

Disability and Technological Practices of Refusal: Locating “Crip Futurity” in the Remote Access Archive

EMMA MAY

Rutgers University School of Communication and Information

emmashustermay@gmail.com

Abstract

This theoretical essay explores the connections between disability and temporality as they relate to technology, utilizing The Remote Access Archive as an illustrative case. The crowdfunded online archive is concerned with how disabled people use technology to create access. The Remote Access Archive highlights the imaginative ways that disabled people utilize and build relations through technology. These practices can be understood as more than simply technological, artistic, or archival interventions. They are practices that uncover possibilities to imagine and enact crip futurity. This paper builds upon the concepts of refusal (Camp, 2017) and crip futurity (Kafer, 2013) to examine how the archival endeavor of the Remote Access Archive is a means to collectively imagine disabled futures despite the ongoing foreclosure of futurity.

1. Introduction

Outside of critical disability studies literature, the connections between disability and technology are often narrowly examined as design concerns (Bennett et al., 2018; Hofmann et al., 2020). Within these formulations, inaccessibility is rendered as an aberration that can be fixed—or cured—by design. It is an ultimately reformative stance wherein the entrepreneurial and neoliberal logics of productivity and techno-solutionism uphold technology as the sole means of solving social issues. Additionally, the contributions of those who are most adversely affected by design decisions are overlooked. Rather than reforming existing technologies through traditional and oftentimes exclusionary design practices, we must look beyond the reformist framework of “curing” technology toward transformative Black feminist abolitionist thought based on the ideals of transformation and liberation (Davis et al., 2022; Lewis et al., 2020). Abolition is more than simply tearing carceral systems down; it is about imagining beyond pervasive logics to build a better future. Benjamin (2019) writes, “calls for abolition are never simply about bringing harmful systems to an end but also about envisioning new ones...the etymology of ‘abolition’ includes Latin root words for ‘destroy’ (*abolere*) and ‘grow’ (*olere*)” (p. 159). Moreover, its Latin root word to “grow” is often ignored. Benjamin urges readers to expand their thinking beyond capitalistic, product-driven perspectives on technology and design to consider “toolmaking as a practice” for solidarity and collective liberation (p. 168).

This theoretical paper focuses on an illustrative case study of The Remote Access Archive that examines how disabled people engage in the communal creation of access. Often out of

necessity due to the multiple and interrelated forms of inaccessibility that span economic, social, and technological realms, disabled people routinely co-construct technologies in order to promote access beyond simply greater inclusion through the aid of technology (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019; Mills, 2010; Napolitano, 2022). The Remote Access Archive is currently in development, and will consist of a collection of images, text-based documents, and video recordings that concern how disabled people create remote access via technology. The archive was chosen as a case because is not simply a technological intervention, nor does it promote individualistic understandings of access and participation. The Remote Access Archive instead directs discussions away from the technologies themselves, and instead looks toward the possibilities that arise from the co-creation of technologies and the alternative epistemologies and relationalities that surround them. The archival project as an illustrative case reveals how access creation through technology can be understood as both a relational and communal practice predicated on a radical valuation of those cast out of reproductive futurity.

This essay examines how disabled people's technological practices reveal opportunities to imagine and enact what Kafer (2013) terms a "crip vision of an elsewhere" (p. 24). Kafer's interrogation of normative temporality and "progress" entails a radical reimagining of temporality that is undergirded by a refusal of the conditions that circumscribe disability from visions of the future. This work extends and brings together the concepts of crip futurity (Kafer, 2013) and crip technoscience (Hamraie and Fritsch, 2019), which originate in critical disability studies scholarship, as well as the interrelated concepts of Black feminist futurity and refusal (Campt, 2017). Together, they challenge ideologies of temporal progress and temporality more broadly that are bolstered by a constellation of racist, classist and ableist logics (McClintock, 1995; Samuels and Freeman, 2021; Smith, 2021). This theoretical paper examines the archival project of The Remote Access Archive and the technological access interventions it highlights as practices of refusal (Campt, 2017). Technological practices of refusal are technological practices that refuse the foreclosure of non-normative futures as a result of racist, capitalist, patriarchal and ableist logics. This can be seen through the project's emphasis on the archival preservation of disabled people's communal ingenuities regarding digital modes of socializing and interaction, which are centered on promoting access. To this extent, the archival project can be understood as a critical means to not only imagine but enact alternative futurities that are realized through radical modes of interdependence that have been previously ignored in the dominant conceptualization of disability (Brilmyer & Lee, 2023; Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019).

2. Disability, technology and curative imaginaries

Within the past decade, there has been a growing interest in research that explores how disabled people have contributed to the design of technologies (Goggin, 2018; Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019; Napolitano, 2022). In an inaugural attempt to connect disability studies and assistive technology research in human-computer interaction (HCI) research, Mankoff et al. (2010) note that despite the intentions of researchers and designers to "do good," they may nonetheless fail to respond to complex and multilayered problems and further ableist ideas. The authors note that approaches from disability studies can respond to these issues and positively inform research on assistive technology. For example, Mankoff et al. argue that approaches based on the social model of disability are crucial to countering one-dimensional

solutionist and ableist tendencies within research on assistive technologies. The social model of disability argues that disablement is a result of interconnected systems of domination, social, political and economic forces that produce and reinforce dominant understandings of normality (Goggin, 2018). Within disability activism and critical scholarship, the social model has been critiqued as it does not examine how disablement occurs outside of social constructions and societal barriers. These critiques challenge binaristic understandings of impairment and disability, while emphasizing that the eradication of social and structural barriers would not render disability irrelevant to embodiment especially in the case of chronic illness (Brilmyer, 2018; Kafer, 2013). Mankoff et al. (2010) illuminate how technology and design research of the time frequently operated within the medical model of disability, which ignores the multiple social and cultural factors that influence disabled people's complex lived experiences (Oliver, 2004; Shakespeare, 2006). Such research often emphasized the importance of fixing—or curing—supposed disability-related impairments and privileged exclusionary constructs of “normalcy.” Mankoff et al. (2010) can be understood as both a precursor to critical design research within the realm of disability and an early attempt to connect interdisciplinary research that connects design research and critical disability studies.

Since the publication of Mankoff et al. in 2010, there has been a growing subfield of interdisciplinary design research that explores disability through lenses from critical disability studies (Forlano, 2017; Frauenberger, 2015; Hamraie, 2013, 2017). This subfield of research on topics related to disability is representative of increasing efforts to integrate interdisciplinary critical approaches in the greater field. Furthermore, it is indicative of what Meissner et al. (2017) describe as a “conceptual shift” in assistive technology research. As a result of this “conceptual shift,” there have been increasing efforts to utilize participatory design approaches to collaborate “with and for” disabled people (p. 1055). These interventions call for the inclusion of disabled people in design processes that center their experiential knowledge and lived experiences, rather than dismiss their roles as knowledge producers (Ymous et al., 2020). Moreover, these studies aim to understand how disabled people conceptualize notions of agency, well-being, and empowerment themselves (Bennett et al., 2019; Meissner et al., 2017; Spiel et al., 2020).

Extending Alper's (2017) critiques of the techno-solutionist ideologies regarding assistive technologies that “give voice” to those with communicative disabilities, Goggin (2018) argues that critical disability studies can build upon existing multidisciplinary efforts that highlight how technology is embedded in dominant ideologies that privilege “normalcy.” Approaches from critical disability studies that examine how power contributes to social and political impacts of disability can interrogate what Goggin terms the “normalizing logics of technology” that narrowly focus on technology as a means to cure—or eradicate—disability (Goggin, 2018, p. 83). Critical disability studies can thus be understood as a means to challenge exclusionary aspects of normativity and imagine previously foreclosed futures.

Situated within critical disability studies, the concept of crip technoscience can be understood as “a field of critical scholarship, practice, and activism” (Hamraie and Fritsch, 2019: 6). Hamraie and Fritsch (2019) note that crip technoscience addresses four interrelated commitments: 1) disabled people's often-overlooked knowledge production and world-making practices, 2) the tensions inherent in access and assimilation, 3) the politics of interdependence, and 4) the importance of disability justice in movement-building practices. Crip technoscience provides a political economic critique to technology that emphasizes how technology is often embroiled within objectives “to fix, cure, or eliminate disability” (p. 23).

Alternatively, crip technoscience seeks to highlight the ways that disabled people utilize technology as a means to engage in activism, community-building, and critique.

3. Interrogating ideologies of “cure” through crip futurities

The categorization of the term “disability” has shifted throughout time and various locales, and is understood differently based upon sociocultural, political, and economic conditions (Nielsen, 2013; Rembis et al., 2018). Histories of disability within the United States in particular note how disabled people were policed and persecuted due to their visually-perceived nonconformance and prevailing eugenicist ideologies that linked disability to disease, contagion, nonconformity, as well as both mental and physical “deficiencies” (Brilmyer, 2020; Schweik, 2010). These ideologies were encoded in late 19th and early 20th century legislation that targeted disabled people for simply existing in public space (Schweik, 2010). Such legislation and their underlying eugenicist ideologies operated alongside profoundly racist, misogynist and classist notions of purity and social order (Samuels, 2014; Schweik, 2010). Attention to the development of disability-related policies in the United States underscores how categorizations of the term disability have emerged through the law, particularly as a result of legislation that determine whether or not individuals are able to participate in the labor force (Francis & Silvers, 2016). A political economic approach reveals how such mechanisms to determine disability are not only highly subjective and context-specific, they both reproduce and are a product of capitalist market logics that determine an individual’s value based upon their capacity to produce labor (Adler-Bolton and Vierkant, 2022; Francis & Silvers, 2016). Through tracing how disability has been consistently constituted and redefined by use of legislative means within the United States, the entanglement of capital, futurity, and systems of power and oppression such as racism, classism, sexism, and ableism become clear. Furthermore, the formation and evolution of the term disability particularly within American legislation underscores how disability has been understood as a threat to the dominant social order, antithetical to societal progress, and a detriment to future generations (Clare, 2017; Schweik, 2010).

Ideologies of cure emerge from dominant conceptualizations of disability that appear not only within the law but society at large. Critiques of cure within critical disability studies challenge what Goggin describes as the “governing myth of technology as akin to a luminous salvation and deliverance from disability” (Goggin, 2018: 83). In *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*, disability justice activist Eli Clare interrogates normative understandings of disability as damage that can and should be repaired through processes of cure. Clare (2017) further explains cure as “an ideology seeped into every corner of white Western thought...[which] rides on the back of normal and natural. Insidious and pervasive, it impacts most of us. In response, we need neither a wholehearted acceptance nor an outright rejection of cure, but rather a broad-based grappling” (Clare, 2017: 14). Central to the ideology of cure is the imagining of a future based upon the outright elimination of disability, which Clare describes as a “future-focused eradication” that “many of us have been seduced into believing the need to eliminate disability and ‘defectiveness’ is intuitively obvious” (p. 27). Moreover, orientations toward a future in which “disability has been cured” are seeped into ideologies of cure (p. 25). Disability is thus excluded from the visions of the future as it is assumed that cure is desirable for all.

In its glorification of the future, cure devalues disability in the present. As Clare notes, this emphasis on a future cure operates within hierarchies of domination that demarcate and place value on that which is deemed “normal” and “natural.” Moreover, Clare brings to light the material outcomes of this “future-focused commitment” that underlies cure. Not only has it been utilized to “devalue people in the present,” that is, those who are not able to fully eradicate their disabilities and those who may pass on their illness or disability to their children, it has also served as a justification for the unequal allocation resources—both monetary and otherwise—toward projects whose sole focus lies on a future without disability (p. 86).

Clare notes that this orientation towards future cures limits attention to the present and “tethers us not only to what we remember of our embodied selves in the past but also to what we hope for them in the future” (p. 87). The hegemonic focus on the future within ideologies of cure operates paradoxically in its stifling of how we envision our future. A key aspect of cure is the glorification of an imaginary future without disability. Moreover, Clare and other scholars within critical disability studies have argued that the temporal logics underlying ideologies of cure are remnants of racist and ableist conceptualizations of nature, perfectibility, and normalcy (Kafer, 2013; Pickens, 2019; Schweik, 2010). In addition to its eugenicist underpinnings, Clare notes that the sole focus on a future without disability obfuscates the material realities of the present and detracts from the integral world-making practice of imagining liberatory futures.

There is a body of literature within critical disability studies that interrogates ideologies of cure, normative temporalities and the exclusion of disability from futurity (Kafer, 2013; Samuels, 2017; Samuels and Freeman, 2021). The prevailing ideologies that position disability as a “site of ‘no future’” (Rice et al., 2017: 214) are tied to what Kafer terms a “curative imaginary.” The curative imaginary is entangled with hierarchies of value that privilege able-bodiedness and able-mindedness over disability. Kafer (2013) defines the curative imaginary as “an understanding of disability that not only expects and assumes intervention but also cannot imagine or comprehend anything other than intervention” (p. 27, emphasis included). Curative imaginaries underly what Kafer terms “curative time,” which can be described as a temporal arrangement wherein the only accepted form of disability is that which is “cured or moving towards cure” (p. 28). Curative imaginary can therefore be understood as the pervasive belief that disability cannot exist without intervention, which contributes to an exclusive futurity that precludes disability altogether.

In response to dominant formations of the future that exclude disability, Kafer (2013) offers a “crip vision of an elsewhere” that reveals possibilities for multiple temporal rearrangements, such as a crip time (p. 24). Building upon Margaret Price, Kafer defines crip time as “a reorientation to time...it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of ‘how long things take’ are based on particular minds and bodies” (Kafer, 2013, p. 27; Price, 2011). The concept of crip time borrows from the “crip” identity descriptor that emerged within disability activist groups (McRuer, 2014). Crip refers to a disabled identity that is “non-compliant, anti-assimilationist position that disability is a desirable part of the world” (Hamraie and Fritsch, 2019: 2). The temporal rearrangement of crip futurity undertakes an imagining of disability as a site of political engagement and a means to simultaneously envision and enact multiple futures. Moreover, crip futurity challenges the pervasive curative imaginary, which precludes disability from visions of the future, by reformulating alternative temporalities and crip futurities.

In *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, Kafer (2013) positions crip futurity as a means to build solidarity as a result of combined racist, classist, sexist and ableist logics (Kafer, 2013; McRuer, 2014). Moreover, crip futurity can be read as a means to highlight the relationship between ableism and other systems of oppression, as well as form a basis of solidarity and collective action that not only interrogate dominant conceptualizations of normalcy and deviance that proscribe disabled people from the future but reformulate alternative temporalities and crip futurities. Crip futurity calls for an interrogation of normative teleological formations that not only promote notions of linear progress and continual advancement but connect linear progress to the highly racialized and gendered ideals within normative subjectivities and life spans. It is nonetheless important to note that there are inequalities with regards to which disabled people are able to imagine crip futurities (Fritsch, 2016). Fritsch (2016) writes that neoliberal hierarchies of value and exclusion are reproduced in “the lack of tractable futures for some disabled people works alongside the tractable futures of enhanced or capacitated disabled people” (p. 11). Crip futurities entail envisioning futures where disability is understood as a means to reimagine normative and exclusionary temporal and social formations. Rather than adopt a nihilist perspective as a response to the ableist logics inherent in reproductive futurism, crip time puts forward a queer utopian stance that gestures toward the transformative possibilities of imagining otherwise (Kafer, 2013; McRuer, 2014).

Kafer’s formulation of crip futurity is cognizant of the ongoing legacies of eugenicist sterilization, institutionalization, and segregation, and how they structure dominant ideologies of temporality and pathology. Kafer writes, “at one time or another, each of these practices—sterilization, segregation, exclusion, institutionalization—has been justified by concerns about ‘the future’ and particularly future children” (p. 31). In other words, ideologies of temporal progress and reproductive futurism are interconnected. These interconnected ideologies are bolstered by a constellation of capitalist, racist, classist, patriarchal and ableist logics.

This constellation differentially harms various populations and therefore produces distinct material outcomes. Kafer writes, “queer kids, kids of color, street kids—all of the kids cast out of reproductive futurism—have been and continue to be framed as sick, as pathological, as contagious” (ibid). Kafer traces the connections between racism, classism, and ableism as they underlie normative understandings of temporality. The aim is not to conflate or compare instances of racism, classism, and ableism, but rather to explore the interrelations between these factors as they are produced and sustained by intersecting systems of domination. It is exactly this overly simplistic comparison of race, class, and disability that crip futurity challenges. In addition, Kafer positions crip futurity as a means to build solidarity as a result of combined racist, classist and ableist logics. Crip futurity can therefore be read as a means to highlight the relationship between ableism and other systems of oppression, as well as form a basis of solidarity and collective action. More than a reinterpretation or orientation towards time, crip futurity is foundational to the realization of more just worlds that refuse not only the preclusion of disabled futures but those deemed non-normative and outside of the white supremacist ideal.

Kafer’s crip futurity and “crip vision of an elsewhere” can be understood as practices of refusal, as they refuse the conditions that proscribe disability—and therefore disabled people—from the future. Crip futurity can be analyzed through Camp’s (2019) Black feminist futurity, which Camp describes as “a performance of a future that hasn’t yet happened but must...It is the power to imagine beyond current fact and to envision that which is not, but

must be” (p. 17). Black feminist futurity is a practice of refusal in that it is a “refusal of the very premises that have reduced the lived experience of blackness to pathology and irreconcilability in the logic of white supremacy” (p. 32). By situating disability as a site of coalition-building, political engagement, and temporal reimagination, crip futurity similarly refuses the conditions that position disability as irreconcilable with the future. Crip futurity can therefore be understood as a means to build coalitions between those who have been routinely siloed from a future.

4. Practices of refusal

Critiques of how ideologies of cure privilege the future can be extended by the Black feminist concept of refusal (Campt, 2017). In *Listening to Images*, Tina Campt explores archives of identification photography of the Black Diaspora. Such archives include mugshots of Freedom Riders, colonial ethnographic photographs of South African women, and the passport photographs of Black British men. Campt understands these photographs not simply as artifacts of racist and imperialist violence, but as sites of refusal. As defined by Campt (2019), “‘practicing refusal’ names the urgency of rethinking the time, space, and fundamental vocabulary of what constitutes politics, activism, and theory, as well as what it means to refuse the terms given to us to name these struggles” (p. 80). Practices of refusal entail the “quotidian reclamations of interiority, dignity, and refusal marshaled by black subjects in their persistent striving for futurity” (Campt, 2017: 11). Practices of refusal exist as everyday radical and subversive acts as well as reclamations of subjectivity that refuse dehumanization. This dehumanization is produced and reinscribed by the white supremacist logics of chattel slavery that continue to structure contemporary society (Spillers, 1987). Within the photographic archives of the Black Diaspora, Campt looks toward quotidian and quiet practices through which subjectivity is reclaimed. As a practice of refusal, Campt describes the quotidian as “a practice honed by the dispossessed in the struggle to create possibility within the constraints of everyday life” (Campt, 2017, p. 4). Refusal can therefore be understood as an articulation of one’s humanity outside of the dominant framework of agency. In emphasizing everyday acts as practices of refusal, Campt challenges normative understandings of agency and resistance.

Practices of refusal are tied to the grammar of Black feminist futurity: “that which will have *had to* happen.” Campt elaborates that “the grammar of black feminist futurity is a performance of a future that hasn’t yet happened but must...It is the power to imagine beyond current fact and to envision that which is not, but must be” (p. 17). Refusal is related to Black feminist futurity in that it is a “refusal of the very premises that have reduced the lived experience of blackness to pathology and irreconcilability in the logic of white supremacy” (p. 32). Furthermore, in the context of ongoing police brutality and anti-Black, racist state-sanctioned violence, Campt poses the questions:

“So, how do we live the future we want to see now when confronted with the statistical probability of premature black (particularly male) mortality? How do we create an alternative future by living both the future we want to see, while inhabiting its potential foreclosure at the same time?” (Campt, 2017: 107)

This formulation of futurity – “that which will have *had to happen*” – within the context of violence and premature death harkens back to Clare’s (2017) critiques of the “future-focused commitment” of cure within critical disability studies. Clare interrogates the eugenicist practices of genetic testing, noting that it contributes to an overall eugenicist “elimination of some kind—of a disease, of future existence, of present-day embodiments, of life itself...Sometimes these eradications result in benefit, but they can also cause individual death and the diminishment of whole groups of people” (Clare, 2017: 28). Similarly, Black feminist futurity is the radical imagining of a future, imbued with the continual legacies of violence that permeate both past and present, which denies the continuation of the white supremacist terms that define Black subjectivity. Moreover, it is a gesture toward a future that refuses the devaluation of Black life. Black feminist futurity and practices of refusal can thus be understood as pathways toward imagining a future in the midst and in spite of purposeful eradication and death, and a means by which disability activists can make clear the connections between ableism, white supremacy and racial capitalism. This is not to conflate the specific experiences of anti-Black racism and ableism, which undoubtedly can occur in tandem, but rather to explore the interrelations between ableism and white supremacy as they are produced and sustained by the ongoing legacies of racial capitalism and chattel slavery that dehumanize and devalue individuals based on deviations from white supremacist ideals of race, class, gender and ability. Disability justice provides critical perspectives that have been previously overlooked in research regarding disability and technology. Disability justice is a social movement founded by queer, disabled activists of color wherein the objective of collective liberation and the connections between ableism, white supremacy, and capitalism are placed front and center (Berne et al., 2018; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Sins Invalid, 2017). The activist approach has been extended as a critical theoretical and epistemic orientation that centers the experiences of queer and disabled people of color. Technological practices of refusal similarly underscore how ableism is intimately intertwined with multiple systems of domination such as racist, patriarchal, and classist oppression (Berne et al., 2018).

Following disability justice approaches, technological practices of refusal are concerned with collective liberation and societal transformation. Through creative media engagements, technological practices of refusal not only work toward these ends but also underscore how violence and oppression often necessitate these alternative media practices. Towns (2022) notes the fundamental implications of this creativity as it relates to subjectivity and survival. Towns writes, “we can see that to be transported and transformed did not always require the same concepts of movement as white people or even the use of their technologies to become free...how have Black people used media to imagine new futures that their white counterparts could not?” Towns extends Hortense Spillers (1987) on the transformative violence of *The Middle Passage* and its initiation of a fundamental grammatical reordering of race, which is central to Black feminist understandings of subjectivity and embodiment. Towns challenges media theorists to understand media through a Black feminist lens, one which underscores media as creative and transformative movements toward liberation that remake, challenge, and rethink subjectivity within the legacies and violence of *The Middle Passage* and racist commodification. In Towns’ words, “media may be used in ways that challenge dominant raced and gendered understandings of the world. Black feminist studies can be used to illustrate the importance of thinking media, communication, and geographies together” (p. 32). The concept of technological practices of refusal can be understood within Towns’ Black

feminist formulation of the transformative qualities of media as means by which these liberatory possibilities unfold.

5. The Remote Access Archive and disability archives

The Remote Access Archive is an in-progress online archive that highlights the long-established means of community-building and social relation that disabled people have created through remote access. The website for the archive defines remote access as “when you can learn, work, socialize, and organize with other people when you are in different places” (Critical Design Lab, n.d.-d). According to its website, the online archive “will gather stories, documents, and other information about how disabled people have used technology to interact remotely” (ibid). The archive is currently in the process of collecting materials including documents, images, and audio/video recordings that concern how disabled people have utilized technology to create remote access both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The archive includes various media such as videos, text-based documents, image files, and audio recordings that respond to the theme of how disabled people collectively create remote access through technology. Examples of material that will be incorporated into the archive include social media posts and internet forums about disability activism and communities, copies of newsletters about disability, and recordings of social events hosted on videoconferencing software such as Zoom. The archive will include “documents and stories” that concern online and remote participation in activism and organizing, utilizing technology to remotely participate in an in-person event, and how technology is utilized to both create and sustain relationships at a distance. Submissions can come in the form of screenshots, diagrams, social media posts, as well as audio/video recordings that depict the overarching theme of remote access (ibid). The archive is collecting submissions from “disabled, Deaf, Mad, Sick, crip” individuals as well as their families and care workers, with priority to disabled people who are queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (QTBIPOC). The archive will be hosted online with alt-text, captions for visual materials and high-contrast colors following best practices for website accessibility.

The archive is currently in-development by the Critical Design Lab, a disability justice-informed design research collaborative led by Dr. Aimi Hamraie, an Associate Professor of Medicine, Health, & Society and American Studies at Vanderbilt University. The Critical Design Lab describes itself as “a multi-disciplinary arts and design collaborative centered in disability culture and crip technoscience” (Critical Design Lab, n.d.-a). The lab is centered around notions of access, and the means by which access is both a highly collaborative and contextualized endeavor. Within the lab, accessibility is understood as more than an individually-determined form of inclusivity, it entails “research-creation, an aesthetic world-building practice, and an invitation to assemble community” (ibid). The archival project of the Remote Access Archive builds upon the lab’s previous work, which includes Mapping Access, a participatory mapping project that explores the ongoing, relational aspects of access and how the creation of access is a collective process that is built upon the often-overlooked expertise of disabled communities (Critical Design Lab, n.d.-b; Hamraie, 2018).

The Remote Access Archive is similarly concerned with access as a relational and communal practice. Similar to the Critical Design Lab’s previous work, The Remote Access Archive reveals how remote interaction practices spurred by the Covid-19 pandemic are built upon

disabled people's long-established technological practices. The archival project is founded on the premise that disabled people have been utilizing remote access technologies to socialize since long before the pandemic. Despite the popularization of remote working, learning, and socializing during the pandemic, remote access is still often denied to disabled people (Critical Design Lab, n.d.-d; Goggin and Ellis, 2020). The archival project is not only concerned with the ways that disabled people have used technology to create remote access, the archive also highlights how access is created as a result of communal processes that are frequently in response to systemic barriers to participation.

The archive emphasizes how disabled people have created new forms of access, social relation, and participation using remote technologies, and how these ingenuities contributed to widespread societal change as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Goggin and Ellis, 2020; Samuels and Freeman, 2021). The Remote Access Archive's creators note that these communal ingenuities in digital interaction and remote access are critical to "how many of us live, socialize, and organize" (Critical Design Lab, n.d.-c). As might be expected, these contributions are frequently not only overlooked but extracted by nondisabled individuals (Hamraie and Fritsch, 2019; Mills, 2010). The archival project of The Remote Access Archive and the interventions it highlights can be understood as practices of refusal, particularly as they relate to disabled people's archival engagements. This can be seen through the archive's critical reimagining of digital interaction and access, as well as through its archival preservation of such practices.

The Remote Access Archive can be theorized as an embodiment of refusal and crip futurity. The technological practices featured by the archive refuse the limits of current possibility with regards to access and relationality. Extending Camp (2017), the communal technological practices highlighted by the archive enact a radical futurity or "power to imagine beyond current fact and to envision that which is not, but must be" (p. 17). In the case of the Remote Access Archive and the overarching work of the Critical Design Lab, this can be seen through their reinterpretation of access and its creation as a collective, political practice. Central to the implications of The Remote Access Archive are not only how it highlights disabled people's technological ingenuities, but how it reformulates the collective creation of access as a "world-building practice" (Critical Design Lab, n.d.-a) that is spurred from politicization as a result of systemic ableism (Hamraie and Fritsch, 2019). In other words, The Remote Access Archive offers a reframing of disability as a political and relational experience that is a means to collectively imagine otherwise (Kafer, 2013).

The Remote Access Archive and the technological practices it features can also be understood as embodiments of refusal in the ways that they represent the counternarratives (Brilmyer, 2018) and anticipatory temporalities (Brilmyer, 2022) that arise through disabled people's engagements with archives. Critical disability and archival studies scholar Gracen Brilmyer (2018) note how archives have historically been utilized to discipline, control and surveil disabled people, yet engagement with such records can be reconceptualized as an interrogative process through which disabled people can transform what are traditionally sites of violence into sites of imaginative intervention. In Brilmyer's words, counternarratives consist of "multiple contradictory, contestable, and complex narratives [that] can be held in tension to transform archival practice" (p. 114). The Remote Access Archive is an archival counternarrative that challenges dominant understandings of disability as an individual experience, which instead highlights how disabled people's technological development often occurs communally. The co-construction of technologies as explored in the Remote Access

Archive underscores how disabled people engage with and create technology through communal practices that refuse exclusionary formulations of the future predicated on a “cure” or elimination of those cast aside by the capitalist, ableist and white supremacist logics of reproductive futurism that is not limited to disabled people. This is not an argument concerned with fostering a more inclusive understanding of technology. Rather, it aims to highlight how ableism, racism, and sexism are enmeshed in narratives about technology that ultimately obfuscate the relational practices and alternative epistemologies that surround technology within disabled communities. The archival project is a counternarrative to the dominant understanding of disability and access as individual endeavors, by highlighting the collective and radical world-building aspects of access-creation through technology. In focusing on how disabled people radically reimagine access through communal technological practices, the archive not only challenges the erasure of disabled people’s contributions to technology but, more importantly, the dominant understanding of disability as an isolating, apolitical, and highly individualized experience.

The Remote Access Archive calls attention to the relationships between disabled people’s archival engagements and crip time. Examined through Brilmyer’s (2022) work on anticipatory temporalities and representation of disability in archives, the central aspect of access creation within the Remote Access Archive can be interpreted as an extension of crip temporalities. Brilmyer (2022) builds upon the literature concerning temporality within disability studies and queer theory (Love, 2009; Puar, 2018) to explore the ways that disabled people reckon with ableist archival representations of their past. Their archival engagements are marked by an anticipatory temporality that is acutely aware of prior archival violences. By looking towards the past, disabled people can “imagine possibilities, conserve energy, and plan, thus allowing pasts to inform possible future moments” (ibid). Disabled people often turn towards their past experiences to plan for the future, as they may face unexpected challenges. Brilmyer further explains, “disabled and chronically ill people plan futures based on their knowledge of their bodyminds of the past, allowing for them to be prepared yet also anticipating that things may not go as planned” (p. 170). Brilmyer describes this anticipatory temporality as an “affective mode” that operates to “protect them against possible harms,” and acts as a catalyst “to hope for something different...which reflects their experiences of how disability is understood in society” (pp. 168-169). The anticipatory nature of crip time operates somewhat paradoxically.

Within this crip anticipatory temporality, futures are imagined through engagement with the past and radical anticipation and world-building are tied to previous experiences of ableism. This crip temporal reorientation underscores how multiple pasts, presents and futures are interconnected with one another. For disabled users of archives, anticipation is a means to not only to prepare for the violence of archival misrepresentations and absences, but it is also a means for disabled people “to maintain hope for alternative futures” (p. 181). Brilmyer argues that an orientation towards the past is essential to imagining disabled futures, while also acknowledging that disabled people of different identities have varying experiences with regards to disability, temporality, and archival projects (p. 183). This anticipatory temporality and its transformative implications can be seen within the access-building technological practices highlighted in the Remote Access Archive.

The archival project of the Remote Access Archive similarly highlights how the creation of access through technology is not only spurred by systemic ableism that contributes to the inaccessibility of everyday life, but most crucially the drive to collectively envision more just

worlds that refuse inaccessibility and ableism altogether. The technological practices featured in the archive are embodiments of the anticipatory aspects of crip temporalities, as the technologically-supported forms of remote access are often materialized in anticipation of inaccessibility. While anticipation may be a strategy for disabled people to navigate the ableist structuring of everyday life, it is also a crucial step towards the collective imagining of previously foreclosed futures—inclusive of disability in its many forms—that are central to technological practices of refusal.

The archival project of the Remote Access Archive underscores the transformative possibilities of disabled people's anticipatory engagements with not only archives, but technologies and the means by which they create access. The archive highlights the technologies and social relationships that emerge from the collective creation of remote access. Crip temporal reconfiguration operates similarly to remote access, as it is a means of survival that often arises out of necessity. Through preserving the technologies created and utilized by disabled communities and the stories surrounding them, the archive exemplifies how disabled people collectively imagine futures in spite of their continual foreclosure (Brilmyer & Lee, 2023; Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019; Rice et al., 2017). Furthermore, the archive underscores how crip temporalities and technological ingenuities alike arise from the collective struggles of those routinely excluded from futurity on the basis of white supremacist constructions of deviance and normalcy. The interconnected crip temporalities and communal technological practices look beyond the reformist framework of "curing" inaccessibility toward societal transformation.

6. Conclusion

The archival project of the Remote Access Archive can be understood as a refusal of both the exclusionary norms that govern social relations and the hierarchies of value that are intimately tied to knowledge production. The Remote Access Archive highlights the imaginative ways that disabled people utilize and build relations through technology. These practices are more than simply technological, artistic, or archival interventions. They are practices that uncover possibilities to imagine and enact a crip futurity, which entails a refusal of normative temporal logics that render disabled futures incomprehensible. The technological practices highlighted in The Remote Access Archive are therefore means to engage in collective world-making practices.

The concept of crip technoscience similarly highlights how disabled people's lived experiences, activist practices and community-based knowledge are central to the design of technologies and technoscience more broadly (Hamraie and Fritsch, 2019). Crip technoscience is premised on a radical stance that "refus[es] to comply with demands to cure, fix, or eliminate disability" (p. 2). Moreover, crip technoscience strives for anti-curative futures wherein "disability is anticipated and welcomed, and in which all disabled people thrive" (p. 22). A foundational aspect of these futures is "refusing to treat access as an issue of technical compliance or rehabilitation, as a simple technological fix, or a checklist" (ibid). The authors note that these radical futures are premised on interdependence and "a politics of crip alliance and solidarity" (p. 13). The frameworks of crip futurity and crip technoscience complementarily highlight the importance of foregrounding systems of power that undergird constructs of disability. Practices of refusal, and their underlying grammar of Black feminist

futurity, name the urgency to reject such logics (Campt, 2017). More than simply reclamations of subjectivity, practices of refusal entail imaginative world-making practices that envision futures beyond the confines of current possibility. Technological practices of refusal emphasize how technology, collectivity, and temporal rearrangements are central to imagining elsewhere and otherwise.

Keywords

disability, access, technology, archives, disability studies, archival studies, refusal

References

- Adler-Bolton, B., and Vierkant, A. (2022) *Health Communism: a surplus manifesto*, New York: Verso Books.
- Benjamin, R. (2019) *Race after technology: abolitionist tools for the New Jim Code*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bennett, C. L., Brady, E., Branham, S. M. (2018) "Interdependence as a Frame for Assistive Technology Research and Design", *Proceedings of the 20th International ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility*, 161–173. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3234695.3236348>
- Bennett, C. L., Peil, B., Rosner, D. K. (2019) "Biographical prototypes: reimagining recognition and disability in design", *Proceedings of the 2019 on Designing Interactive Systems Conference*, 35–47. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3322276.3322376>
- Berne, P., Morales, A. L., Langstaff, D., Invalid, S. (2018) "Ten Principles of Disability Justice" *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, 46(1): 227–230.
- Brilmyer, G. (2018) "Archival assemblages: applying disability studies' political/relational model to archival description" *Archival Science*, 18(2): 95–118.
- Brilmyer, G. (2022) "'I'm also prepared to not find me. It's great when I do, but it doesn't hurt if I don't': crip time and anticipatory erasure for disabled archival users" *Archival Science*, 22(2): 167–188.
- Brilmyer, G., Lee, C. (2023) "Terms of use: crip legibility in information systems", *First Monday*. <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v28i1.12935>
- Campt, T. M. (2017) *Listening to Images*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Campt, T. M. (2019) "Black visibility and the practice of refusal" *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 29(1): 79–87.
- Clare, E. (2017) *Brilliant imperfection: grappling with cure*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Critical Design Lab. (n.d.-a) *Critical Design Lab*, Available online at <https://www.mapping-access.com> (last accessed: June 21, 2023).
- Critical Design Lab. (n.d.-b) *Mapping Access*, Available online at <https://www.mapping-access.com/mapping-access-methodology> (last accessed: June 21, 2023).
- Critical Design Lab. (n.d.-c) *The Remote Access Archive*, Available online at <https://www.mapping-access.com/the-remote-access-archive> (last accessed: June 21, 2023).

- Davis, A. Y., Dent, G., Meiners, E. R. and Richie, B. E. (2022) *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (Vol. 2), Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Forlano, L. (2017) "Data rituals in intimate infrastructures: crip time and the disabled cyborg body as an epistemic site of feminist science" *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*, 3(2): 1–28.
- Francis, L., Silvers, A. (2016) "Perspectives on the Meaning of 'Disability'", *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 18(10): 1025–1033.
- Fritsch, K. (2016) "Crippling neoliberal futurity: marking the elsewhere and elsewhen of desiring otherwise" *Feral Feminisms*, 5: 11–26.
- Goggin, G. (2018) "Technology and Social Futures ", In *Manifestos for the future of Critical Disability Studies*, K. Ellis, R. Garland-Thomson, M. Kent, and R. Robertson (eds.), pp. 79–91, Milton Park: Routledge.
- Goggin, G., Ellis, K. (2020) "Disability, Communication, and Life Itself in the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Health Sociology Review*, 29(2): 168–176.
- Hofmann, M., Kasnitz, D., Mankoff, J. and Bennett, C. L. (2020) "Living disability theory: reflections on access, research, and design", *Proceedings of the 22nd International ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3373625.3416996>
- Hamraie, A. (2013) "Designing collective access: A feminist disability theory of Universal Design" *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 33(4), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v33i4.3871>
- Hamraie, A. (2017) *Building access: Universal design and the politics of disability*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hamraie, A. (2018) "Mapping access: digital humanities, disability justice, and sociospatial practice" *American Quarterly*, 70(3): 455–482.
- Hamraie, A., Fritsch, K. (2019) "Crip Technoscience Manifesto" *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*, 5(1): 1–33.
- Kafer, A. (2013) *Feminist, queer, crip*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lewis, G., Major, M., Samudzi, Z., Spillers, H. and Emejulu, A. (2020, August 19) "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house: abolitionist feminist futures", <https://silverpress.org/blogs/news/the-master-s-tools-will-never-dismantle-the-master-s-house-abolitionist-feminist-futures>
- Love, H. (2009) *Feeling backward: loss and the politics of queer history*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- McClintock, A. (1995) *Imperial leather: race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest*, Milton Park: Routledge.
- McRuer, R. (2014) "The Then and There of Crip Futurity" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 20(4): 532–534.
- Meissner, J. L., Vines, J., McLaughlin, J., Nappey, T., Maksimova, J. and Wright, P. (2017) "Do-It-Yourself Empowerment as Experienced by Novice Makers with Disabilities", *Proceedings of the 2017 Conference on Designing Interactive Systems*, 1053–1065. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3064663.3064674>

- Mills, M. (2010) "Deaf Jam: from inscription to reproduction to information", *Social Text*, 28(1): 35–58.
- Napolitano, D. (2022) "Reuniting speech-impaired people with their voices: sound technologies for disability and why they matter for organisation studies" *PuntOorg International Journal*, 7(1): 6-21.
- Nielsen, K. E. (2013) *A Disability History of the United States*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Oliver, M. (2004) "The social model in action: if I had a hammer" *Implementing the Social Model of Disability: Theory and Research*, 2: 18–31.
- Pickens, T. A. (2019) *Black madness: mad Blackness*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2018) *Care work: dreaming disability justice*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Price, M. (2011) *Mad at school: rhetorics of mental disability and academic life*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Puar, J. K. (2018) *Terrorist assemblages: homonationalism in queer times*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Rembis, M., Kudlick, C. J. and Nielsen, K. (2018) *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rice, C., Chandler, E., Rinaldi, J., Changfoot, N., Liddiard, K., Mykitiuk, R. and Mündel, I. (2017) "Imagining Disability Futurities" *Hypatia*, 32(2): 213–229.
- Samuels, E. (2014) *Fantasies of identification: disability, gender, race*, New York: NYU Press.
- Samuels, E. (2017) "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time", *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 37(3): 3. <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5824>
- Samuels, E., Freeman, E. (2021) "Introduction: crip temporalities", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 120(2): 245–254.
- Schweik, S. M. (2010) *The Ugly Laws: disability in public*, New York: NYU Press.
- Shakespeare, T. (2006) "The Social Model of Disability" *The Disability Studies Reader*, 2: 197–204.
- Sins Invalid. (2017) "Skin, tooth, and bone – The basis of movement is our people: a disability justice primer" *Reproductive Health Matters*, 25(50): 149–150.
- Smith, L. T. (2021) *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Spiel, K., Gerling, K., Bennett, C. L., Brulé, E., Williams, R. M., Rode, J. and Mankoff, J. (2020) "Nothing about us without us: investigating the role of critical disability studies in HCI", *Extended Abstracts of the 2020 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3334480.3375150>
- Spillers, H. J. (1987) "Mama's baby, papa's maybe: an American grammar book", In *The Transgender Studies Reader Remix*, pp. 93–104, Milton Park: Routledge.
- Towns, A. (2022) "Transporting Blackness: Black materialist media theory", In *Re-Understanding Media: Feminist Extensions of Marshall McLuhan*, S. Sharma and R. Singh (eds.), pp. 23–35, Durham: Duke University Press.

Ymous, A., Spiel, K., Keyes, O., Williams, R. M., Good, J., Hornecker, E. and Bennett, C. L. (2020) "I am just terrified of my future': epistemic violence in disability related technology research", *Extended Abstracts of the 2020 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3334480.3381828>