

The Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update: Highlights Newsletter

2019 - 2020



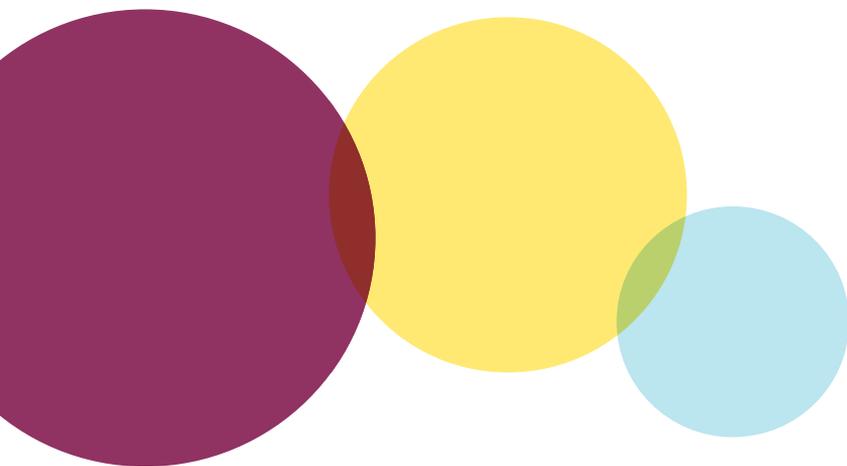
Maddie Brown. (2017). *FLEX Forward Accessible Education Resource*

Don't Forget to Download the Full Digital Version of the 2019-2020
Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update

To Be Released: Winter 2021!

Table of Content

<u>Introductions</u>	3
<u>Community Engagement</u>	3
<u>Student Initiatives</u>	4
<u>Teaching and Learning: Accessibility and Disability Inclusion in Research, Instruction and Course-Level Enhancements</u>	5
<u>Teaching and Learning: Educational Technologies, Online Course Design, Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Consultation and Training</u>	6
<u>Publications</u>	7
<u>Service Delivery</u>	8
<u>Employment</u>	8
<u>Policy and Plans</u>	9
<u>Spaces and Environments</u>	9
<u>Technology and Communications</u>	10



Equity and
Inclusion Office



McMaster Accessibility
Council (MAC)



Introductions

To celebrate and commemorate [December 3: The International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#), the [AccessMac Program](#) in the [Equity and Inclusion Office \(EIO\)](#) and the [McMaster Accessibility Council \(MAC\)](#), are proud to present the Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Highlights Newsletter 2019-2020!



International
Day of
**Persons with
Disabilities**
3 DECEMBER

Summarizing the accomplishments and efforts of McMaster students, staff and faculty working to enhance and move forward accessibility and disability inclusion work at the University and in communities outside of the University, this community campus newsletter draws directly from this year's full Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2019-2020 publication, which will be released and distributed in Winter, 2021 and made available from the [Inclusion Initiatives section of the Accessibility Hub website](#).

Please read below some of this year's highlights from the approximate 70 submissions we received from a complete cross-section of faculties, services, and individuals; it should be noted how incredible these accomplishments have been in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how quickly the campus community came together this year to work through accessibility and inclusion barriers, exacerbated in our shift to remote work environments.

Sincere thank you to everyone for your incredible efforts and hard work!

Community Engagement

Community-engaged partnerships were deepened among [AccessMac \(EIO\)](#), [Career Access Professional Services \(SSC/CAPS\)](#), [Library Accessibility Services \(LAS\)](#), [MSU Maccess](#) and [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#), as staff and student-staff hosted a visit-to-campus event for students and teachers from W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind.

The Two-of-a-Kind Buddy Initiative was launched by [Arts and Sciences students](#) - a virtual buddy program providing free online tools and virtual socialization to combat loneliness and support youth from across the world with all abilities and socioeconomic statuses.

In supporting older adults in Hamilton, the [McMaster Institute for Aging Research \(MIRA\)](#) identified "Bridging the Digital Divide" as a priority for this year, in order to better support immediate goals of accessing online platforms and programming, as well as broader goals as members of the goal [Age-Friendly University Network](#). In Working directly through placements with Conway Homes, [Student Open Circle's](#) volunteers were able to were able to provide 985 hours of in-person service, up until the pandemic, where visits were quickly moved online to address the heightened risk of social isolation among residents.

McMaster academic Faculties and Programs are supporting community engagement and accessibility inclusion. One example is by facilitating community conversations on improving Universal Design for Learning and Accessible Education to deepen research initiatives undertaken within [McMaster's Occupational Therapy Program](#). Additionally, the [Faculty of Sciences' Nuclear Magnetic Resonance \(NMR\) Facility](#) coordinated a [community workshop](#) with relevant stakeholders on improving accessibility within the [NMR research lab](#).

Community-focused work continues to be undertaken by disability-centric services and peer-groups, including [MSU Maccess](#) and [AccessMac](#) in their coordination of the [Disability DIScussion; Remote Access/ibility](#) conversation series; the celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 2019 through the in-person launch of the [second annual Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Update 2018-2019](#); and continued peer-support and University-level accessibility consultation work carried out by the [Employee Accessibility Network](#) (for self-identified McMaster Employees with disabilities).



Call-Out to McMaster Community Members!

[Subscribe to McMaster's accessibility list serves](#) to receive more information about community-engaged training, events, joining the Employee Accessibility Network and more!

Student Initiatives

Using music, student researchers Gabrielle Gonsalves and Maryam Kord have been working towards a novel programming environment which will teach coding and math to visually impaired students. The project [Software: Tool for Change](#) arose from an undergraduate course project by a team including a visually impaired undergraduate student. Meanwhile student researcher, Sydney Valentino, under the supervision of Dr. Maureen MacDonald, is conducting a systematic review and meta-analysis to understand the effects of accessible and effective exercise interventions to improve the fitness of individuals with a spinal cord injury.

In response to the move to online environments and as part of the Student Representative Assembly Arts and Science Caucus initiative, students Adeola Egbeyemi and Vikita Mehta, have designed the [Accessibility Guidebook for the Society of Arts and Science Students \(SASS\)](#). This guidebook is geared toward a student audience and contains checklists to ensure considerations for accessibility when hosting Zoom/Microsoft Team calls, creating social media posts, making videos, and more!

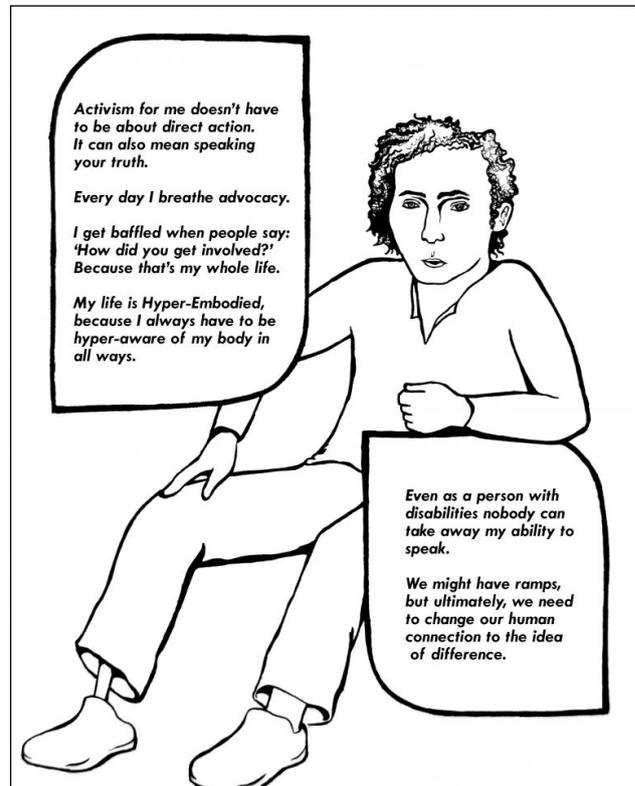
Additionally, [MSU Maccess](#) student peer support service has launched three collaborative

peer support and community groups, in addition to their volunteer-selected groups, including Disabled Queer & Trans ([with the PCC](#)), Disability in Colour ([with WGEN](#) and [Diversity Services](#)), and Navigating Health/Care ([with SHEC](#)).

Call-Out to McMaster Students with Disabilities:

Looking to find peer or transition support for students with disabilities at McMaster?

Check out [MSU Maccess Student Service](#) or the [SAS Transition Program](#) for more information.



Michelle Sayles. (2018). [Open Accessibility: An Illustrated Story of Disability Advocacy at McMaster](#)

Teaching and Learning: Research, Instruction and Course-Level Enhancements

At the course-level, Dr. Sarah Brophy from the [Department of English and Cultural Studies](#) has worked to enhance disability-inclusion within the open-elective course [Narratives of Health in the English and Cultural Studies](#) by hosting Burlington-based senior disabled writer Dorothy Palmer for a Q & A with students about Palmer's acclaimed memoir [Falling for Myself](#). Meanwhile, Dr. Lyndsey Beutin from [Communication Studies and Multimedia](#) has incorporated zine-making into the final project for students in [CMST 4D03: International Communication](#) to enhance accessibility within course assessment. Additionally, Carmela Alfaro-Laganse from the School of the Arts is integrating readings regarding disability justice and indigenous perspectives on disability justice, various discussion about access to art and art making, acquiring AODA certification online and devel-

oping a group catalogue of students' creative practices into the SOTA course [4AR3: Advanced Research and Presentation](#).

In areas of research Dr. Magda Stroinska from the [Department of Linguistics and Languages](#) will engage in inquiry to improve the experiences of Deaf/deaf and hard-of-hearing students by analyzing the accuracy of speech-to-text software embedded in current [McMaster teaching and learning platforms](#) to produce machine closed-captioning.

Additionally, Dr. Ameil Joseph from the [School of Social Work](#), has been awarded three grants for research projects related to accessibility and disability-inclusion, including "What happened to you?": The disablement of youth across socioeconomic indicators (in partnership

with the [Disability Justice Network of Ontario](#)) and Grief, Memorials, and Loss through COVID-19: Resources for caring while physical distancing (in partnership with PhD student, Shaila Kumbhare, and [CMHA Hamilton](#)).

With funding from SSHRC, researchers affiliated with the [MacPherson Institute](#) piloted

an equity-focused stream of the [Student Partners Program](#) during the Winter and Fall 2019 terms, where student partner-faculty partnerships have enhanced attention to accessibility, disability inclusion, and mental health into a number of faculty member's courses in a range of ways.

Teaching and Learning: Educational Technologies, Online Course Design, Consultation and Training

At the faculty-level, the [Faculty of Sciences](#) (with support from a Strategic Alignment Fund) and the [Faculty of Social Sciences](#), continue in-depth digital accessibility remediation work, content development and training to enhance the accessibility of blended course content (Sciences) and public-facing websites and web content (Social Sciences).

In online course design, instructor Emily Scherzinger (PhD Candidate) from the [Department of English and Cultural Studies](#) has intentionally designed her online course, ENG 2PC3: Popular Culture, with accessibility in mind, constructing her class to prioritize students' mental health and accessibility with lenient deadlines, the development of transcripts and pre-recording of lectures, untimed quizzes, and a take-home final exam to offer students lots of time to think through their responses. [Engineering Co-op and Career Services](#), in partnership with Disabled McMaster students and alumni and the [AccessMac Program](#), have also prioritized accessible design and disability-inclusion within their soon-to-be-launched online workshop, developed to support engineering students to explore in-depth topics of accessible design and disability-inclusion.

To better support access to accessible content for online and in-person course development, University Library staff have partnered with the Library's Digitization Centre to transcribe hand-written content and corrected text of scanned documents from the [Digital Archive](#) to improve searching and make content legible to screen readers. [Library Accessibility Services](#) has been able to shift to project-based work by contributing library material scanned in-house to the [Accessible Content ePortal \(ACE\)](#) accessible database project; captioning projects and lectures; and moving video files to a new efficient storage system. Additionally, the [Faculty of Sciences](#) in partnership with the [AccessMac Program](#) have co-created and launched the asynchronous Accessible Documents webinar available through [Microsoft Sway](#) and [MacVideo channels](#), as well as through synchronous in-person training, to support accessible content development for McMaster faculty, staff, and students.

Finally, the [MacPherson Institute](#) has pivoted in major ways to support instructors accessibly in the shift to remote teaching and learning environments by:

- providing blended and online course design

consultations and educational technologies that enhance accessible and inclusive practice and evaluation

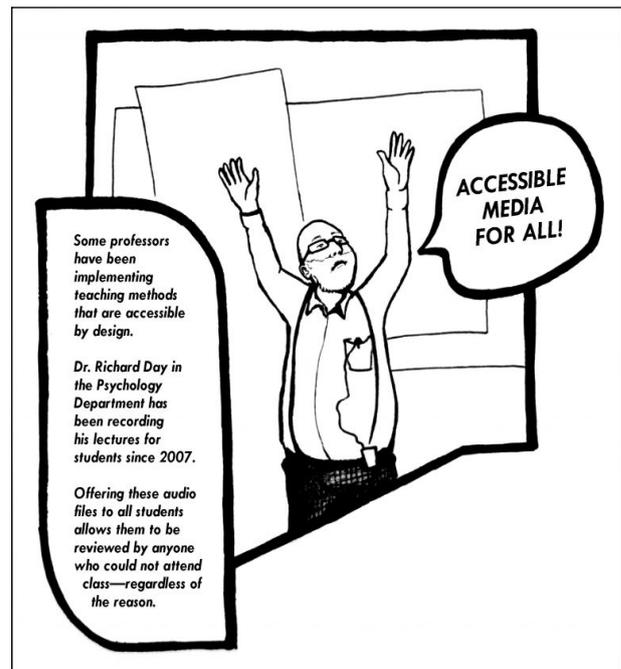
- authoring an open module on [Inclusive Design for Open Educational Resources](#)
- adding a section on accessibility and accommodation to the [New Instructor Handbook](#) and the collaboratively developed [Inclusive](#)

Call-Out to McMaster Faculty and Students!

Looking for opportunities to create and/or participate in partnership opportunities in teaching and learning research for higher education? Please see the [MacPherson Institute's Student Partners Program](#) for more information.

[Teaching webpage](#) to be launched in 2020.

- partnering with the EIO to develop a chapter on Accessible Online Teaching and Learning for the [FLEX Forward Accessible Education book](#) (release date: Winter 2021).



Michelle Sayles. (2018). [Open Accessibility: An Illustrated Story of Disability Advocacy at McMaster](#)

Publications

The [User Testing for Website Accessibility student partner team](#) authored and published the 2020 case study: [Students with disabilities as partners: A case study on user testing an accessibility website](#) in the [International Journal for Students as Partners](#). Additionally, A co-authored book chapter, articulating self-advocacy from the perspectives of people labeled/with intellectual disabilities, written by self-advocates Kelly MacDougall, Kerr Wattie, Romeo Pierre, Rainbow Hunt, O'Neil Allen and Robert Gray, with Ann Fudge Schormans and Carol Krause, has been accepted for publication in,

[Developmental Disabilities in Ontario](#), 4th Ed., Ivan Brown & Maire Percy (Eds.), Ont: Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities.



Michelle Sayles. (2018). [Open Accessibility: An Illustrated Story of Disability Advocacy at McMaster](#)

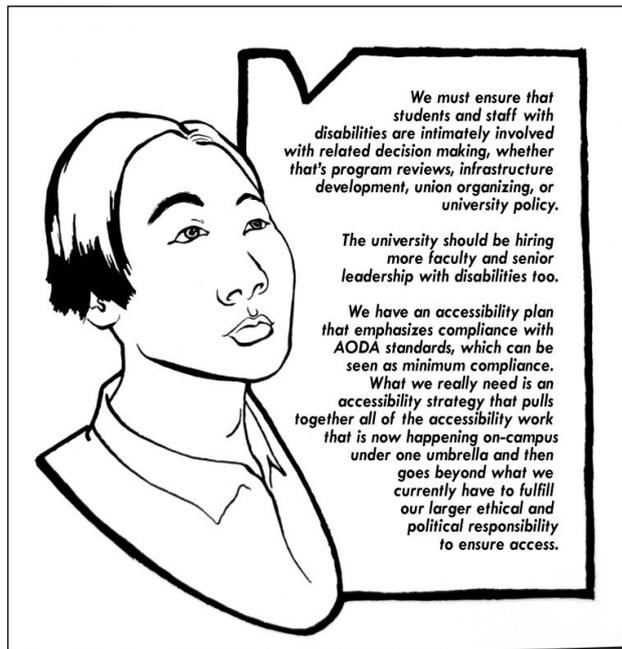
Service Delivery

Several student and staff-facing services have shifted their service-delivery models profoundly through the incorporation of accessible design into their online shifts and launches.

[Housing and Conference Services](#) has incorporated extensive digital accessibility training and considerations into the development and launch of the new [online Archway Program](#) for incoming McMaster students. The [Student Success Centre](#) has incorporated digital accessibility in reviewing and updating print resources to online formats; moved their 1-1 service and workshop delivery models into online spaces; and provided relevant and detailed information related to accessibility, accommodations and safety to improve the [Global Experiences Program](#).

[MSU Maccess](#) has additionally relaunched their peer-support services online, by creating a [Discord server for drop-in programming](#), through

which community members can connect via text, voice, and video, and [Library Accessibility Services](#) have worked to respond to the exceptional growth in requests for their services, notably working to ensure that the roll-out of their [Echo360 Lecture Capture](#) captioning strategy for students who are Deaf/deaf and hard-of-hearing is working to meet captioning needs.



Michelle Sayles. (2018). [Open Accessibility: An Illustrated Story of Disability Advocacy at McMaster](#)

Employment

Dr. Catherine Connelly ([DeGroote School of Business](#)) and Dr. Sandra Fisher ([Münster School of Business, Münster UAS](#)) are exploring one of the major barriers to employment for many people with disabilities: employers' perceptions that the costs associated with accommodations for employees with disabilities are prohibitive. In their forthcoming paper in the [Canadian](#)

[Journal of Disability Studies](#), they demonstrate how to empirically estimate the financial implications of hiring employees with disabilities, providing tools for organizations hesitant to hire workers with disabilities, demonstrating that this hiring can be financially beneficial.

The [Gender Affirmation Fund](#) was won by [CUPE](#)

Attention McMaster Units and Employers!

Looking to hire equity-seeking students for McMaster employment and volunteer opportunities? Connect with [Katherine Hesson-Bolten](#), Diversity Employment and [Career Access Professional Services](#) Coordinator, in the SSC.

[3906, Unit 1 \(representing TAs and RAs in-lieu\)](#) in 2019. The purpose of this fund is to help Two Spirit, trans, and nonbinary Unit 1 members offset the costs associated with gender affirmation, including every-day, medical, administrative, legal, and other expenses.

Finally, [Human Resources Services](#) in collaboration with key stakeholders including the

[McMaster Accessibility Council](#) and the [Equity and Inclusion Office](#), undertook a variety of programs and initiatives, including the ongoing development of [Individual Accommodation Plans](#) for employees requiring accommodation, as well as collaborative work with the EIO to facilitate [Accessible Workplace Accommodation Training](#) for managers, staff, and faculty.

Policy and Plans

The [McMaster University Policy on Accessibility](#) has undergone extensive re-drafting in 2020, carried forward by the Accessibility Program Manager (EIO) and the [McMaster Accessibility Council](#); the Policy will undergo community consultation in 2021, with a focus on disability community input. The McMaster Accessibility

Council has additionally continued its participation vis a vis the Accessibility Council Chair on the provincial [AODA Post-Secondary Education Standard Development Committee](#). A draft of the provincial Standard is expected to be ready for public consultation in late 2020.

Spaces and Environments

The [McMaster Museum of Art](#) has worked diligently to ensure visitors of all abilities are able to access the Museum's galleries and events. Accessibility and inclusion updates to the space have included:

- a new multi-level accessible reception desk was constructed to better welcome and accommodate a variety of heights and mobility devices
- new seating, both portable and stationary easy access chairs placed in all public spaces
- large font versions of interpretive texts and object labels are provided in galleries
- a safe, private space for McMaster Student Open Circles sessions, exploring mindfulness practice, creative expression, and discussion
- welcome text in the lobby, and all-gender washroom signage

[McMaster Facilities Services](#) completed many accessibility-related projects as part of the [Campus Accessibility Action Plan \(CAPP\)](#) in addition to specific requests for accessibility upgrades in several departments and campus buildings; additionally, the Barrier-Free Standard Commit



Nusrat Mir. (2020). [FLEX Forward Accessible Education Resource](#)

tee was established through partnerships with Facilities, the EIO, McMaster Libraries, Housing and Conference Services and SAS in order to continue developing a barrier-free standard for McMaster's built environment. Finally, [Parking and Security Services](#) replaced two existing campus shuttle buses with accessible shuttle buses which went into operation for the Fall term.

Attention Students with Disabilities!

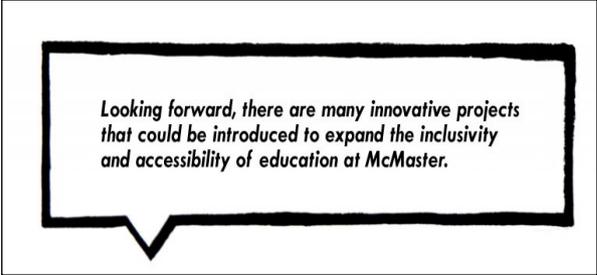
Although the [Campus Accessibility Technology Space \(CATS\)](#) is currently closed, stay tuned for some exciting changes when the space is re-opened.

Technology and Communications

Since the move to online learning, [University Technology Services \(UTS\)](#) has identified accessibility and inclusivity challenges that are prominent throughout the [Microsoft 365 Platform](#). The UTS Service Team now offers personalized training with our Business Systems Specialist [Christa Morrison](#), as well as access to resources, to better support McMaster community members.

The [Office of Communications and Public Affairs](#) has been working towards accessible, inclusive communication in providing accessible, inclusive content, for example, highlighting stories on accessibility, disability, and assistive technology, as well as ensuring that content and social media managers across campus have training in developing accessible content and social media posts through virtual training sessions.

After undergoing extensive user testing for accessibility, the AccessMac Program officially relaunched the [McMaster Accessibility Hub](#) on Media Production Service's (MPS) [new Macsites platform](#) in September 2019. Moving forward, the Accessibility Hub, which is linked to a variety of other online platforms and list serves for accessibility and disability inclusion, will continue to act as the "one-stop-shop" for all things accessibility-related at McMaster.



Looking forward, there are many innovative projects that could be introduced to expand the inclusivity and accessibility of education at McMaster.

Michelle Sayles. (2018). [Open Accessibility: An Illustrated Story of Disability Advocacy at McMaster](#)

Attention McMaster Community Members!

Need support in embedding best digital accessibility practices into in your digital content, courses, and meetings? Please visit the [COVID-19 Response section](#) of the Accessibility Hub, for faculty, staff and student support.