

Phil Dallmann: Hello inclusion believers, and welcome to the first episode of 2019 of the Access Champions podcast. I'm your host Phil Dallmann for this week's journey into the galaxies of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion.

Phil Dallmann: I'm gonna apologize for last week, skipping the episode, but it was that weird week between Christmas and New Years where you just eat a lot and you don't know what time it is or what day it is ... It's just a blur, so tough to get a guest during that time. We skipped a week. It's our first skipped week and it ideally will be our only one, but we're very excited to dive into a new year of this podcast.

Phil Dallmann: We're a little more than halfway through our first and sort of inaugural season, our first year of episodes. This is episode 37 I believe. I know it was very exciting as I was putting into the calendar all the way up to episode 52, which will be a year's worth of episodes, and knowing that we actually have our guest locked in for episode 52. We're really excited.

Phil Dallmann: As we start this new year, I do wanna say briefly just again how grateful I am to everyone who listens to the podcast. It has been so much more successful than I could've ever imagined, and it just continues to live in that upward trajectory. We have some potential opportunities coming up which are really, really exciting, and I'll put it out there, we are always looking for sponsorships. We officially a New York City nonprofit organization, which is exciting. I don't know how many nonprofit podcasts are out there, but we are one of them.

Phil Dallmann: We are happy to accept donations, but we also are willing to take some sponsorships and we can plug your organization on the podcast, and happy to share the data of who listens and where they listen and how many are listening with you if you are interested in that. If you are interested, again, you can reach out to us at [accesschampion@gmail.com](mailto:accesschampion@gmail.com).

Phil Dallmann: I also want to put out that if you have anyone you'd love to hear on the podcast, our listeners are such a wonderful mix of folks who work in accessibility, diversity, and inclusion across the board, and folks who benefit from that realm and who are creating communities and live in these diverse communities and inclusive communities, so if there are folks that you're like, "You know, I'd love to hear them sit down on the podcast and have a really great in depth chat," shoot us a message. We're open to suggestions. We're always looking for new guests.

Phil Dallmann: Or if there's an event where you'd love to see the pop up studio come back, hit us up. I'm always down to travel a little bit and set up a studio and have a great time. As always, gotta plug follow us on social media. We're at [accesschampion](#) almost everywhere across the board. On Facebook, The Access Champion podcast. We're pretty closed to, I believe it was like 600 likes on Facebook,



which is exciting. Again, all these people following us is more than I could've ever imagined with this show.

Phil Dallmann: We have, speaking of the pop up studio, we have two guests this week, two mini interviews from our pop up studio last summer. It's been, we got so much content in just three days time down at the LEAD Conference in Atlanta. So we have a couple more left. We're almost out of interviews, but it's been amazing to continue to share these, and what a really fun couple of days doing these interviews.

Phil Dallmann: Our interviews this week are Sawyer Kost, who is from the IDEA Center. She's gonna share some of her thoughts on universal design, really fun interview, and a really fun topic and something we haven't touched on much yet on the podcast. But I'm looking forward to this being the tip of the conversation that we have on the podcast. It is always ongoing and we'd love to chat more with both Sawyer and other folks who are working in that field.

Phil Dallmann: We also have Jill Rothstein, who is the chief librarian for the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library which is part of the New York Public Library system here. The work that they're doing is amazing. It really is. It's one of the greatest resources in the country I would say, of braille and talking books, so a really fun conversation. Again, another one that I hope we get to continue in the future on the podcast. So without further ado, Access Champion Sawyer Kost.

Phil Dallmann: All right, and we're back at our pop up studio here at the LEAD Conference in Atlanta, and I am joined by Sawyer Kost.

Sawyer Kost: Kost.

Phil Dallmann: Kost. Sawyer Kost from the IDEA Center in Buffalo, New York. How many LEADs is this for you Sawyer?

Sawyer Kost: This is my first one.

Phil Dallmann: Oh, that's very exciting.

Sawyer Kost: Brand new.

Phil Dallmann: Very exciting. What brought you to LEAD?

Sawyer Kost: The head of my center, Ed Steinfeld, comes here every year and does presentations, and so the work that I'm doing with him and the IDEA Center and for my thesis for my Master's deals directly with arts and cultural institutions, so this was perfectly matched up for the work that I'm doing.

Phil Dallmann: Fantastic.

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Sawyer Kost: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: How long have you been here?

Sawyer Kost: I got here ... When did I get here? I got here on Sunday actually.

Phil Dallmann: Oh wow, so you did some ... Did you do pre-conference?

Sawyer Kost: No, I actually went down to Savannah for a couple of days, saw a band Every Time I Die, who's actually from Buffalo, in a tiny 100 person venue, got some bruises, and then came up here and was academic.

Phil Dallmann: That seems like the most well rounded experience you can-

Sawyer Kost: The best.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah.

Sawyer Kost: The best.

Phil Dallmann: So far have you been in any sessions or seen any ideas that really struck you?

Sawyer Kost: Yeah. The sessions that I've really liked have dealt with grant writing and all the stuff from the NEA because we do a lot of grant work at the IDEA Center. We get a lot of funding through state and federal grant, and that's all new to me. I come from an arts and design background so a lot of that academic federal funding kind of stuff is not in my wheelhouse, so I've learned a lot.

Phil Dallmann: It's not spoken about enough I think.

Sawyer Kost: Yeah, for sure.

Phil Dallmann: Honestly in the world of cultural institutions and nonprofit, it's like you hire these specialized folks that live in development and grant writing, but even the specifics of these federal agencies and the state agencies that do this funding are all incredibly unique.

Sawyer Kost: Right, absolutely.

Phil Dallmann: That's fantastic.

Sawyer Kost: Yeah, what else? It's been just really nice to meet a lot of people. I think that's the biggest thing for me. I'm brand new to the accessibility area coming from design, so being able to meet a lot of different people, connect. I have a whole thing of business cards. That's been the highlight for me, being able to have people come up to me after my presentation that I just made today and want to



know more about the work that we're doing, so that's I think the biggest takeaway for me.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, my favorite thing about LEAD is meeting everyone, meeting new people. I was just speaking to someone and I said that LEAD for me is always coming home because it's your people, it's community, it's everybody just trying to lift each other up and love on you about the ideas that you're doing, the work you're doing. What were you presenting on?

Sawyer Kost: Ed and I were presenting one of our things that we're doing at our center called ISUD, it's innovative solutions for universal design. The focus used to be, well starting out, was on commercial buildings, new builds. It's basically based on construction and architecture because a lot of the work that the IDEA Center does is focused on universal design in architecture solely. The work that I brought into the program and to the center focused more on content design, artistic implementation in arts and cultural institutions.

Sawyer Kost: So we wanted to bring this to LEAD to ask the people at LEAD that came to that particular session if we should combine those two things, if they should be separate, if we should have a whole things for arts and culture or if it should be infrastructured within this architectural kind of program. So that was what we were working on and we got a lot of great feedback. People are excited about it. A lot of institutions wanna get their buildings and their content and their exhibitions and their performances to be universally designed.

Sawyer Kost: A lot of people in this field in the arts are very very receptive, and that's something that we don't always run into. A lot of architecture firms and architects in general, not to bash my people in architecture, but a lot of focus is on code and law, and because there's so much riding on your architectural infrastructure you worry about that stuff way beyond anything else, and so we get a lot of pushback when it comes to more design thinking and innovative solutions and universal design. They want to go by the code. They want to be safe from lawsuits and they don't really think beyond that. But here, like you were saying, there's a lot more welcome opportunity for that.

Phil Dallmann: Absolutely. For the rest of the time you're here is there anything else you're looking forward to learning about or any sessions you're looking forward to?

Sawyer Kost: I have some former colleagues here actually, Bessie Varth and [inaudible 00:10:51] who work in universal design for the Smithsonian. I used to work at their accessibility office back in DC when I was in graduate school. They're actually presenting in like an hour, and so it's good to see them do their presentation work. I'm excited for that. I just like to be able to see what other institutions are dealing with, what their challenges are, what they feel that they need to share. So that's what I'm looking forward to the most, and just meeting more people. That's the big thing for me.



Phil Dallmann: Well that's fantastic. Beside those folks that you just mentioned, is there anybody else out there that you feel like are doing tremendous work as it comes to universal design?

Sawyer Kost: I think my big inspiration is all the work that the accessibility wing of the NEA does. I met Beth, the head of their wing of accessibility, and I think that they're doing so much to educate, and education is so big for me. I wanna after I get this Master's degree, I wanna go on to get my PhD and do a lot of educational work in teaching designers and architects and technicians and artists about universal design. So I think a lot of the work that they're doing with education is so important.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, absolutely. Well fantastic. Well I hope you enjoy the rest of the conference and thanks for sitting down with us.

Sawyer Kost: Of course, thank you.

Phil Dallmann: Oh, and before we stop, you do have your own podcast. Sorry.

Sawyer Kost: I do. I do actually. We're currently on hiatus, but my podcast Phased Out is on the history of alternative music. I'm a big music nerd and me and my friend Ian have a podcast about that. I'm also expanding it out to do a whole network of podcasts in the Buffalo area. We have one coming up about New York hockey, which is a other big passion of mine. Then we're doing, me and my roommate Jocelyn are doing one on mental health and LGBT issues, so keep an eye out for all of those I would say.

Phil Dallmann: Fantastic.

Sawyer Kost: I'm a big podcasting junkie, so this is exciting.

Phil Dallmann: Fair enough. Awesome, well thank you again and I'm sure we'll be chatting more soon.

Sawyer Kost: Thank you.

Phil Dallmann: Thank you Sawyer. Really great to hear from you and listen to that conversation again. It's been a few months since we got to sit down and it was really refreshing to hear. Just man, it was just such a blast doing that popup studio. Looking forward to doing it many more times. Keeping this podcast rolling, Access Champion Jill Rothstein.

Phil Dallmann: All right, and we're back for our second mini episode of the LEAD Conference. We're here with Jill Rothstein, who I met yesterday, the beauty of the LEAD Conference. You sit down at a table if you don't know everybody, all of a sudden

you've made new friends. Jill is from the New York Public Library, the Heiskell Library, correct?

Jill Rothstein: Yeah, the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library.

Phil Dallmann: Great. I know it's a much longer name than that.

Jill Rothstein: Yeah, it's quite long.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah, but it's fantastic, and I've been a fan of the work that you guys do there from afar-

Jill Rothstein: Thanks so much.

Phil Dallmann: Specifically some of the conventions and gatherings that you guys host there I think are fantastic for community partners and things like that. Now this is your-

Jill Rothstein: This is my third LEAD Conference, but I haven't been for a couple years, so I'm really excited to be back.

Phil Dallmann: I was about to say, what brought you back this time?

Jill Rothstein: Well I'm actually doing some work for an NYPL system wide accessibility group, specifically focusing on some of the exhibitions we do at that main library because we have such amazing collections there. And so it was particularly appropriate to come and learn some more about access for that kind of cultural institution.

Phil Dallmann: Absolutely. So far, because it's only been a day of sessions, have you learned anything interesting?

Jill Rothstein: Yes I have. It's been a great day already. I was fascinated to find that a museum, who's name I of course forgot but I can look it up for you, they were working on a death culture festival and they designed an American Sign Language sign for their museum based on the sculptures in their front yard which I thought was really great.

Phil Dallmann: That's fantastic. There's a lot of great museums here this week I think.

Jill Rothstein: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: That are doing really interesting work like that. That's great. What are you most excited about today?



Jill Rothstein: I'm excited that I think possibly for the first time some of my colleagues are doing a session on public libraries and the importance of public libraries being accessible and open to everyone and some of the specific concerns there.

Phil Dallmann: Yeah. It's not a topic, and I'm around a lot of conferences, that gets brought up. Libraries are an essential part of ... It's culture.

Jill Rothstein: Yeah, absolutely.

Phil Dallmann: They are the holders of culture.

Jill Rothstein: They've done some studies and public libraries have a really great reputation, for some people, you know this is a safe space, a good space, and not a lot of people even in the museum world seem to actually know everything that libraries do these days. We're not just sitting around reading books.

Phil Dallmann: No.

Jill Rothstein: Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: So what's one of the things that people wouldn't know that you guys do?

Jill Rothstein: Maybe that we're providing digital access by loaning out hotspots, and we're doing sensory story time programming and having exhibits and concerts. Yeah.

Phil Dallmann: That's fantastic.

Jill Rothstein: Yeah, and of course at my library we're working on braille literacy.

Phil Dallmann: Yes, which is amazing. Wonderful. Well enjoy the conference.

Jill Rothstein: Thank you.

Phil Dallmann: Thank you for coming to sit down in the pop up studio, and I'm sure we'll catch up soon.

Jill Rothstein: Yes definitely. Thanks so much.

Phil Dallmann: We're gonna do a proper interview once we're all back in New York.

Jill Rothstein: Sounds good.

Phil Dallmann: Thank you Jill. Again, man just so much fun. Kelsey and I, Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown as she's always called here on the podcast, just had a blast, just a blast doing that studio and running around, just meeting so many interesting people. I had gone to that conference for so many years and you just naturally end up



gravitating to the same people that you're comfortable with, and it was so cool to just have so many people that are doing amazing work come over and get to engage with, and I got to meet all of these Access Champions. So again, this is probably the third time I'm plugging this on the podcast, if you have events and things where you'd love to have the popup studio, reach out because I'd love to come and I'd love to set up camp and chat with a bunch of people and have a great time.

Phil Dallmann: Just last little bit of business, be on the lookout on social media. Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown is rebranding some things. We're gonna have a lot more content coming your way in 2019, very, very, very exciting stuff. I'm happy to announce we're gonna be doing some organization series coming up where we kind of take a deep dive into various parts of organizations that do work in accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. So not necessarily just the person with the title of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion, but looking at how they fundraise, who's in charge of fundraising, how that person navigates inspiration porn and things of that nature and ethics, and all the way up to executive directors who have to set the tone for the organization, that maybe the entire mission doesn't necessarily live in accessibility, diversity, and inclusion but part of it does, and how they balance all of that. So really excited to do that.

Phil Dallmann: We have great organizations lined up, but open to more. There are plenty of slots, so if you feel like your organization would be a good fit for that, again, please reach out and we'd be happy to chat. As always, I wanna thank Matt Kerstetter, our producer, for making us sound great each and every single week, Eric Walton for that dope theme song. It never gets old, but we may be fiddling with it a little bit coming up this year. Have some ideas in motion, we're gonna try some stuff, see what happens. And of course our champion intern Ms. Kelsey Rose Brown. We'll be back again next week, and remember inclusion believers, never stop running through that brick wall.

