Second Meeting

Scientific Network
Dis-/Abilities and Digital Media

Assistance - On the History of Assistive Ensembles

Organizers

Jan Müggenburg (Lüneburg)
Philipp Sander (Lüneburg)
Robert Stock (Berlin)
Andreas Wagenknecht (Berlin)

Outline

The category of assistive technologies is often discussed as a political category (Alper 2017), as they invoke connotations such as "in need of help" with respect to the respective users* (Mills 2015; Kotsch 2012; Ott 2014). At this meeting, the concept of assistance will be historically situated and questioned. The aim is to problematize the question of what meanings have been attributed to the concept of assistance in the context of dis/abilities in the history of digital media and what place the term takes in current debates about bodies with varying abilities.

The tensions between specific possibilities and barriers posed by digital assistance technologies will be the core issue of the meeting. Therefore, the interaction of discourses on assistive devices and practices with assistive devices will be considered from different perspectives and disciplines. We approach the topic based on empirical studies ranging from the history of computers to contemporary practices of augmentative communication via speech computers, and propose to discuss the significance of ensembles of assistive technologies. By exploring the interactions between different areas of life in which assistive technologies are developed and used in everyday practice, we hope to gain a broad understanding of the socio-political significance of assistance.

Accessibility

German Sign Language Interpretation will be provided during the public talks.
Please let us know about any further accessibility requirements. Email to psander@leuphana.de

Registration

Please contact Maximilian Mohr to receive the link for the Zoom video conference to join the public discussion and keynote.
Email: shkmedas [at] leuphana.de

March 17, 2021

6:00-7:30pm (CET)
Diskussionsforum
Kathrin Lemler, Carsten Bender, Marion Schnurnberger und Vertreter*innen ARCHIPEL (Asta Referat Lüneburg)
Universität und Assistenz. Assistive Medien in Lehre und Forschung (in German)

// DGS Dolmetschung wird bereitgestellt //

March 18, 2021

Welcome: Informal Coffee Break

Network Discussion
Meryl Alper, Andreas Wagenknecht & Jan Müggenburg
Augmentative Communication and Computer Access – Historical Approaches
Reading: Vanderheiden (2002)

BREAK

Network Discussion
Meryl Alper, Andreas Wagenknecht & Jan Müggenburg
Augmentative Communication and Computer Access – Contemporary Ensembles & Methods
Reading: Alper (2017)

BREAK

KEYNOTE
Meryl Alper (Northeastern University)
Critical Media Access Studies: Examining the Benefits and Limits of Accessibility in Mediated Spaces
// DGS Dolmetschung wird bereitgestellt //

March 19, 2021

Network Discussion

Discussion about the publication format and member's contributions (research topics, co-authorships)

//with breakout rooms: (1) practices / (2) materiality / (3) history & discourses / (4) (sensory) experiences and knowledge //

BREAK

Network Discussion

Summary of the discussion and further planning

Keynote Abstract

Critical Media Access Studies: Examining the Benefits and Limits of Accessibility in Mediated Spaces

The benefits of "accessible" media and technology for people with disabilities are rarely questioned, nor considered within broader critical/cultural frameworks. In this talk, based on an article recently published in the *International Journal of Communication*, I make a contribution to the field of communication by proposing *critical media access studies* to further define a growing area of inquiry into contested notions of mediated access, drawing on work from disability media studies and critical access studies in architectural design. My proposal for critical media access studies is furthered through a case study of physical spaces designed for media engagement for young people, from museum exhibits to movie theaters, that provide "autism-friendly" programming. Qualitative analysis of interviews and observations with autistic children and their families, as well as participant observation in such sites, reveals ideological assumptions, frictions, and contradictions underpinning cultural accessibility. Critical media access studies can offer communication scholars valuable theoretical and conceptual tools for deconstructing power, visibility, and marginality in mediated space.

Keynote Speaker

Meryl Alper is an <u>Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Northeastern University</u>, where she studies the social and cultural implications of communication technologies, with a focus on disability and digital media, children and families' technology use, and mobile communication. She studied communication sciences and history at Northwestern University, and at the University of southern California, where she earned her Ph.D. in communication. Her works include among others, <u>Digital Youth with Disabilities</u> (MIT Press, 2014) and <u>Giving Voice: Mobile Communication, Disability, and Inequality</u> (MIT Press, 2017), which was awarded a 2018 PROSE Award Honorable Mention from the Association of American Publishers and the 2018 Outstanding Publication in the Sociology of Disability Award from the American Sociological Association.

Her work is situated at the intersection of communication studies, science and technology studies, and disability studies and she also draws on her professional experience in educational children's media as a researcher, strategist, and consultant with Sesame Workshop, PBS KIDS, Nickelodeon, and Disney.

Reading

- Alper, Meryl: Critical Media Access Studies: Deconstructing Power, Visibility, and Marginality in Mediated Space. In: International Journal of Communication 15(2021), pp. 840–861.
- Alper, Meryl (2017): Giving Voice: Mobile Communication, Disability, and Inequality. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Vanderheiden, Gregg C.: A Journey through early augmentative communication and computer access. In: Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development Vol. 39 No. 6, (Supplement) November/December 2002 Pages 39–53.

References

- Alper, Meryl (2017): Giving Voice: Mobile Communication, Disability, and Inequality. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Mills, Mara (2015): Technology. In: Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, David Serlin (Eds.): Keywords for Disability Studies. New York/London: New York University Press, pp.176–179.
- Ott, Kathrine (2014): Disability Things: Material Culutre and American Disability History, 1700-2010. In: Susan Burch and Michael Rembis (Eds.): Disability Histories. Chicago Ill.: University of Illinois Press, pp. 119-135.
- Kotsch, Lakshmi (2012): Assistenzinteraktionen. Zur Interaktionsordnung in der persönlichen Assistenz körperbehinderter Menschen. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Contact

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