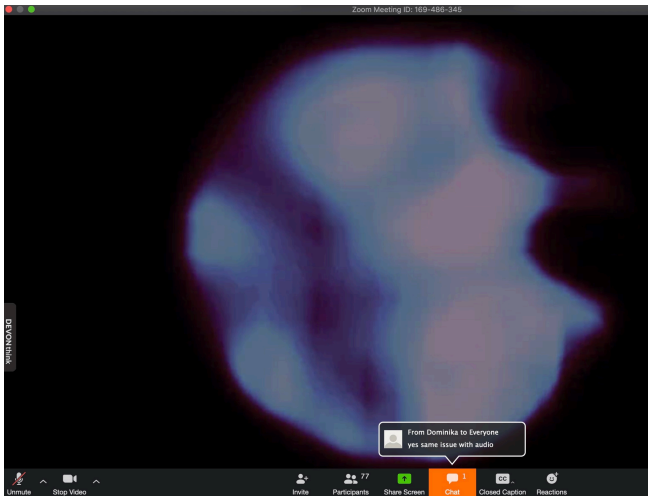


LINDSEY DOLICH FELT

Interview Date: January 14, 2022

Image Description: Text reads “The Remote Access Archive” atop a screenshot of a Zoom shared screen, which shows a work of art by Yo-Yo Lin. The art is a white and grey blob on a black background. The bottom shows a series of grey buttons, along with an orange chat button that is lit up. A speech bubble above it “From Dominika to everyone” says “yes same issue with audio.”

KEYWORDS

academia, algorithmic bias, conflicting access needs, COVID-19 pandemic era, D/deaf, digital course infrastructure, digital divide, Google Slides, higher education, hybrid access, hybrid teaching, negotiating access, online teaching, remote work, systemic ableism, technological equity, video chat, workplace accommodations, Zoom

IDENTITIES GIVEN

woman, deaf person, disabled person

LOCATION

United States

Introductions

Kelsie Acton:
So do you want to start by telling me who you are, and maybe giving a brief visual description of yourself? Sorry, the caption messed up. So visual, like as in audio describe yourself.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
Oh, thank you. Yes, that's helpful clarification. So my name is Lindsey Dolich Felt, and I am a light skinned woman with shoulder length blonde hair. I am wearing a light blue sweater with some patterns. And I'm wearing tan, sort of cat eye glasses. And I have a virtual background of a number of shelves, with some plants and some white and yellow pillows in the background against a white wall.

Kelsie Acton:
It's very impressive.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
So my

Kelsie Acton:
- virtual background. Sorry!

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
I am just playing around with the Google meet backgrounds. So let's see. My, official title: I am a career track lecturer at Stanford University, and I work in the Programme in Writing and Rhetoric (PWR). PWR primarily serves undergraduate students, teaching them argument and research-based writing and communication skills. In PWR, I teach courses on disability rhetoric, non-verbal communication, and most recently an upper level rhetoric and project-based course titled “The Art of Access—Disability, Creativity, Communication” I received my PhD in English from Stanford, and my research focuses on how disabled people

contributed to technological innovation in the postwar era. In the last few years, outside of my teaching I've explored these interests through community and arts-based applications, specifically through Leonardo/ISAST's CripTech Incubator Program, an art and technology fellowship for disability innovation. I am currently based in the Bay Area. And I should also mention that I use she/her pronouns.

Kelsie Acton:
Brilliant. Thank you. And can you tell me a little bit about your connection to disability or a Deaf culture?

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
I identify as a deaf person. I also wear, I use bilateral cochlear implants. So I've had quite a journey in my own identification as a deaf person and as a disabled person. We probably don't have time to get into that. But when I was an undergraduate, I had the wonderful opportunity to have a mentor who worked in the field of disability studies, Dr. Debora Sherman. And once I was introduced to the field of disability studies, I just immediately fell in love, and I think it really prompted an important and critical self reflection process for me that helped me understand how I fit into the d/Deaf and disabled communities. As I began to read disability studies scholarship, I realized that it was a field that was going to be pivotal to my intellectual development and one that I wanted to contribute to …and so began a new beautiful journey that helped me understand some of my own internalized ableism and introduced me to the rich tapestry of Deaf history, culture and storytelling.

Remote Teaching and Captioning Early in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Kelsie Acton:
Awesome. So you wanted to tell the Remote Access Archive about your experiences with remote teaching? Where would you like to start with that?

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
So many places to begin... I think it probably makes sense to, not necessarily go back to the beginning, but to start in the early pandemic. So my sense of time has expanded and contracted since we're still in the pandemic, and I find it hard to place myself with where we are now. I was coming off of maternity leave for my second child, and actually, all my colleagues had pivoted online in spring of 2020. So I was returning to work in the fall of let's see…Yeah, fall of academic year 2020-21. Okay. So for me, we were all online at that point, we ended up teaching at Stanford online for the entirety of the year. Which is kind of staggering to think about now — a year and change later — because we are back in person. And I'm calling in from my office on campus.

So I was really overwhelmed. Not only was I making the transition off of maternity leave, but I was wrapping my head around the prospect of teaching online for the first time. I have always enjoyed and utilized visual conferencing technologies, but not on this scale, on the level that I'm being asked to do as a teacher. So typically, my class sizes are 15 students each. These are run seminar style and are discussion based, not lecture based. So it is very dynamic and fluid in terms of the communication exchange between me and my students. I had a lot of concerns about audio, about some students who perhaps didn't feel comfortable with their videos on. There was a lot of discussion within our program about the pedagogical affordances of Zoom and how students were using Zoom to participate. This was particularly vexing for me, since at the time, we were all asked to use Zoom as our conferencing platform, and Zoom did not yet have the automatic captioning features enabled. There were a lot of accessibility features that were not integrated into the platform, which was a learning process. So I requested through the Stanford Diversity and Access Office (which serves faculty, staff, and Stanford visitors; students are served by the Office of Accessible Education) that I receive a CART captioner for online classes. And they granted my request. It was absolutely critical for me to have a CART captioner present to provide access support. Otherwise, I think the class would not have been successful.

However, I mean, we could really go into like the nitty gritty, technical aspects of what Zoom can and can't do. But it created a whole other additional burden. And I felt like, in some ways, I became an event coordinator on top of being a teacher. At the time, when automatic captions were first introduced, Zoom hosts were responsible for enabling captions—first in the Zoom settings, and then again in the meeting itself. And only institutional Zoom accounts had access to this feature, I believe. This meant I had to manually assign the captioner the role of transcriber at the start of every class session, in order for captions to appear on the screen. And then I would have to tag the captioner, sort of digitally linking myself to them so that they could follow me into the breakout rooms and continue to provide transcription during small group work. I should mention, now, this kind of laborious access choreography is no longer necessary as Zoom in 2023 gave participants the agency to authorize their own captions.

Kelsie Acton:
Right.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
And it just became incredibly labour intensive. It was not seamless at all. Obviously, the caption transcripts, you know, there were multiple access fails, the internet went down when the connection wasn't good, or the captioner could not provide accurate transcription when the audio wasn't good. I actually ended up writing an essay about this (which remains unpublished). So I'll send it along to you. So maybe you can have a written version of this experience as well. But yeah, it wore me down over time. And I will say because I was teaching a class on disability rhetoric, focusing on disability justice— and disproportionate access during the pandemic— my students and I were literally living through and performing this experience as a daily ritual in our class sessions. Access was really integrated into my pedagogy online for that reason, but even so I was still absolutely stunned by the scale and complexity of access needs during my year of remote teaching. Let me just stop for a second since the video is pretty spotty. Are you following me at all?

Kelsie Acton:
I am, give me one second. I'm gonna try and switch over to my phone. And that hopefully will give you a little bit better picture. Okay, hopefully better?

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
Okay, yeah. So there were several moments, actually, when I experienced — and this was quite interesting — when I experienced access fails. My students had their own access needs, and I had my own access needs, and sometimes there were access conflicts. So I had a non visual student. And we became a kind of team in that we were both simultaneously experiencing different kinds of access fails but also trying to help each other. But there were a couple moments where I had planned certain activities that I tried to translate into non visual modes, a real-time process that got bungled when my captioning failed – I was using automatic zoom captions at that time. I could no longer understand that student. I kept trying to rephrase what I thought the student said, and kept wildly missing the mark. And anyway, I'll say again, I'm not going to go into too much detail, but we ended up having kind of a laugh about that. In that moment I sort of took a step back in front of the class online, and I was like, "look at what's happening right here with the Zoom infrastructure and, and the kinds of values that is inscribed on us as users." I wanted to highlight for my students that my inability to comprehend in that moment was not due to my own limitations, but due to a failure in the way Zoom was designed as a platform that primarily catered to hearing users. So I tried to take that as sort of a teaching moment. And I think it resonated with my students, but it was extremely stressful (and a little embarrassing!) in the moment. So those are like some, some instances of access conflicts that I experienced. But there were also some really wonderful benefits and silver linings to teaching online. Like the fact that we were really able to lean into crip time. The asynchronous work, the recorded videos that students could watch at at any moment or on their own time, for information retention, or maybe if they couldn't be fully present in class, for whatever reason. I enable the captions all the time. And I think a lot of students actually really appreciated

that. So these are just examples of interesting tensions that came up — the possibilities afforded by teaching online, but the new limitations as well.

Kelsie Acton:
I'm so caught by that phrase, you just used, ‘the values that Zoom inscribed on us’. And wondering, I know you said you didn't want to get into detail. But could you give an example of that?

Zoom Infrastructure

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
Okay. So just, for instance, the assumption that all users can hear. When Zoom did not have audio transcription, or sorry, live transcription as a feature initially, until like three or four months later. I just find that so surprising, because the audio quality is so contingent on your bandwidth, and your computer and your platform, your background noise, all of this. So that, to me, just seemed like a lost opportunity to think more expansively about the sensory capacities of the users engaging. I'll also give you another example that I've been thinking a lot about, once those automatic captions came through, which were great. It became fairly quickly apparent to me that, you know, as we know now, and have known for some time that the algorithms encode biases, right? So if you have an accent, perhaps you don't have normative modes of speaking, the Zoom captions are not going to transcribe those accurately, or capture them well. And that can actually create some really problematic channels of mis-information that can be really damaging. At one point I started keeping a running log of the mistranscriptions, which contained some really wild mistakes like inexplicable profanity. So as a deaf user, who relies on captions, I find myself seeing the mis-transcriptions of my own voice coming through. Because I'm not what you would call a traditional speaker, but then who is right? So these are some examples of the kind of values that I see getting manifested through this platform. Like the visible or invisible values at the

coding level, that become tangible at the level of the Zoom interface in fascinating ways.

Kelsie Acton:
Yes. So you said you also wanted to talk about how you and your students navigated this. You mentioned laughing about it. But did you ever find other workarounds?

Reimaging the Pedagogy Through Remote Access

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
We did, we would use the chat quite a bit. I would. So we're still online/remote mode, because the work arounds have shifted as we've come back to in person. We did a lot of shared Google Docs, which feels somewhat straightforward. But the possibilities opened up by shared collaboration platforms are pretty exciting now, where I would invite students, I - and this is like something that I would do even before the pandemic, but like giving students autonomy, and agency to help guide the flow of the classroom. But the stakes became so much higher during the time of remote teaching, and I began to reimagine the power dynamic in the classroom as a community of care and interdependence; I recognized my students could help me too (and hopefully were willing to, in order to get the most out of their classroom experience), and that this exchange should be reciprocal. So I asked for student volunteer note-takers. And, because normally, I'm someone that likes to write on the whiteboard, but then I found that this is actually better, because you have this student-generated digital document. And it allows the students to participate in some of that information capture, and then multiple students could actually jump in and add, you know, a phrase or a keyword or make a comment and ask a question on those Google Docs or even Google Slides, we did a lot of Google slides as well. So those sort of shared platforms were really pedagogically transformative. Granted, I also realized that sometimes they won't - sometimes Google is not always great for screen readers, too. So

those were some challenges that we had to work through as well. Like a screen reader can't really find its place in a document where everyone is working simultaneously on that. So trying to create really strong organizational structures that prompts the students to do that wayfinding in a digital way, was a new experience for me. So we use a course infrastructure called Canvas. And I completely revamped my digital course infrastructure to be much more superfluous in a way. So there was a lot of redundancy built in, so that there were multiple pathways for students to find the information, you know, given formats, when I made those available. But I think recognising that trying to make the move to online actually opened up a lot of other options for students, like maybe they needed to make the text size bigger, rather than just having that printout. However, some students who are dyslexic said, well, then, you know, I still prefer to have a hard copy of that thing. So, I think the recognition was, access isn't perfect, right. And it needs to change with each group of students, and responsive to what their needs are.

Kelsie Acton:
Yeah. I'm listening, and I'm wondering if it's also fair to say that some of your students realized they had access needs in the shift to online?

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
That's exactly right. I think this is sort of also a broader trend that I see in student self-advocacy and recognizing that Zoom presents new access needs. My class is a required freshman writing class. And so on one hand, I had this opportunity to grab students who might not opt in to this course. And also they're all, like around mostly give or take the same age. And I would say, a good number of students, maybe a third of my students come into class not identifying as disabled. And then after we worked through the texts and the materials, and we had these like really critical discussions about what it means to be disabled and coming to understand the more inclusive language I've used around bodies, they realize, oh, actually, I realized that depression could be a kind of disability, for example, or bipolar disorder, or dyslexia. I think so many students were sort of still on the disability as pathology mindset. And so for them, it's very liberating to find

their community, and for some to come into an awareness that they might identify as disabled or have a desire to seek further academic accommodations. But then also even students who may not have disabilities or don't identify, they finally experienced real access conflicts that disabled folks experience all the time. So I think they would, again, that's like one of the silver linings where access became this sort of broader term that applies to everyone. Like, what does accessibility mean in the remote learning landscape – and has our understanding of access changed through this shift to online videoconferencing? Remote access is something disabled people have been practicing before the pandemic, and suddenly these practices and conversations are entering the mainstream, which was very exciting to me. As a class, we talked about who gets to access things (i.e. information, resources, healthcare, etc.), who determines which groups can access these tools for living and learning, and how is that access often determined across lines? These conversations were generated by daily observations about what it was like to be a first-year college student learning from home, 3,000 miles away or even 9,000 miles away from the physical community and campus they were supposed to be acclimating to. Like, you know, contingent on socioeconomic status, identity, gender, geography, and so on and so forth. So I think there were some really neat epiphanies that students had through that course.

Kelsie Acton:
You mentioned briefly the shift back to in person, how has - what's that taught you about remote access?

Returning to In-Person

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
So it is funny, right before our meeting I just received University correspondence announcing that Stanford’s winter quarter is going to be online for the first two weeks of classes with the new variant wreaking havoc on our community... In some ways, I have conflicted feelings: I don't

feel that sense of trepidation about that as I did before, because I have my set of tools. Now, strangely, Zoom actually is my preference right now, because it means I get to see my students' full faces, because I have been teaching in a masked classroom. Teaching in a masked classroom was a whole other set of very, very difficult, in some ways, more difficult access conflicts for me, this past fall quarter.

So I can talk a little bit more about what that experience has been, because I think I haven't gotten a chance to really reflect deeply on it. And I appreciate the opportunity to do that in this space with you.

Every university had a very different set of protocols during the pandemic. But at our university, as of December 2021, they required that everyone be masked at all times indoors. And so they are quite rigid, and I actually appreciate that they're trying to keep our community safe and healthy. So I had been sort of anticipating that announcement for a long time. A lot of my community, my colleagues, were saying, ‘well, we're all vaccinated. There's no need for masks. So let us go back and we'll be teaching like as if we are back to normal’. I have to scoff a bit at this notion of going “back to normal.” Disabled folks have been saying this is wrong. We don't want to go back to normal — “normal” before the pandemic wasn’t great either — and there is no getting back normal after a global pandemic has profoundly and irrevocably changed us in ways we still don’t understand. So I wasn't surprised, but I was just, I was taken back to that moment of fear, and uncertainty when I was told to go teach online. How am I going to communicate with masks which left me feeling really isolated the entire pandemic? With masking, it is next to impossible for me to communicate with people because I rely very heavily on lip reading, in addition to my limited auditory abilities. So I did, I spent a lot of time thinking about what I could do to make teaching in a masked classroom work. And of course, the burden was on me. I did get some support from colleagues and administrators, but they would make suggestions that didn't make sense or weren't fully thought through. So at one point, I was like, I don't even know if I can teach in person. I might have to be - I might have to teach on zoom. So, I was put kind of in a difficult position where I said, I guess I have no

choice but to try it in the classroom. And if it fails terribly, then they will move me online, with a lot of pressure to teach in person. So on the first day of class, I had an in person CART captioner. I felt really badly about this, because it meant another person in the classroom who had to put himself or herself at risk for me, for their own occupation. This was still in an early critical stage where we didn't know what it was like to return to in person teaching and how we were going to contain the spread of the virus. So I bought a stack of clear masks for the class. And honestly, that in and of itself was a project to just figure out what are the good clear masks out there because there's a lot of really shoddily constructed clear masks that fog up very easily.

And then Stanford never made any sort of recommendation specific to clear masking. So it felt like I was making my own sort of health recommendations, which was concerning to me, because I recognize that I might have some immunocompromised students in my class who might want to wear their like, N95s, or KN95 masks. So I had this push pull of my own access needs versus trying to honor my students. It was really hard. I didn't feel comfortable saying all students need to wear clear masks. So I invited them to do it if they felt comfortable. And I would say initially, maybe a third of the students did that. And it helped a lot. But it was on them to remember their clear mask, I had to keep bringing them to class, they would forget them, the clear masks did fog up a bunch. Some students were just really difficult to hear, my captioner had an impossible job. We did a lot of work researching if we could bring a Bluetooth microphone into this space, or a speaker that would pick up the students' voices through the masks. But all of those options either never came to fruition or failed when we tried to execute in the classroom.

It was— it was actually quite laughable. It was a series of like unfortunate events, to the point where the access coordinator would forget something or the bluetooth microphone wasn't charged, or they like momentarily lost it and, and then it was on me to try to figure this out. And I, I have somewhat limited technical knowledge of how to operate these things. And at one point, we are also thinking about a Bluetooth mic that might link up directly

to my cochlear implant. But they were just making the assumption that any Bluetooth, or audio speaker would sync up with a medical device, and I was like, no, it doesn't work that way! So that ended up getting scrapped. And I said, “this isn't working, this is distracting. We're starting classes late because of this. This is fundamentally not helping anyone. Let's try again at a later stage.” What all this revealed to me was the lack of foresight on the institutional level about what a return to learning in a physical classroom with masks would mean, and thinking about technical tools like built-in classroom microphones, amplification devices, or even video conferencing tools for hybrid that could help everybody.

I think at that point, a lot of people have thought about, okay, the teacher, the instructor, would wear a mobile/lapel microphone for the students. But they weren't thinking about it from the other side. What about a teacher who needs to hear the students too? So those are, I mean, examples of how there was an unspoken assumption that all instructors could hear well, and didn’t need the same kind of support as students did. I could drone on about this. But those are some examples of the challenges of in person teaching. And I have to tell you, the first day after in person teaching with masks, the level of exhaustion that I felt was shocking to me because all sensory capacities were on high alert for several continuous hours. And I was working so hard to engage my eyes and pick up on every little eye movement and nuance to understand my students, and I was really alarmed at what that was going to mean for me going forward. But fortunately, after a few weeks, I was able to adjust a bit. I know I was not alone in this: my colleagues also felt similarly drained with in person teaching because speaking through a mask and listening to people speaking through masks is really physically taxing.

Kelsie Acton:
That sounds really brutal.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
Yeah.

Kelsie Acton:
Can you talk about, you mentioned Stanford, you felt like you needed to try and go back in person. Can you talk to me about what some of the narratives were around why people needed to be back in person?

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
I think there were two predominant narratives that came out during that time that reflected broader reactions and thinking in educational circles in response to the pandemic vis-a-vis students and faculty. And one was remote teaching, remote learning is just not working. It is too hard to stay engaged. It is inequitable, because some students don't even have a quiet space or reliable internet connection. Those are all really excellent arguments to be sure. And then that informed the push back to in person and where I think, we can provide housing, we can provide food, we can provide educational support, we can provide health care, which a lot of students did not have access to, since they were zooming in from their homes. The majority of students, with the exception of a few students who were granted exemptions to be on campus last year, were zooming in remotely. So, I had a lot of students who were in precarious situations that were zooming in, and it was really difficult for them, and it affected their academic and emotional and mental health. So I understood the arguments for in person teaching in that sense.

But, what was surprising was the kind of assumption that everybody would benefit or wanted in person learning and teaching because that was what we were used to and what we knew how to do well. You know, we just realized now in this pandemic, that there were vulnerable populations. And, of course, there always, always have been vulnerable populations. But those folks maybe who, you know, are imuno-compromised, or had, you know, chronic health issues, did not want to be back in the classroom, both on the teaching and the student side. I think it's across higher education, there was a lack of willingness to truly consider the benefits of remote learning outside of the constraints of this one-in-a-lifetime global event, or even to try hybrid. And I actually asked some higher administration folks about hybrid. Why are we not thinking about hybrid, when you're excluding

a really big community of people who would benefit from it? And also, what about the students who have to quarantine or who've been exposed? Or who have a regular cold? And we're now asking them to stay home?

The response was, “we don't want to do hybrid, if we can't do it well. We won't, we don't believe in doing hybrid poorly. So we're not going to try it at all.” Which is a really eye opening response. Because we've got a lot of institutional wealth, and we are in the seat of Silicon Valley where technological innovation is happening all around us and within the very walls of the university. And it seems like a pretty good - you know, this is going to be the future. So why not try hybrid? This messaging against hybrid teaching was university wide, and we were told that everything needs to be delivered in the physical space of the classroom, do not accommodate students trying to zoom in. Or do not record your classes.

I think some of this response stemmed from a few concerns: that we didn't have the technical infrastructure in place - in our classrooms - to meaningfully and seamlessly sustain dual presencing; that the University had already asked so much of instructors and they recognized the burden of labor would fall on us to adapt to yet another entirely new classroom environment and to achieve some degree of literacy with that system.

Kelsie Acton:
That's so interesting, because it sounds like maybe you weren't doing Zoom well, but also, everything in person had shifted. So you weren't necessarily doing in person well, either.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
Right? Right? One can expose the logical flaws about that very quickly. But it was just really perplexing to me. We already had generated so much online content - recording lectures, and asynchronous activities, and were just finally learning to teach more effectively online. Now, we were being asked to effectively ditch all that content and pedagogical tools we had laboriously developed over the year. I think that the thinking was that instructors had already been so stretched, moving online, and then to yet

again learn a new set of tools for hybrid was going to push everyone to the breaking point. Okay, fine - there's some validity to that argument as I've been talking about how difficult this year was for me and my colleagues, and our students. But I think that again, that's ignoring the crip wisdom of planning for uncertain futures. And, you know, I love Alice Wong's notion of the disabled oracle, right, that we can see the future. To me, it was an unfortunate lack of foresight to acknowledge that hybrid is the future, so let's lean into that.

So I just decided this approach was antithetical to my pedagogy, to not allow students who are sick, or maybe needed to take a rest day from their bed to zoom in. And yeah, that presented some other challenges for me, but we made it work. And so I actually was a little bit radical in my approach there, but it just felt like it was, it was further penalizing students who were trying to preserve the health of our community.

Experimenting with Hybrid Teaching

Kelsie Acton:
So how did you make hybrid work?

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
So we spent the first, let's say, four weeks of class, in person. And then at that point, students started to fall ill as they tend to do, you know, at certain points in the quarter. So I had a student who inquired about it, even though they weren't technically supposed to. And I said you know what, let's try it, I don't want you to fall behind, I can't promise it's gonna go well. So what I did was I opened up a zoom classroom - I always have a zoom link, ready to go on my canvas page, in case of emergencies. So I opened up the link. And they could see me, they could not see the rest of the class, though. But I enabled the subtitles, so they could pick up on bits and pieces. And I tried to provide other documents like we would have our class Google Doc which contained our agenda, discussion questions, activities etc., so they

could follow along with note taking. And we did some group work online so that they could participate that way. So I think, because I had done so much scaffolding work in the previous year with Zoom, and I kept a lot of it, that it allowed that hybrid format to work. It didn't allow students to participate in a way that they might have in person. And they didn't, they didn't quite pick up on the large classroom discussion. But they were at least able to hear me working through important components of the lesson plan and show their presence in a different way.

Kelsie Acton:
That's really cool.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
The interesting thing is that I - it was hard to navigate all of this on my small laptop, because I would have my notes, or the presentation on one classroom screen and then the Zoom screen on another. I had my captions on a separate computer, too. And it was, again, a little bit of that event coordinator move during - you have to multitask. But I think that the students were just grateful to be able to participate at all.

Kelsie Acton:
Yeah, I see that. I've really loved this. I feel like you bring up such amazing things about all the upsides of the technology, and also like all the complexities that the technology creates. Do you have anything else you want to tell me or other stories from like navigating remote to hybrid to in-person?

Remote Teaching and Disability Identification

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
Oh, let's see. What's in my notes? I think you've touched on a lot of this. I think it's yes, it's a lot. It's a lot to process. I would like to say I've

highlighted - sorry, momentarily lost my screen here. I was checking my notes.

I think interestingly, I had more students who identified explicitly as disabled during my remote teaching year than I am seeing now back in the classroom. A lot of students I work with have invisible disabilities. And I noticed that they didn't explicitly talk about their identity as much as I had seen in the remote teaching period. But at the same time, some students with physical disabilities were able to mask or “pass” as non-disabled through the Zoom environment. And this is something that I'm actually just kind of coming to think about right now.

Yeah, I think there was something compelling about the layout, sort of protection that the Zoom room and the ability to turn the camera on and off allowed. We talked so much about access, and I was even more vulnerable with them in my own struggles with communication. I had one student with some visible differences. I never saw him once. His screen was always off. But I know he said he identified that he had facial differences. And so I think in some ways, it was kind of liberating for him to just be himself. And I don't think any of the other students knew about his visual differences, except for me, because he had shared that with me to explain why he didn't want to be on video. So I thought, you know, that's lovely that he can just choose a mode of participation that suits him, although it presents some real challenges for me to understand him. So again, those tension points that I touched on of access conflict, were really interesting to me, and I still am not totally sure how to navigate them except for with like, compassion and care. And I think there was a mutual understanding, like, okay, you'd have more patience with the professor who needs a little bit more repetition, perhaps. Or maybe sometimes you need to use the chat, to clarify a point that you said, because I didn't pick up on it. So those are some other observations.

And one other thing that I'll say just to close out, so typically, I also teach oral communication in my programme. So we have two educational directives: the first year students develop their research and writing skills.

And the second year students take an oral communication class in which they translate their research paper into an oral presentation with multimedia support for a live audience . So lots of really practical tools. And I enjoy teaching that class, I teach a class that flips the idea of a normative speaker on its head. Like what values do we ascribe to a speaking body, and what might be some compelling non-normative modes of presenting information that stray away from this ableist ideal? So I haven't been able to teach that class. I'm not going to teach it this year. And I didn't teach it last year, because I didn't feel comfortable evaluating students' work while they were masked. Even though there was such an interesting possibility of like, well, given my course topic, we're really interested in like non-normative modes of speaking and the masking presents just that. So that's been kind of an interesting consideration. And it's hard to say when I will return to our oral communication curriculum.

Kelsie Acton:
Yeah, and I guess also thinking, how much do you want to rethink that? If masks end up being something we do long term? Is it worth eventually rethinking that, but at what point do you decide to do it?

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
Yeah, yeah. And I love that you brought that up. And I've been doing a lot of thinking with the programme about what we hold up as a good model of speaking. I think, it is really ableist. And I think what was done with the Zoom presentations as our oral communication curriculum shifted to fully online, pre-recorded presentations introduced compelling alternatives of expression and presence that weren't necessarily explicitly verbal. Right? So but yet again, there is just this push to just return to the norm, to the old standard of teaching. And it gets really exhausting to continue to do that advocacy when it gets nowhere. All that additional advocacy for myself, and for my students on top of just trying to survive this year—wow. It's been, yeah, one of the most exhausting years of my life teaching.

But you know, I feel like I connected with students in maybe a deeper and more meaningful way too.

Kelsie Acton:
Amazing.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
So yeah, I think that more or less covers things, at least from the teaching side and I think there's a lot more to say there. I wish I had an opportunity to capture even more of those fine grained exchanges. And I'll go back and think if there's anything else that pops into my head.

Kelsie Acton:
Yeah. And if you send through the writing, we'd love to, yeah, have that. But I think even what you've shared, is really incredible because we have some other pieces around remote pedagogy and like remote teaching that are very, like manifestos, or like how to guides. And I think now listening to you, I'm sort of like, oh, what was missing was, like, all the complexity of actually trying to put those things into place.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
Yeah, then its sort of like whack a mole, you try to do one thing, and then it opens up a whole host of other problems, like, thinking we could do a microphone in the classroom. Wow, that just added a whole other layer of complexity that I even myself was surprised by.

Kelsie Acton:
Yeah.

Lindsey Dolich Felt:
So I think I'm glad that some of that complexity is coming through.

Kelsie Acton:
Hugely. So thank you so much for your time. It's been such a pleasure chatting to you. Yeah.