommodate" alternatives by lugging in a rather ill-fitting table a few minutes before the session, I turn my attention to "planning" for the panel, "Rooting for Radical Inclusion in Writing Programs and Writing Program Administration," presented by members of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) Disability and Accessibility (D&A) Committee. As a result of unexpected life events and funding gaps, four of the five session speakers were not able to physically attend the conference. I offer my assistance to Jessi Ulmer, the only panel participant present, and we carry out a hybrid, synchronous delivery in which two speakers participated via video, and I presented Bre's materials. Although not ideal, the group created a doable, alternative path that enables participation. Later

Saturday evening, I attend the conference outing at the American Visionary Art Museum. I'd been nervous about the outing since visiting the museum when preparing the conference access guide. During this visit, I quickly noticed lacking accessibility. Entering into the museum during that visit, I immediately encountered an ascending ramp. Beyond that ramp are most of the museum's exhibits, the elevators, and the accessible restrooms. On this Saturday evening, I walk around the different physical spaces CWPA has rented and it appears that everyone is having a good time. But I also know that some conference attendees may have chosen to not attend the outing because of how the access guide described the museum's access limitations.

The conference "experience" described above captures in/access-in-action and reveals the felt realities that in/access both imposes and makes possible for living bodies. In/access, configured with a slash that separates the preposition "in" and the noun "access," reveals inaccessibility—a lack of or barriers to access—and accessibility, the fullest capabilities of participation for all bodies. The liminal space between performs a necessary pause, an intrusion, that urges readers to recognize what Brenda Brueggemann et al. (2001) articulated, ableism and ability exist as fluid, ever-changing states of being. Ability performs as an unstable privilege located in time and place, according to situated embodiment (Brueggemann et al., 2001, p. 369). Together, the two words conjoin and create new meaning, suggesting a deliberate movement inward, into access, and a vital stance to reside within access rather than resist and push back against access. Through in/access, we name and resist barriers, but we also design, with intention, realities that carve space for disability.

The exclusion of disability, Jay Dolmage (2017) argued, results from privileging able-bodiedness and able-mindness, as well as the erasure of disability from language, physical spaces, and places (p. 6-7). Ableism, Dolmage defines, "has to be seen as a series of entrenched structures," such that "we have to understand that because of these pervasive structures, we live in a society that resists efforts to ameliorate or get rid of ableism" (2017, p. 53). Higher education exists within this system of exclusion and forwards such overt exclusion through explicit barriers and unconscious biases. Dolmage (2008) uses physical-spatial metaphors to show how the system of in/access affects and excludes, in particular, those with disabilities. The "steep steps," which keep certain bodies out, and "retrofits," which Dolmage describes as "adding ramps at the sides of buildings and making accommodations to the standard curriculum," continue to shape the experiences of disabled members of the university (2008, p. 15). Retrofits characterize added components or structures that serve "as a correction" after production or construction is complete (Dolmage, 2008, p. 20). Teachers, scholars, and conference organizers "react" to embodied differences instead of making spaces that include, through deliberate invention—or purposeful access—spaces, places, and

pedagogies for multiple bodies (Dolmage, 2008, p. 21). In/access in its various forms materializes the expected norms of higher education and is buttressed by interventions, such as "reasonable accommodations" and accommodation request processes, that are inadequate in their very design (Dolmage, 2017, pp. 79-80). Continuing inadequacies secure the supersystem of hyper-ableism, which in turn cycles across and makes pervasive the system of inaccessibility in higher education—and more specifically WPA work. Central to our work in this chapter is an urgency to re-imagine and enact access in higher education, in home institutions and programs, and in disciplinary spaces such as academic conferences.

Composition and writing programs across the nation suffer from the overarching system of inaccessibility, an offshoot of the supersystem of hyper-ableism. Stephanie Kerschbaum (2015) argued "disability is not often at the forefront of classroom planning or pedagogical practice," which reveals that disability is not an explicit priority of WPAs (p. 9). In her 2019 CWPA conference presentation, Ashanka Kumari concurs that most higher education academic spaces are "inherently inaccessible," which echoes Dolmage's 2008 summary of composition's history: "Composition is not always an accessible space" (p. 14). Composition's governing force—writing program administration—perpetuates and feeds the supersystem of hyper-ableism. Conference settings as well as many of our home writing programs (un)intentionally reproduce in/access and exclusionary practices. For example, presentation delivery tends to reinforce one mode, the linguistic, and speakers too often neglect to include captions when images or videos accompany written text and oral speech. Speakers often fail to provide alternative methods for accessing materials—even larger font handout requests symbolize an extra "burden" for presenters. Despite the best intentions, access as an afterthought and add-on never prioritizes the lives and participation of disabled peoples and others with multiple corporealities (Kuppers, 2014; McRuer, 2006, 2018). Consequently, access becomes realized through retrofits. Disabled people encounter roadblocks that prevent participation and presence (Dolmage, 2008, 2017). As the members of the CCCC Committee for Change demonstrated in this collection, such exclusion often intersects with race and "other areas of difference like ethnicity, class, and gender." Through a collection of counter-stories, the authors assemble a chorus of voices to speak against hegemonic practices, to resist systems and supersystems that block participation. Our particular story focuses on the possibilities for resisting such exclusion when serving in official positions and on official committees created to increase inclusion. Our story, then, captures our experiences working within hegemonic structures and voices what this work has accomplished, still must accomplish, and can't accomplish in its current form. In alignment with the CCCC Committee for Change, we call for a counter-story that subverts or inverts the supersystem of hyper-ableism.

In this chapter, two members of the CWPA Disability and Accessibility (D&A) committee argue for a revisionary, re-corporealization of in/access and call for purposeful access as an embodied positionality for CWPA and for its constituents in writing program administration. Framing this discussion, we question, what are the barriers to full-bodied access, and why does access continuously perform, rhetorically or in action, as a retrofit or afterthought? Why does access feel synonymous with traversing cracks in the road? We argue the responses to such questions reveal both the interconnected supersystems of higher education and inaccessibility that shape professional academic organizations and academic institutions as well as the language practices intricately tied to both disability and ableism.

We draw from six years of D&A committee research and continued occurrences of inaccessibility at academic conferences to theorize a radical rearrangement that foregrounds access as an integral part of the conference organization process—moving access from a latter delivery concern, most often discovered through missteps, to an early and recursive invention concern. Moving access earlier as a rhetorical invention process foregrounds equity as a critical component of project design. In this case, projects represent conferences, curricula, and program design. As much of academia moves from a culture of bureaucratic isolation to a more grassroots and agile organizational model that prioritizes universal design, we argue that accessibility must move from the outside of rhetoric to the inner-ions and particles of invention (Dolmage, 2008, 2017; Garrett, 2018; Price, 2011; Vidali, 2015; Yergeau, 2016). Such a shift is necessary because of the force the supersystem of hyper-ableism exerts on both academia and socio-material gatherings such as academic conferences. Short of purposeful action in the form of reinvention, accessibility will remain an afterthought, one that occurs in the form of response and not invention, such that accessible interventions will not have lasting effect on larger structures.

We would like to pause and account for the significant shifts that conferences have undergone since our 2019 experience due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Disruptions to the very systems people use to attend—to access—in-person conferences created necessary changes to conference infrastructures and modalities. Given great differences in the size, budget, staffing, purposes, and lead time for pandemic conferences, these professional meetings have likely existed on a continuum of in/accessibility, just as conferences did before the pandemic. We recognize that many conferences during this time privileged purposeful access, but such access was, at times, in the service of re-establishing "conferencing," not accounting for the supersystem of hyper-ableism. We also worry that access gains made by retrofitting conferences online and remotely will be lost going forward and that similar gains will not be applied to what are seen to be

"traditional" in-person conferences.[1] Our argument that access links invention and delivery, then, can operate as a useful heuristic for all conferences, as many people continue to discuss what the future of academic conferences will be.

The remobilization we propose places the first and last rhetorical canons of invention and delivery in a bi-directional relationship as a re-embodied supersystem that both disables access and critically re-examines the retrofits that pervade the networks and systems of writing program administration—and the supersystem of hyper-ableism. Thus far, a disconnect between discourse and action demonstrates that access functions as an abstract requirement—a polite gesture or, worse, what Dolmage (2017) calls "the ableist apologia"—rather than a foundational, concrete value and action (pp. 35-36). In pushing back against accessibility as retrofit, in conversation with Margaret Price (2009), we identify the academic conferences as a "kairotic professional space," and forward Ada Hubrig and Ruth Osorio's (2020) claim that "access can be world making" (Price, 2009, para. 5; Hubrig & Osorio, 2020, p. 95). We see such "world making" as functioning as a central tenet of this section in this edited collection, especially as demonstrated in the ongoing work to make a professional organization a more inclusive space described by members of the CCCC Committee for a Change (in this volume) and by those doing related work to changing the Writing Program Administrators listserv as to create a more supportive, accountable space (Ruiz et al., this volume).

In the 2019 CWPA conference narrative we shared to open the chapter, the conference organizers—and the hotel conference set-up staff who must abide by The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards—deemed proper conference staging as inclusive of those who stand and deliver. Such a limited, ableist view erases individuals who may have fatigue, injuries, and illnesses, and excludes those who move in wheelchairs. Stand and deliver as an embodied rhetorical device marks a deep physical entrenchment that secures the performativity of hyper-ableism by signifying, as Debra Hawhee (2004) argued, "fit," "agile" bodies as those able to fully participate (p. 97). In this chapter, we pay special attention to the academic conference and the CWPA summer conference because of the always-present relations among space, bodies, access, and discourse. Whether held on or off academic campuses, online or off, situated participation in a disciplinary conference, including one's ability to engage in knowledge production and circulation as well as the development of an organization's professional priorities, requires access to physical, digital, and social spaces that replicate the hyper-ableism of higher education and society at large.

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1   We do not intend to overgeneralize or speak about online conferences as non-existent or in/accessible prior to the pandemic. Our central focus is the intersections between hyper-ableism and the normate academic conference.

In conversation with Dolmage (2008; 2017), Hubrig and Osorio (2020), Robert McRuer (2006), Price (2009; 2011), and Remi Yergeau (2016), as well as others in disability studies, we identify hyper-ableism as a super-system, a discursive structure at the very center of how academic institutions, and by extension, academic conferences function. Hyper-ableism exerts bodies as super-able and physically "robust" (McRuer, 2006, p. 7). As long as accessibility unfolds through retrofits—and access remains stigmatized by normative embodiment and identity—hyper-ableism will maintain its status and performance as a supersystem. Our examination of retrofits, similar to John Tassoni's analysis, in this collection, of Dolmage's schema of the actor-network surrounding basic writing at Miami University, extends questions of how accessibility "persists, pushes, and perishes at a variety of . . . sites" (this volume). For writing program administration, only by "disabling" the CWPA academic conference (Vidali, 2015), can the full(er) accessibility pronounced as valued within writing program administration scholarship materialize within the physical-spatial-digital locations in which we gather.

Accessibility, the word, carries empty weight when actions result in inaccessibility and exclusion. Declaring a state of accessibility when material reality is in/access, as we will demonstrate, forces those needing accessibility to confirm for themselves a lack of that which is needed and to communicate this lack to those who have constructed a fiction as (their) reality. Said differently, it is an act of gaslighting. Access, most often through the supersystem of hyper-ableism and the system or network of language, defines itself and becomes known through interaction with in/access. Although ripe with capacious potentials, language tends to restrict discourse based on economy networks and contexts that reinforce language as a system of cultural production (McRuer, 2006, 2018). In her 1993 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Toni Morrison argued that it is the users of language who distort or "forego" the "nuanced" potential in language to promote inclusivity; therefore, only through revisionary and purposeful use will language return to its life-sustaining potential (Morrison, 2001, p. 418). In institutional contexts, policy and curricular design, and governing bodies, the systemic uses of language erect barriers between the material environment and action, which results in in/access experienced by living bodies.

Those in privileged or normative embodiments remain unaffected by in/access's disruption and harm—unless or until a body, as Kristin Lindgren (2008) urges, "demands acknowledgement" (p. 146). Within higher education, the acknowledgment of disabilities is bound up in legalities. As Dolmage (2017) reminds us, the granting of an accommodation makes disability visible; short of accommodations being granted, disabilities, from the institution's perspective, remain unknown and "invisible" (p. 9). The privilege of ignoring or remaining

unaware and complacent with one's own able-bodiedness, however temporary to echo Brueggemann et al. (2001), marks the exact ideology that oils the grind of hyper-ableism as a supersystem. Such evasiveness of in/access and dis/ability enables the supersystem of hyper-ableism to remain the dominant structure of academic spaces, particularly conferences, which epitomize scholastic exclusion in terms of budgetary expense, physical capabilities for attendance and participation, indications of hierarchies such as keynote speakers, and a number of additional time and space-based actions that hinder or promote participation and community-belonging. Until a body demands attention, bodies remain unobserved, hidden by the supersystem of hyper-ableism and made obsolete by the system of inaccessibility.

IN/ACCESS IN WRITING PROGRAMS
AND ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

In their 2016 keynote address, Yergeau appealed to the CWPA community, the three-hundred plus room of WPAs and writing specialists, to harness rhetorical prowess toward radical reinvention: we must respond to "the crises" that perpetuate hyper-ableism by both naming and responding to the "structures that are . . . woefully problemed" (p. 155). Yergeau urges the organization to re-build "a culture of access," a call that the CWPA D&A committee and the executive board (EB) strives, continually anew, to prioritize, although not without fault and shortcomings. The supersystem of hyper-ableism, an ideology within the very framework, or "design," of how writing studies functions, remains insidiously—and always—at work, Yergeau attests (2016, p. 155). As Petra Kuppers (2014) explained, "[D]isability culture is not a thing, but a process. . . . disability cultural environments have to safeguard against perpetuating or erecting other exclusions (based on racial stereotypes, class, gender, economic access, internalized ableism, etc.)" (p. 4), a charge that mirrors the "intersections of difference" highlighted by Olivas and co-authors in this collection. In conversation together, Yergeau's (2016) call for a culture of access, Kuppers' (2014) warning about the complications of building a culture of disability, and CCCC Committee for Change (this volume) illuminate the supersystems and systems that work in unison to create exclusion and power struggles—such constraints as budgets, top-down privilege and ableism, or "internalized ableism" (Kuppers, 2014, p. 4). The places and spaces, and infrastructure, to name a few, remove responsibility from humans—those with the power to make and enforce decisions—by replacing agency in the systems themselves.

    As in the example at the start of the chapter, where a presentation was able to continue despite speakers' unanticipated absence, at the same time that the

spaces for presenters in other rooms were in/accessible, CWPA demonstrated accessibility and in/accessibility-in-action. In/access here relates to fuller options for participation. Virtual attendance and participation in academic conferences is an expanding practice at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) as well. Individuals unable to attend the physical convention participate through social media such as Twitter, with hashtag following and even a robust and intentional review thread, and through an online archive of posted presentation materials initiated by the Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition (CDICC). Yet, more must be done to foreground accessibility-in-action as a micro-practice of rhetorical invention.

Yergeau's argument, that the immovable ideology of hyper-ability shapes the language of WPAs and imparts an agency only available to the fittest few, identifies a supersystem that necessitates cautious yet forceful restructuring. They lament, "Without inaccessibility, would we even know ourselves as a discipline?" (2016, p. 159). The D&A committee emerged in the summer of 2012, through a think-tank conversation at the closing of the summer CWPA workshop, a space that convenes newly appointed WPAs and is facilitated by advanced, experienced WPAs. The CWPA EB then charged the committee with developing more inclusive practices for the organization. The development of a particular committee, one focused explicitly on making the conference more inclusive, provides a discursive and structural priority that holds the power to re-shape the conference experience. However, for action to move from the realm of discourse to the experiential, felt-sense of conference attendees and to make the experience more accessible to disabled members—and all members—the impetus must extend beyond the system of language by materializing into renovations of space and place, eradications of budgetary constraints, and removal of inaccessible presentation practices, just to name a few surface issues.

While a rising subject discussed in WPA scholarship, as evidenced by publications in the WPA journal, access and disability have only recently taken root as cornerstones from which to proceed with program creation, pedagogical and conference design, and, as a counter-system to the supersystem of hyper-ableism. Scholastic conversation coincided with the 1990 passing of national legislature that aimed to bring disability rights to political attention (Lewiecki-Wilson & Brueggemann, 2008). James Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson (2001) explained that disability rights and issues became a prominent political topic with the passing of the 1990 ADA signed into action by President George Bush, which resulted in "a start of the reversal of legal exclusion" for disabled individuals (p. 4). One year prior to the ADA Act, in 1989, Susan McLeod, a WPA, and Kathy Jane Garretson, an ADA expert (1989), collaborated to develop and implement faculty training that included access as a core component in classroom

and pedagogical design. Twenty-six years later—and one year prior to the CWPA conference in which Yergeau delivered their keynote on inaccessibility—Amy Vidali (2015) published "Disabling Writing Program Administration," advocating for a programmatic methodology that disrupts the conventional supersystem(s) of writing program administration by foregrounding the voices and stories of disabled WPAs. Vidali's article received the Kenneth Bruffee Award, a prestigious acclaim that testifies to not only Vidali's research and writing esteem but also the communal reception of the subject as timely and of utmost importance. A close examination of WPA article titles from 1990–2012 reveal not one title with the terms "access," "disability," or "inclusion." Then, in the Fall 2013 issue, Fernando Sánchez (2013) published "Creating Accessible Spaces for ESL Students Online," the first article title to explicitly name "access" as a core WPA topic since McLeod and Garretson's 1989 publication. Vidali's (2015) article moves beyond arguing for disability's place in WPA scholastic conversation and positions disabling as a methodology for WPA work. The almost complete lack of WPA scholarship on disability and access in the discipline's own journal, across more than twenty years following the passing of the 1990 ADA legislation, further makes explicit the power of hyper-ableism and the larger system of inaccess that defines WPA work.

Then, in 2017, *WPA: Writing Program Administrators* journal released a special issue, "Ability and Accessibility," edited by Kathleen Hunzer. In this issue, Melissa Nicolas (2017) examined the failure of writing program policies to capture "the embodied, material realities of our students' lives" and, in doing so, challenged WPAs to develop policies that center difference and make space for difference (p. 11). In the same issue, Sushil Oswal and Lisa Melonçon (2017) highlighted the limitations of checklist implementation for centering inclusion in online writing instruction, while Kelly Shea (2017) reminded WPAs that effective design of inclusive classrooms benefits all students, not just those with recognized disabilities. In 2019, with the articulation of the annual CWPA conference theme, "More Seats at the Table: Radical Inclusion in Writing Programs," the conference membership united to scholastically examine access and make conscious, collective efforts to become more inclusive. Through 11 consecutive sessions, consisting of several presentations and round-table discussions on topics ranging from giving greater voice to contingent faculty within writing program leadership, to modifying campus writing support for shifting student populations, to enacting anti-racist writing assessment, to metacognitive reflecting on the conference space itself—as well as a plenary address by Holly Hassel and Joanne Baird Giordano—the 2019 conference interrogated numerous constraints to access in WPA work, and in doing so acknowledged as Yergeau (2016) insisted, the true lack of diversity and exclusion that infiltrates the organization and WPA practices more broadly.

Despite the most altruistic intentions of CWPA members, the supersystem of hyper-ableism engines forward, disrupting the system of access through the co-operating systems of language/discourse/policies/budgets, to echo Nicholas (2017) and others who point out the numerous constraints that impede access-in-action. To use the words of Cynthia Selfe (1999), WPAs need "*small potent gestures* [emphasis added]" (p. 412). We need to see articles on disability and access in more issues, as special topics and integrated and prioritized as daily experience that informs all areas of WPA work. Through the mangled arrangement that (dis)places access as a latter, delivery concern, in/access emerges through the presence of retrofits. Rather than beginning with access as part of project, program, curricular, and conference invention, too often, WPAs and other academics/scholars discover in/access once delivery occurs. The resulting, "oops," requires a significant rehaul of rhetorical action that engages delivery, audience, and disability as core pieces of invention, or design.

I put the finishing touches on the conference's accessibility guide. Though proud of my work, the final product feels more like an appendage to the conference and not central to the conference itself. While I've provided information that will allow all conference participants to experience greater access while at the conference, I can't help but feel that the document reflects a checklist, not a text that centers access as the organization's identity and mission.

Tara Wood et al. (2014) asked, "Now that disabled students and teachers are accepted as belonging in our classrooms, and we affirm that their presence is an asset rather than a deficiency, what should we be doing?" (p. 147). Similar questions of "what should we be doing?" have been asked by Yergeau (2016) and Vidali (2015) about writing program administration. These authors argue that greater attention be given to the roles played by disability and accessibility within writing program administration, specifically. Yergeau (2016) challenged CWPA to "consider, as many of our colleagues have claimed about whiteness and heteronormativity, whether . . . the act of administering or teaching can ever be anything but ableist" (p. 159). Vidali (2015) resisted the normative tradition within writing program administration by introducing "disabling" as an operative term to name a "process of bridging the insights of disabled people and perspectives in order to innovate, include, and transgress expected and exclusionary norms" (p. 33). Similarly, Yergeau submitted that "a culture of access" is not simply one of participation but also "of redesign" (2016, p. 155). Redesign carries connotations of building anew, revising, and reinventing. Such conceptions and actions apply to physical architecture as much as ideologies, pedagogies, and theories. Redesign means composing with a new, or different, system of language to disrupt the cycle of hyper-ableism.

Language functions as a system that informs the supersystem of hyper-ableism, and together, both reproduce a system of in/access. According to Morrison (2001), "both the excluded and the excluder" suffer the damages of "the lethal discourse of exclusion" (pp. 419-420). Uses of lethal language are fueled, Morrison said, by the motivation to "preserve privilege," and such discursive moves of exclusion result in the deliberate "blocking [of] access" (2001, p. 420). This systematic process often occurs without recognition or awareness. When access functions as an afterthought, and, consequently, as a retrofit, the word itself performs as "evacuated language," often the outcome of policing and official language use (Morrison, 2001, p. 419). In such use contexts, the word access loses its intention for inclusion and full participation, fulfilling, instead, the outcome of exclusion, and even violence. Speaking before the elite Nobel Prize in Literature audience, Morrison exclaimed, "Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence" (2001, p. 419). How do we revive language; how do we avoid violence and microaggressions that inflict harm and perpetuate lethal practices? Such microaggressions, though perhaps not micro at all but instead aggressions that fully perpetuate the ableist hyper system, include, for example, proclamations by instructors that a course is already accessible. Such statements disregard differences and dissuade students from seeking the specific accommodations they need. Morrison suggests, "the proud but calcified language of the academy" is "salvageable only by an effort of the will . . . it must be rejected, altered and exposed" (2001, pp. 418-19). As we move through different scholastic recommendations for how to heal and improve, we extrapolate actions that inform purposeful access as a renewed system. From Yergeau, we bring forth re-design as we embark on building a culture of access; from Dolmage, we explicitly include disability as an embodied identity; from Morrison, we listen to language as a powerful mechanism, a living organism that shapes supersystems.

In examining how diversity within organizations is communicated, Sarah Ahmed (2012) offers that "diversity can be used as an adjective, as a way of describing the organization, a quality, or an attribute of an organization" (p. 52). It can also be used, she argued, "normatively, as an expression of the priorities, values, or commitments of an organization." Why this duality matters are in how a description of diversity "also indicates the values of that organization" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 52). The same, we argue, can be said of accessibility. Such use of and the consequences of such use emerged in March 2019 at CCCC, where a large, red sign reading "The CCCC Convention is accessible!" greeted conference attendees at check-in. Under this statement were a list of bullet points identifying accessibility features, including accessibility guides; quiet, lactation, and family rooms; childcare grants; gender-neutral bathrooms; and interpreters. As Osorio

(2019a) described on her accessibility website, "Turns out, folks had very different experiences than this sign presumed. Anonymous CCCC members used post-it notes to decorate the large, standing sign with specific access issues they've encountered." Along with capturing these different experiences—even going as far as posting transcriptions to her website of the post-its conference attendees plastered to this sign—Osorio (2019a) questioned, "if #4c19 is applauding itself for achieving accessibility, will it stop trying to expand accessibility?" With a worrisome tone, she wondered, "is this the end of the road for Cs?"[2] In thinking about and sharing our own experiences with in/access at the CWPA summer conference, we raise similar questions and offer purposeful access as a starting point for situating explicit, intentional (re)design to resist "the end of the road."

In 2006, the CDICC submitted an official policy statement on "Disability in CCCC" (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2020).[3] The policy, once approved, became instituted, agreed-upon language. Despite the official language, thirteen years following the policy approval, at CCCC 2019 (4C19), conference attendees spoke back, noting nearly fifty specific instances of in/access. Osorio (2019b), a current member of the CDICC, documented the 4C19 happening as "collective direct action." In her email to the DS_Rhet-Comp listserv (Discussions in the field of Disability Studies and Rhetoric and Composition), Osorio "Thanks . . . the people who resisted the erasure of disabled folks and inaccessibility at CCCC" (Osorio, 2019b). This particular conference occurrence and Osorio's analysis demonstrate the real risk about which Ahmed wrote. In the case of this conference, the act of making equivalent a description of an event as accessible with the priorities, values, or commitments of the organization putting on the event operated as an attempt for accessibility to be accepted and agreed upon apart from any questioning of the priorities, values, or commitments of the hosting organization itself. One point of contention that arose was who actually authorized the sign, as no one from the CDICC, the organizational committee devoted to access and disability, was informed or consulted. This lack of consultation represents what Dolmage (2017) referred to as a "defeat device," an act intended to pronounce decision makers as "more expert than [disabled] students or disability officers" (p. 74). Announcing that the conference "is accessible," and doing so while excluding the CDICC, creates a constructed "reality" in which inaccessibility will continue

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2   Osorio's (2019a) fuller account of the event and a photo of the original sign with transcriptions of the post-it notes is included on her website: http://www.ruthosorio.com/accessibility-at-4c19/.

3   The statement was passed in 2006 and reaffirmed in 2011. In March 2020, the statement was replaced with a new statement, "Disability Studies in Composition: Position Statement on Policy and Best Practices."

regardless of the actual events of the conference, as demonstrated by the post-it note protest. The "self-congratulation" of achieving "accessibility" defeats the possibility of continued work occurring within the organization itself (Dolmage, 2017, p. 74). We share this story about 4C19 as an imperative for how we all want to move forward. As Osorio (2019b) said, "Access is complex, ongoing." To name access as complete and packaged for delivery renders the multitude of situated experiences static. The list of access issues present at 4C19 reveals the extent to which hyper-ableism instills barriers despite the best intentions.

Here, then, is a foundational point to our argument: accessibility operates both linguistically and materially. That a claim can be made that a conference is accessible undermines the innovation, inclusion, transgression, and redesign that Vidali and Yergeau argued must be central to creating accessible spaces, ones that are made "disabled" and not merely retrofitted. Noting audience as a "treasured rhetorical concept" central to WPA work, Yergeau (2016) nonetheless "remain[s] unconvinced that audience-as-concept is meant to include the so-called cripples and the feeble-minded among its ranks" (p. 159). For all the talk there is about conference accessibility, has any of this talk centrally changed the "non-disabled default" that has traditionally shaped how academic conferences are conceived of and held (Yergeau, 2016, p. 159)? We argue that, at best, the standard adjustments made to academic conferences to create greater accessibility operate primarily as retrofits that don't disrupt the hyper-ableist supersystem present in the discursive-materiality of academic conferences. Disabling, to borrow Vidali's term, provides a linguistic-material framework that goes beyond how access has been used as a retrofit to hyper-ableism by transgressing "expected and exclusionary norms." Disabling, therefore, gets to the "priorities, values, [and] commitments of an organization" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 52; Vidali, 2015, p. 33). As academic conferences operate simultaneously as rhetorical, physical, and disciplinary spaces, working toward disabling the academic conference is also an act of resistance to the hyper-ableism that circulates in higher education. Yet, the centrality of ableism in higher education also makes such interventions difficult.

In 2013, the D&A committee[4] formed as a result of a conversation that took place at the 2012 CWPA pre-conference workshop. At the end of the week, workshop facilitators, Shirley Rose, Dominic DelliCarpini, and guest speaker Duane Roen, opened a discussion about what was missing in CWPA: what new committees would help serve and extend the mission of CWPA and the work of WPAs? Workshop attendees Bre Garrett and Tracy Morse suggested that the conference and CWPA community needed a committee to emphasize

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4   The committee launched as the Disability Committee, but one of the inaugural committee's first actions changed the name to include access: Disability and Accessibility Committee. Thus, one of the committee's first actions was, itself, a retrofit.

and implement access, providing a more explicit conversation about and charges on inclusion and disability issues. Since its inception, Kathleen Hunzer, Tracy Morse, and Bre Garrett have chaired the committee, and attention has focused on drafting new policies, spreading the visibility and necessity of access and inclusion, and creating practices for making CWPA's annual conference more accessible and inclusive. Re-positioning access as an integral part of the conference's infrastructure has been a process of renovation and revision, one filled with continuously discovering faults and cracks in light of maintaining the most important goal: fostering a community of belonging by removing barriers that inhibit participation. Prior to 2013, no official committee, policies, or language existed that foregrounded inclusion, access, disability and disabled people in the CWPA organization—an absence that likely influenced the omission of scholarship on such topics in the WPA journal.

The D&A Committee has focused a great deal on working to establish an infrastructure for making the conference more accessible and inclusive.[5] The following list names short- and long-term actions the committee has accomplished, most of which occur annually:

- The development of an annual access guide.
- The recommendation and use of captioning services (CART) for plenary and large auditorium talks.
- The creation, publication, and circulation of guidelines for creating accessible presentations.
- The allocation of a quiet room and a lactation room at the conference site.
- The request for gender-neutral bathrooms at the conference site
- The implementation of an access table.
- The recommendation to include mics in all session rooms.
- The implementation of a site visit to evaluate access at the conference venue.

Many of the committee's efforts borrow directly from the CCCC's initiatives developed by the CDICC, from whom we've aligned our discourse and praxis. Yet, even given this discourse and praxis, the creation of the D&A committee itself operated as a retrofit, one intended to extend the mission of CWPA but not explicitly intended to disable and disrupt in the ways Yergeau and Vidali intend. As

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5   This list represents the annual actions and activities that enhanced access and inclusion at the CWPA's face-to-face, physical convention, pre-COVID-19. We acknowledge that this list needs rethinking and updating as a result of shifts in conferencing practices due to the pandemic. With conferences taking place either solely online or in a hybrid modality, the actions to ensure access must shift to account for more varied modes of participation.

we know, language falls short, and the system of budget constraints restricts action and institutes access as retrofits. Site visits often occur after venues are selected, and cancellations or budget reallocations are typically out of the question when schedules and calendar time hold authority and agency over individual bodies. What this means, long term, for changing the system of inaccessibility is that access must become a central and forefront part of the rhetorical action of conference design. Furthermore, the work of access must no longer occur in isolation. Each year, the annual conference design process begins anew, with access falling to a collaboration between the D&A committee and the local host committee. Rather, access should become a priority of the EB and should be situated as an annual budget item. The conference access materials, such as guidelines for creating accessible presentations, should be housed on the main CWPA website rather than the individually designed conference website that changes each year. Redesign in this regard relates to digital, virtual spaces as much as physical, concrete spaces.

In their 2016 address, Yergeau highlighted the conference space itself as evidence of the needed redesign in writing program administration. Noting that spatial design "makes particular statements about the bodies it values," Yergeau described:

> . . . the arrangement of tables and chairs, the lack of aisle
> space, the positioning and placements of screens and speakers,
> the way in which our bodies are packed into this space, the
> line setup of our food stations, the proximity of our exhibi-
> tion tables to the walls, the un-ease or uneasiness or sheer
> mortal peril in which certain groups of people can or cannot
> access restrooms, [and] the absence (or presence) of prepared
> materials and handouts during sessions. (p. 158)

Yergeau's list overlaps with the concerns raised at 4C19 and points of priority for the D&A committee. While CWPA and the D&A committee have delivered successes that have improved conference inclusion, much more continual work must occur. To resound the words of Kuppers (2014), "disability culture is . . . a process" (p. 4). For example, the 2019 CWPA conference included CART captioning services for the large auditorium talks, making the presentation more accessible to all attendees. However, the method used by the CART specialist was such that readability was difficult to follow, and transcripts of the talk were an additional service and thus an additional cost; therefore, not something that the conference committed to this time around.[6]

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6   Funding for the CART services was provided by Towson University's College of Liberal Arts and not taken from conference registration fees such that the funding itself was a retrofit to the conference's financial plan.

In addition, while guidelines for presenters to create accessible materials exist and are posted to the conference website, the official email often goes out too close to the start of the conference, which promotes the treatment of access as a delivery concern rather than an invention, pre-planning part of project design. Finally, speaking to the point about the creation and role of the D&A Committee—and further reflecting on the role of the CDICC—the work often happens as middle negotiations, among individuals who have no real budgetary authority. The D&A chair makes recommendations and the committee relays suggestions back to the EB through annual reports, but most correspondence occurs through emails and often requires time for awaiting responses. At the pivotal moment of action, as when securing CART services, for example, the D&A chair is not able to negotiate costs, and therefore, the charge moves ahead to someone on the EB. Major charges and suggestions are documented in reports that circulate up to the board. To make access and disability issues a prominent part of the conference organization would necessitate representation from the committee on the EB to ensure issues remain a core part of conference design.

While many of these successes—gender-neutral restrooms, quiet and lactation rooms, the production and distribution of the conference accessibility guide—may be assumed to be standard operations for many academic conferences, their material existence must be made into each annual conference as part of the conference planning process. To assume accessible continuation apart from the labor that brings access into being is to imagine accessibility apart from a conference's embodied and material realities. Up until the point accessibility becomes material within the conference design, it merely operates as a checklist of features desired at an "inclusive" conference. Further, much of the local work, including the access guide, materializes through the local host committee rather than the D&A committee, which is another layer of dissonance between the work and the implementation of purposeful action.

Each academic conference, then, faces its own accessibility challenges, ranging from state laws regarding gender-neutral restrooms, to the conference site's geography, topography, and weather, to the funds available to underwrite accessibility. The conference snapshot that introduces this chapter offers a small glimpse at the successes, challenges, and oversights that occurred at the 2019 CWPA conference. For example, the conference featured real-time captioning for keynote addresses for the first time, but microphones were only available in larger breakout rooms. The accessibility guide circulated via multiple media, but large-print copies were not available at the conference's outset due to miscommunication among organizers. To continue in this "good-bad" structure would give the incorrect impression that accessibility results from correctly applying a checklist of desired features. Our

purposes here are to speak to the larger system(s) that results in a continuation of in/access and hyper-ableism at academic conferences and in writing program administration. Extending from the previous point that the D&A committee operated as a retrofit, the same can be said of accessibility at an academic conference and accessible considerations within conference planning.

In closing this chapter, we explore the collaborations and relationships WPAs might leverage to produce a system of purposeful access that counters the super-system of hyper-ableism. The question posed at CWPA 2019, "what does radical inclusion look like in practice?" deserves pedagogical attention as well as exploration of the daily activities that comprise WPA work—in teacher-training, curricular design, campus and community out/in-reach, budget management, and assessment. How do local institutional contexts shape the work of creating access? What do we need to know about our institutions and who do we need to know to sustain a culture of access? Through what discourse(s) and methodologies can we advocate for accessibility practices that will result in purposeful action? We offer readers actionable steps, resources and tools, as well as starting places to begin the work of radical inclusion—whatever position they hold in the institution for both programmatic and institutional change. We also call for more voices to respond to these critical questions. We call for more work in the WPA journal and more sessions at the annual CWPA conference to grapple with these questions.

PURPOSEFUL ACCESS AS EMBODIED POSITIONALITY: PRACTICAL APPLICATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The title of this chapter, Purposeful Access, asks composers, presenters, conference organizers, teachers, and WPAs to approach design as a deliberate act that foregrounds difference and explicitly invites disability and multiple corporealities into scholastic conversation "in order to innovate, include, and transgress expected and exclusionary norms in writing program administration" (Vidali, 2015, p. 33). As an embodied positionality, purposeful access acknowledges situated bodies as inextricable from delivery, or, how, through what available means, different bodies are able to respond. Feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (1994) defined bodies as "the very condition of our access to and conception of space" (p. 91). Ability, therefore, cannot separate from theories and practices of delivery; delivery must always prompt, how is one able to respond, and that question must pose early in project/conference design if it is to have real action for lived, concrete experience.

To engage in purpose-driven action, access and delivery require careful consideration and pre-thought—invention—about/of space, place, and materials,

and about/of the numerous different bodies: people with disabilities, illnesses, and other conditions that challenge normative activities that are, as Susan Wendell (1996) defined, "necessary for survival . . . or necessary to participate" in an "environment or society" (p. 4). The following list provides extended definitions of purposeful access, showing how language can shift to help move forward a system of access that counters hyper-ableism. Purposeful access:

- Experiences the rhetorical canons as interdependent.
- Casts bodies as rhetorical means and sites of invention and delivery and actively considers the situated embodiment of audiences, aiming to cast the widest net possible for human involvement.
- Positions bodies as points of access, the physical means by which humans make contact with other materials and spaces and with other humans.

In many ways, purposeful access is about membership, participation, and valorization. On the Composing Access website, produced by CDICC members, each page opens, top center, with a quote by Aimi Hamraie that reads, "Meaningful access requires us to ask not only, 'Who belongs?' but also, 'How do we know?' The power of such questions demands attention to bodies and requires an imperative and deliberate reflexivity. Whose knowledge and leadership is foregrounded? Whose labors are employed in creating access, and how are labors compensated?" The emphasis on belonging as a tangible outcome means we advocate for more than systematic, official language and the failures that words, divorced from purpose, employ. Purposeful access opens otherwise closed-off and exclusive spaces "to people with different forms of embodiment," including disability (Kuppers, 2014, p. 1). In many ways, the normative conversation about access in regard to conference design is already diminished when it begins.

As a material take-away from this chapter, we present a diagram Bre designed as a pedagogical heuristic to guide accessible classroom design. The diagram displays a traditional rhetorical triangle with vertices marked by author, subject, and audience. Within the traditional triangle, four circles reside. In the center, the phrase "embodied delivery" makes explicit the place of bodies and access in rhetorical situations. Embodied delivery performs as a method for rhetorical invention, resituating the abstract terms of author, audience, and subject with "situated bodies," "composing materials and technologies," and "wider context," which includes spaces, places, and time. The word "access" touches every aspect of the situation: purposeful access, a framework for how we can foreground access as a system that forges an inter-animate relationship. We can apply this heuristic to conference design and, in doing so, disable the supersystem of hyper-ableism.
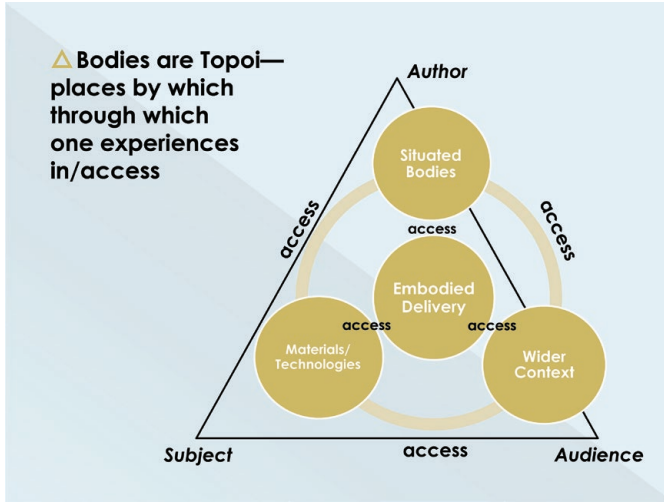
Figure 1.1 Bodies are Topoi by Bre Garrett.

We conclude with actions that readers can employ as central to reinvention. In offering these recommendations, we acknowledge the sustaining power of hyper-ableism that necessitates we go further than the retrofit "revisions" that have been made to the CWPA summer conference and to other academic conferences. As Dolmage (2017) explained:

> It is worth remembering that at the contemporary college or university, ableism is everywhere: not that it overwhelms all the good schooling can do, not that it invalidates your teaching or your research, but that we are all responsible for looking for it, recognizing our roles in its circulation, and seeking change. (p. 33)

Therefore, members of professional organizations in our field who often double as conference attendees, can:

- Become better informed of how academia systematically excludes those with disabilities such that conversations about accessibility at conferences and in professional organizations already largely exclude those with disabilities.
- Reflect on, if able-bodied, how ableness is central to full participation in many, and likely most, academic conferences and how one's ableist biases inform the continuation of practices of in/access at conferences.
- Acknowledge the material means required to retrofit accessibility into conferences and conference spaces and to be informed by this knowl-

edge when participating in conversations about conference costs and future designs of academic conferences.

- Reform one's language practices about accessibility including discontinuing the use of the "ableist apologia" such as "we are doing all we can do" and dismissals that state accessibility can't be that important so as to not disrupt traditional conference features and traditions. And avoid using budget constraints as a justification for inaccess.
- Interrogate academic ableism at/on one's own campus so to better understand how in/access operates within educational institutions.

Additionally, those who have power in/over decisions about conference design and in the operations of professional organizations, can:

- Create a workflow that links conferences across space(s) and time(s) instead of treating them as isolated, singular events, so that "purposeful access" can operate more fully and outside the confines created by just-in-time retrofits.
- Place conference accessibility at the center of conference decisions and designs such that no decision that will later require a retrofit or produce inaccess for some "participants" will be made.
- Situate accessibility funding as being central to budgetary decisions instead of treating accessibility as being funded, at least in part, by fundraising executed by disabled members of the organization.
- Resist self-congratulation that announces accessibility as a fixed accomplishment and not labor that must be engaged in a continuous, sustained, recursive manner.
- Center "disabling" by shifting matters of accessibility from being primarily the work of "retrofit" supplementary committees to being the work of the entire organization extending from the executive board, across all committees, and to all members.

That last item is both broad and essential. Shifting accessibility work away from being primarily the isolated work of specialized subcommittees risks deprioritizing the "insights of disabled people," but not making such a shift creates the likelihood that inaccess remains the norm, characterized by retrofits that are inadequate both for the purposes of creating sustained access and for radically changing cultural institutions such as professional organizations and academic conferences (Vidali, 2015, p. 33). Citing Dolmage (2017, p. 77), Tassoni, in this collection, highlighted how retrofitting creates "abeyance structures" that are "perhaps allowing for access, but disallowing the possibility of action for change" (this volume). Our hope is that purposeful access can work in the direction of disabling the academic conference so "to not only remove problematic

and dysfunctional practices" but to also "innovate in the ways that disability invites" (Vidali, 2015, p. 48). Such purposeful access matters because as Christina Cedillo, one of the members of the CCCC Committee for Change, stated in the collection: "The bodies we inhabit determine the experiences we have in the world." "Except," Cedillo wrote, "that's not the whole story. The rest of the story is this—how people interpret our bodies determines what experiences we have in the world." Supersystems, such as hyper-ableism, which we extensively discuss, and racism, interrogated in the next chapter, limit existence in a profession because they reinscribe values that privilege exclusion. We must create, with purpose, conditions that are not simply retrofits to the supersystem of hyper-ableism or the experiences of disabled academics will continue to be largely that of, if not full exclusion, limited, begrudging access.

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