

Plain English Summary

Archiving, Access, and Artificial Intelligence Report

October 2025

What is this Report about?

This report is about a project that created a website called Disability Arts History Australia.

The project was funded by the Australian Research Council, Creative Australia, Queensland University of Technology Centre for Justice, and Curtin University Centre for Technology and Culture, with Arts Access Victoria and the University of Melbourne.

The project's goal was to make a website with records of Australian Disability Arts from the last 50 years. The project team wanted to do this to fix a problem.

- Australian Disability Arts are well known around the world
- We do not have many records of Australian Disability Arts in the past
- For a long time, libraries, galleries, and museums have left the work of d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent people out of the work they show visitor
- If they did show our work, they did not show it the way we wanted
- This means people do not know much about us and our history
- This also means people continue to think about us in ways that are not fair

The Disability Arts History Australia website is a website to help artists, people who work in arts organisations, government, and Universities to make the arts industry more accessible.

To create the website, the team project was to fix this.

- Collected records
- Had conversations with artists
- Used 'Critical Disability Studies' – a way of thinking that helps use understand out Disabled people live, work, make art, and speak up for our rights – to find out what people talked about the most in these records and conversations
- Met with d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent people to discuss what the website would look like

As soon as the project team tried to upload this information to the website, we learned this was difficult for us to do. This was not just because we are not good at websites. The old documents, and the website we were trying to upload them to, were not easy for us as Disabled people to read and use. They were not easy for Disabled people who visit the site to use.

The team found out that many people are now using smart computers and robots that can learn – called ‘Artificial Intelligence (AI)’ – to help with this. So, the team tried using these smart computers and robots to see if it would make it easier for us to create the website, or for other people to use it.

What is in the Report?

How did we use Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- To get information from documents
- To make it easier to search for information in the documents
- To make the documents, and the website, easier to use
 - Putting documents into different formats
 - Short descriptions of what is in the document and website
 - Reading documents aloud in a computer voice
 - Adding captions to read what people are talking about in videos

What did we learn about using use Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- Some of these computers and robots are useful – for example, to read text aloud
- Some of these computers and robots are not easy for us as d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent people to use
 - The computers read other things out loud, or describe pictures
 - They do not read their own instructions out loud, or describe they pictures they are using, or have easy to follow instructions for us
 - They do not let us give the computer instructions telling it what we want it to do with our voice rather than typing
- Some of these robots and computers made a lot of mistakes
 - They did not understand the way we talk
 - They did not understand the words we use to describe our lives
- Trying to fix these mistakes took a lot of time, energy, and effort
- This was hard for us as d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent people
 - We have less opportunities for training, work, and making money so we do not have money to get people to help us
 - We spent a lot of time sorting out our medical appointments, support workers, and access arrangements – as well as other life activities or work – so we do not have a lot of time to do this

What else make us worry about using AI?

- We worried what happens if AI becomes very good for access
 - Will it force all of us to use robots instead of human support?
 - Even if we say we do not want to do this?

What are the main things learned in the Report?

The project showed that a lot of work is still needed to make collections of records on websites, and the computers and robots people use to create these websites, easy for us as d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent people to use. This includes work to fix problems with

- **Bias and Misrepresentation** – smart computers can have unfair ideas about d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent people, and this can make us feel more left out
- **Accessibility** – smart computers are not easy for us Disabled creators and users, if they do not read information aloud, give us captions and descriptions of pictures, or let us tell the machine what to do with our voice
- **Labour and Cost** – using smart computers and robots can be a lot of work and can cost a lot of money.

The report recommends that d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent people should have the right to be in charge of their own history. To make this happen, we need to make archives, digital archives, and AI tools more accessible.

How do I contact the authors?

Contact Us



Visit the Disability Arts History Australia website at:
<https://disabilityartshistoryaustralia.net>



For media, interviews, further information, or enquires about tailored reports, contact Professor Bree Hadley, bree.hadley@qut.edu.au

What do the main words used in this Report mean?

Words and Ideas in this Report

- **Disability Arts History Australia:** A website that shows stories, records, and history of d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent artists in Australia.
- **Archive:** A collection of records and histories
- **Project:** A plan of work done by a group of people. This project made a website to share Disability Arts history.
- **Funded:** Money given to help a project happen. This project got money from universities and arts organisations.
- **Records:** Old papers, photos, videos, or stories that show what happened in the past.

- **d/Deaf, Disabled, and Neurodivergent people:** People who are Deaf or hard of hearing, have a disability, or think and learn in different ways.
- **Accessible / Accessibility:** Easy to use, easy to understand, and open to everyone. Accessible websites work well for people with different needs.
- **Arts Organisations:** Groups that help artists make and share their work.
- **Critical Disability Studies:** A way of thinking and learning about disability that looks at how society treats disabled people. It asks what makes things harder or easier. It does not just look at medical problems, or at problems with buildings, furniture, and equipment, or at bad things people say about this. It looks at how all these things work together.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Smart computers or robots that can learn and help with tasks. Example: reading text aloud or writing short summaries.
- **Smart Computer / Robot:** A machine that can do things like a person—like reading, writing, or answering questions.
- **Captions:** Words on a screen that show what people are saying in a video.
- **Description:** Words that explain what is in a picture, video, or document.
- **Plain / Easy English:** Simple words and short sentences that are easy to read and understand.
- **Bias:** Unfair ideas or actions. Example: when a computer thinks disabled people are less important.
- **Representation:** Showing the real experience of real people in stories
- **Misrepresentation:** Wrong or unfair way of showing someone or something.
- **Labour:** Work that takes time and energy.
- **Cost:** Money needed to do something.
- **Upload:** Put something (like a photo or document) onto a website.
- **Search:** Look for something online or in a document.
- **Digital Archive:** A collection of records saved on a computer or website.
- **Consent:** Saying yes to something. Example: agreeing to share your story or photo.
- **Participation:** Being part of something. Example: joining a meeting or making art.
- **Equity:** Fair
- **Disability Administration:** Extra work Disabled people do to manage life