Institutional Counter-surveillance using a Critical Disability Studies Lens

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ABSTRACT

This study examines policy and procedure documents related to Disability at 3 U.S. institutions of higher education over a 25-year time frame. Policy and procedure documents are the foundation that govern how institutions "handle" Disability, outlining expectations and guidelines for providing services and establishing bureaucratic channels used to determine who has access to those services. This research employs a comparative case study mixed methods approach. The found documents and their online contexts are analyzed according to four qualities: *findability*, *cohesion*, *consistency*, and *transparency*. A document's *findability* refers to the ability of a user to locate the original document, and a document's *cohesion*, *consistency*, and *transparency*, refer to respectively where, what, and how these documents persist from their original creation date. As I collected these documents, I constructed comparative matrices to track these qualities within and across three different universities.

The initial *findability* of documents demonstrates two key results: 1) during the overall 1990–2015 time frame, there was a marked change in the availability of materials in a digital format, and 2) the emergence of a way to describe documents via the phrase "*Does Not Exist*." These materials definitively did not exist prior to a given time frame, but later versions of such documents included an earlier start date. *Cohesion* results indicate that the documents most likely to be presented in a single source were broadly usable to a large portion of the university population: the general student body. *Consistency* results address a major issue with the

document search: while these materials were likely to exist, at each of these institutions and time frames (barring the DNE documents), they are very difficult to track down. *Transparency* across found, single-source documents was ubiquitous; if it could be found, it had searchable text.

Beyond the findings of my document collection, I created two major products as a result of this dissertation work: key recommendations for different stakeholder groups and a curated exhibit of VT-specific materials collected for this study.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This study examines policy and procedure documents related to Disability at 3 U.S. institutions of higher education over a 25-year time frame. Policy and procedure documents are the foundation that govern how institutions "handle" Disability, outlining expectations and guidelines for providing services and establishing bureaucratic channels used to determine who has access to those services. This research employs a comparative case study mixed methods approach. The found documents and their online contexts are analyzed according to four qualities: *findability*, *cohesion*, *consistency*, and *transparency*. A document's *findability* refers to the ability of a user to locate the original document, and a document's *cohesion*, *consistency*, and *transparency*, refer to respectively where, what, and how these documents persist from their original creation date. As I collected these documents, I constructed comparative matrices to track these qualities within and across three different universities.

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likely to be presented in a single source were broadly usable to a large portion of the university population: the general student body. *Consistency* results address a major issue with the document search: while these materials were likely to exist, at each of these institutions and time frames (barring the DNE documents), they are very difficult to track down. *Transparency* across found, single-source documents was ubiquitous; if it could be found, it had searchable text.

Beyond the findings of the document collection, there are two major products as a result of this dissertation work. First, key recommendations for different stakeholder groups (SEEKERS, WRITERS, and KEEPERS) are outlined; these recommendations are intended for the entire audience as practices that they can incorporate within their own documents. Second, the work undertaken to create a repository using materials from my document collection, utilizing the Qualitative Data Repository (based in Syracuse University) as the host for a curated exhibit of VT-specific materials, is described.

Dedication

To my dissertation goblin.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problems of *Space*: Disability, Visibility, and Identity in Higher Education

College campuses devote significant research focus to erasing the "problem" of disability through early diagnosis, cures, prosthesis, exoskeletons, brain computer interface, and other assistive technologies. Such goals are lauded for their intent to improve the quality of life for disabled people through interventions that reduce difference, or the visibility of difference, to align with dominant normative values and ways of being. While well-intentioned, these efforts implicitly devalue the legitimacy of disability experiences. They also often do not include Disabled people in their work.

There is an alternative story emerging from higher education as well: Disabled people on those same campuses are recognizing and claiming Disability[1] as a valued part of their identity. They are publishing pieces, with titles such as "It shouldn't be this hard to be on campus" (Shew, 2017), to protest the inaccessible spaces where they have the same right to belong as any

[1] Disability will be capitalized, or not, based on the context in which it is used throughout this work. When speaking to identity and culture, pride and joy, it will be capitalized. When discussing specific conditions, models, and demonstrating person-first language, it will not. There will also be capitalization that reflects the choices of other authors.

nondisabled person. Put plainly, while federal legislation indicates that educational spaces (physical, digital, formal, and informal) should be welcoming and inclusive of the Disabled community within the United States, personal narratives at different institutions of higher education demonstrate that there is a dramatic disconnect on the local level.

This research joins the emerging voices of Disability-centered praxis to document spaces of academic inaccessibility and to analyze ways that these inequities contribute to historic and current value systems within institutions of higher education. My focus on policy and procedure documents for this work "recognizes the long history of disability and higher education inflected by the current, often camouflaged, vectors of academic ableism" (Dolmage, 2017, pp. 31–32), taking into consideration a quarter century's worth of material (or lack thereof) to develop recommendations for creating and preserving such documents into the future.

With approximately 20% of the American population—across all ages, races, ethnicities, and genders—identified as being disabled, Disability is the largest minority identity in the United States (Switzer, 2003). Federally funded programs and initiatives have existed for over 40 years in the K-12 realm (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002), and the Americans with Disabilities Act has been federal legislation for nearly 30 years (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990). Yet, these legislated fundamental changes have yet to impact the disproportions observed on college grounds; the National Center for Education Statistics reported that only 11% of undergraduates reported having a disability (2016), while 5 % of graduate students (Harbour & Greenberg, 2017), and 4% of faculty are estimated to be

Disabled people (Grigley, 2017). “Estimated” is used as there is very little published regarding this “neglected demographic” (Grigley, 2017) in higher education.

Physically inaccessible buildings and terrain are surely one factor, but it is also important to recognize that Disability is often a missing dimension in discussions of diversity and inclusion. Disability justice and access initiatives call for a collective approach focusing on the design of society, instead of addressing, or more pointedly, fixing, concerns on an individual basis (Mingus, 2015; Wolbring, 2003). Institutions not only have a social obligation to provide inclusive environments for all students, but a legal obligation as well. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that public educational programs (such as those existing at the study sites) be accessible for Disabled students (Title II), as well as making employment accessible to Disabled faculty and staff (Title I) (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990).

While the legal requirements of the ADA are met as “reasonable accommodations” at an individual level, the potential for universally designed educational practices that impact not only individual access needs but benefit society at a broad scale should not be ignored. One well-recognized example of this is the proliferation of curb cuts; the original access purpose for wheelchair users has additionally benefitted those with strollers, wheeled carts, or moving dollies (McGuire, et al., 2006). From this holistic perspective, this work will provide a better understanding of how Disability and access are defined and made part of academia.

This study was designed to explore this question by examining institutional policy and procedure documents related to Disability and accessibility. However, the focus quickly shifted to a gaps analysis. The initial goal was to analyze documentation in order to better understand the daily lived experiences of Disabled people in campus environments a quarter of a century after passage of the ADA. Collected from three institutions of higher education, these documents could offer a means to determine how Disability and accessibility have been considered and discussed across time and location, allowing for an analysis of content and rhetorical choices that impact the interpretations of national policy and the resultant on-campus practices. However, early stages of data collection revealed that significant gaps in documentation exist across all of the higher education sites selected for the study and that existing records are not readily accessible.

Creating equitable campus spaces includes not only physical navigability but also accessible places of informational structure. By ignoring the types of institutional policies that dictate and accredit disability on campus (Haagaard & Jackson, 2021) and that determine who is recognized as disabled within higher education and how they are treated, we obfuscate the larger impacts of academic ableism embedded within institutions of higher education.

A Note on Language Choices and Definitions

This dissertation uses a framing of Disability that may be disquieting or uncomfortable for those solely familiar with how educational specialists discuss Disability; I will be discussing and defining my linguistic choices as they arise. The first example of this is my choice to use identity-first (i.e., “Disabled people”) language, as opposed to person-first (i.e., “people with disabilities”), to express my own work when discussing Disability within higher educational contexts. This choice is reflective of the position of activists and advocates for Disability Rights as well as my own researcher positionality (Acevedo et al., 2015; Secules et al., 2021).

My linguistic decisions are also based in part on the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990, 2009). The social model puts forth the idea that structural and social barriers are an important component of what disables people, as opposed to their bodies or minds, or, as Margaret Price coined, their “bodyminds” (Price, 2011b). This choice is again reflective of the position of self-advocates from within the disabled community who point out that Disability can be an important and welcome part of an individual’s identity (Ladau, 2015) that influences their experiences in the world similar to the influence of identifying with specific gender, racial, veteran, economic, or sexual orientations.

Purpose and Design: Aligning Research Methods with Principles

This study examines differences and similarities in policy and procedure documents related to Disability with respect to the passage of time and at different U.S. institutions of higher education to develop an in-depth understanding that might be missed by focusing on a single institution or year. Policy and procedure documents are the foundation that govern how institutions "handle" Disability, outlining expectations and guidelines for providing services and establishing bureaucratic channels used to determine who has access to those services. This research employs a comparative case study approach, beginning with an exploratory search for the source documents (*findability*), complemented by quantitative explanations of where (*cohesion)*, what (*consistency*), and how (*transparency*) these documents persist from their original creation date. As I collected these documents, I constructed a comparative matrix to track *cohesion*, *consistency*, and *transparency* within and across three different universities.

The methodological design was framed by a lens of "counter-surveillance" that aligns with Critical Disability Theory (Hosking, 2008). Counter-surveillance is my approach of turning the observation of Disability and accessibility away from the individual and back onto the institutions; instead of peering at people under a research microscope, the *institutions* are the subject of scrutiny. Bringing the institutions into the spotlight provides the basis to describe these different settings, observing their institutional norms for creating and preserving

institutional documents that have major impacts on their communities. I included self-imposed constraints on the search process to focus on the accessibility of research. In order to understand the institutional context surrounding Disability within higher education, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What institutional policy and procedure documents have been produced at institutes of higher education (IHEs) regarding Disability between the passage of the ADA (1990) to 2015?
    a. Are these documents *findable*? Are they in a *consistent* location? Are they presented in a *cohesive* fashion? Are they *transparent* to their audience?
        i. Are these answers similar across the different institutions and time frames in this study?
    b. Has the language used in official documents changed over time?
        i. Do these documents use person-first language? Identity-first language? Euphemisms?
        ii. Are these answers similar across different institutions in a given time period?
2. How can researchers systematically gather and organize the policy and procedure documents in order to answer these questions? How can we create a public, shareable, accessible dataset in the process of doing so? What work still needs to be done in order to create this easily accessible, public dataset?

Foreshadowing my response to these research questions, due to issues of historical inaccessibility based on a lack of findable materials, my analysis as presented in Chapter 4 ultimately focused on answering question 1a, and not 1b. I have therefore proposed that, as a result of the work completed by this dissertation, future efforts could now focus on a deeper content analysis of the document collection I have created through my search process.

I framed this work in order to incorporate my own developing "Critical Access Methods" under the guiding principle of "Nothing about us, without us." These "Critical Access Methods" align with my positionality as a researcher, calling for an approach that centers Disability and accessibility while performing research. Document collection and analysis will be performed, but *only* on publicly available digital documents—this allows me, as the researcher, to focus my energy on collecting information that is available to the entire public Disability community (assuming they have an Internet connection, such as would be available in a public library).

Going beyond other research traditions that primarily focus on aligning the questions with the methods, I also consciously focused on aligning myself with the community of Disabled people that I am researching (and also a member of). This means my focus is on performing research that does not "presume a particular sort of embodiment [... does] not necessitate travel [...and is] driven by [paywall]-free document sources" (Svyantek, 2018a).

Beyond the findings of my document collection, I created two major products as a result of this dissertation work. First, in Chapter 5, I outline key recommendations for different stakeholder

groups (**SEEKERS, WRITERS**, and **KEEPERS**); these recommendations are intended for my entire audience as practices that they can incorporate within their own works. Second, in Chapter 6, I describe the work undertaken to create a repository using materials from my document collection. I utilize the Qualitative Data Repository (based in Syracuse University) as the host for a curated exhibit of VT-specific materials.

Audience

The primary audiences for this work are those who are most intimately connected with higher education—its students, faculty, staff, and administration. This work proposes an investigative look at the documents that govern the experiences of Disabled people at specific institutions, though such policies and procedures affect everyone on campus.

Researchers who identify as Disabled or as methods experts are also included in the audience for this work. As this dissertation is the culmination of a research project, I expect that my "Critical Access Methods" may be of interest to others exploring Disability in different capacities. Similarly, librarians and others whose work focuses on archival practices and "open access" will find my emphasis on publicly available and accessible documents a refinement on the traditional definition of what access means. Finally, I believe that this project may be of interest to the general public, in the same manner that universal design principles are beneficial to a wider audience, as it centers on publicly available documents from public institutions of higher education.

This “leaves” us with the intended setting for this study: public, research-intensive institutions of higher education with both undergraduate and graduate degree programs in STEM fields. I have chosen three specific sites for this dissertation project: Auburn University, The Ohio State University, and Virginia Tech. The time frame for this study ranges from the passage of the Americans with Disabilities in 1990 to 2015, using 5-year chunks to frame the proposed data collection; future work, if started now, could capture the 2020 academic year before it ends. The use of documents within the study additionally reflects the previously mentioned “Critical Access Methods” in that such documents do not privilege my position as a researcher with access to individuals to interview or survey.

Limitations and Biases

I have identified multiple limitations designing this study. The four primary limitations are: 1) the number of institutions included as cases for analysis, 2) the time frame under investigation, 3) the focus on publicly available digital document sources, and 4) the analysis that only includes accessible documents. Each of these limitations is described and detailed more deeply as part of Chapter 3, Research Methods. While the institutions included in the study share similar, overarching characteristics, the focus of the study excludes different types of institutions (such as private or community colleges). The study’s twenty-five year time frame provides the opportunity to conduct longitudinal document analysis but cuts off collection and analysis around key time points. An additional limitation regarding time is the decision to

collect documents during the span of a single year at five-year intervals (e.g., documents created from July 1, 1990 to June 30, 1991 were collected, followed by documents created from July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996).

Focusing on publicly available digital documents is a limitation as each institution may be privy to private, internal documents that led to the development of Disability-related policies and procedures; by focusing on digital documents, I also excluded documents that might only exist in physical hard copies at each institution. This final limitation, the focus on accessible documents, meant that I would only analyze documents that are accessible to the community of people that they affect—Disabled faculty, staff, and students. This limitation additionally forces me to note which documents are digitally available *and yet* inaccessible to the community they affect as part of my analysis while also reinforcing my own position as a researcher whose guiding principle for this work is "Nothing about us, without us."

While the positionality regarding "Critical Access Methods" will be more broadly discussed in my chapter Research Methods, I will briefly state how I am not a neutral researcher, nor do I believe that neutrality is necessarily a goal for this work. The act of utilizing Critical Disability Theory as a perspective is not a neutral act; it is a *critical* act as a researcher. My evolving awareness of my own non-neutrality has led to deep discussions about my research design, prompting a focus on document sources that anyone else should be able to access in the manner that I am doing instead of putting myself into a place of privilege by conducting interviews or surveys that would provide data unavailable to my stakeholders and audience.

While such data sources, and their obfuscated nature, are very familiar to academic researchers, I again re-emphasize my intentions to create a data set that could be independently replicated, along with my analysis (J. Block & Kuckertz, 2018; Camerer et al., 2018; Porte, 2013). The quest for shareable, findable data has taken on greater importance in the light of COVID-19's global impacts, which have affected and highlight the non-apparent precarity of research projects, funding, and site access, among other things.

That said, I did utilize my privilege, in terms of physical presence, at Virginia Tech when sourcing documents—I spent days not only going through the digitally available Records Groups for the university Special Collections materials, but also visiting in person during the summer of 2019. Being in this space clarified the inaccessibility of particular research avenues and material resources. I loosened this constraint by bracketing these days, and the resulting findings, within my search memos (Svyantek, 2019d). This divergence reinforced the importance of intentionally preserving materials, as well as having research approaches that were created with accessibility at the forefront.

Scope of Dissertation

As previously stated, this project originally included the intention to perform content analysis on collected documents; it has evolved as an analysis of the lack of availability of documents in intentionally curated archival spaces. There are elements of the study that had to be postponed (the original content analysis), elements that were kept (the collection phase and some of the

analysis pieces), and elements that were added (the discussion of roles, as well as suggestions for each in Chapter 5) as I conducted my search. These elements are pieces of a continuous process of determining where I and my work fit in relation to established communities of practice while simultaneously challenging those same structures.

An easy means to start scoping what this project ended up entailing is by describing what it is *not.* While this dissertation project may touch on some of these topics over the course of the literature review, the research focus will not include settings such as the K-12 education system, private institutions, community colleges, small liberal arts colleges, or teaching-focused institutions primarily geared towards undergraduate education. The study itself will also not propose to develop an intervention, come up with a new diagnostic procedure, or design a new prosthetic or piece of assistive technology.

However, the study itself *serves* as an intervention: in exposing the relations of higher education with its Disabled denizens via policy, the study conclusions will *de facto* provide intervention in the form of critical reflection. The aims of this study also avoid drawing Disability up and out of a single individual as the "main point" of their personal story or narrative. Other approaches have conducted small focus groups or personal interviews to gather insider knowledge of the lived experiences of Disabled people within higher education (S. Kerschbaum, Eisenman, et al., 2017), or focused on those who work with or are charged with providing services to Disabled people on campus, such as instructors or interpreters (Cogen et al., 2015; Napier, 2004; Schick, 2005). Finally, this study is not proposing a new model

or definition of Disability; existing ways of understanding Disability will be included in the literature review and used as a lens.

Definitions

In this section, I reiterate foundational definitions for this dissertation work. This list includes terms directly linked to Disability as well as those related to the design of the study itself.

- *Accessible/accessibility* - For my purposes, this is not about affordability (such as the cost of the thing or having a document exist behind a sign-in or paywall), but about whether people can use a resource, independent of the means of access (e.g., a document is “accessible” if there is optical character recognition).
- *Accommodations* - The measures proposed to provide access that are not necessarily built-in. For example, in a course, this might include creating alternative formats for a single student.
- *Cohesion* - The multiplicity of documents, regarding how many “pieces'' a document was in at a given time.
- *Consistency* - The source of the documents, meaning if they were from a university-related site or not.
- *Counter-surveillance* - I call my own work counter-surveillance because instead of focusing on the Disability community on campus, I turned the lens back towards the institutions themselves and their document practices on a large scale.

- *Critical Access Methods* - A framework based in the emerging field of "Critical Access Studies," coined by Aimi Hamraie (2020), which engages methodology with accessibility and perspectives of Disability Justice and disability culture.
- *Critical Disability Theory (CDT)* - An emerging theoretical framework for understanding, studying, and analyzing understanding issues related to Disability (Hosking, 2008).
- *disability ("little d")* - Using "little d" indicates a reference to specific impairments or conditions, models of disability, as well as the recognition of the predominance of person-first language; reflects the choices of other authors where appropriate.
- *Disability ("big D")* - Using "big D" indicates a recognition of the cultural aspect of Disability, and of the role it serves as part of an individual's or community's identity; reflects the choices of other authors where appropriate.
- *Findability* - Regarding materials, whether such documents are available *at all* in a way that could be perceived.
- *Institute/institution/institutional* - When the term "institution" comes up in discussion of disability, it typically refers to *institutionalization*—the long-term placement of disabled people into group living settings. When used in this document, it will almost always be related to institutions of higher education ("IHEs").
- *Transparency* - The searchability of text, meaning that the file included machine-encoded text (or Optical Character Recognition, OCR).

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. This chapter, Chapter 1, provides the overview of and introduction to the dissertation, its guiding research questions, and scope.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review that will provide the foundation for this work. It will include background information about the iPhD process at Virginia Tech; disability in the United States, weaving together history, language, and models; educational disability-related policies and implementation in higher education; archival practices; and previous studies of Disability within higher education. It also highlights the larger impact of Disability on my methodological choices, discussing "crip methods" and "critical access." This review illuminates the conversation that this dissertation contributes to, thereby furthering disability studies research in a meaningful way.

In Chapter 3, I present my research design. This chapter covers the data collection and management plans, proposing a researcher positionality firmly in line with the motto of the Disability Civil Rights movement, "Nothing about us, without us." The chosen sites for the document collection are presented, along with the rationale behind each choice. The analysis methods are also discussed, foreshadowing the potential future work that will arise from the proposed search results.

In Chapter 4, I present the results and discuss them in detail, focusing on the first major research question initially presented in my Introduction. This chapter contains four major sections; first, a meta-analysis of the data collection process discusses the *findability* of the documents, followed by considering them in three different dimensions: *cohesion, consistency,* and *transparency*. Each section includes quantitative analysis of the coding used, and resultant visualizations, both across time and institution, are presented.

Chapter 5 presents a list of recommendations based on the results presented in Chapter 4, along with the detailed reflective memoing undertaken while conducting the document search. It addresses the second research question posed in Chapter 1 by considering the document lifecycle through the roles of a **SEEKER, WRITER,** and **KEEPER**.

Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary of the research results, identifying the implications of the dissertation in larger conversations regarding Disability and higher education. It includes a proof of the concepts outlined in Chapter 5, using a Qualitative Data Repository project to share part of the search results and memoing process. I then propose potential future research areas based on these results and provide a conclusion of the presented work.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter narrates how I came to this work. It describes my journey with the iPhD program and how I developed my individualized research plans. It presents the historical context for my research topic, specifically looking at institutions of higher education and academic responses to Disability and access. It also provides the foundation to my research approach, illuminating how I came to focus on specific methods and practices.

This research further contributes to the academic dialogue regarding Disability and higher education by utilizing "Critical Access Methods" to conduct research and analysis. My developing methodology's central tenet of "Nothing about us, without us" necessitates mentioning Disability history with respect to educational settings within the United States as an explanation of why proposing such methods is both radical and important for such work. Within this discussion of historical changes, I will highlight narrative tropes and Disability rhetoric. I will also provide information about each of the public institutions of higher education that will be included in this study. Previous research regarding Disability and higher education are discussed to highlight gaps in research where this study's methods and results could serve to further the conversations taking place.

This literature review will be organized to cover the following areas:

1. An Evolving Doctoral Process
2. Disability History: Models and Identity

3. Disability History: Federal Disability Policy and Policy at Institutions of Higher Education
4. Archival Practices
5. Disability Methods and Practices

An Evolving Doctoral Process

The Virginia Tech individualized, interdisciplinary PhD (iPhD) program began in 2015 as a way to provide opportunities for graduate "students whose goals cannot be met by a single discipline from a degree granting academic unit at the university" (Virginia Tech Graduate School, 2019) to pursue a doctoral degree. There have been "two students [to] successfully complete their degrees to date, [and] 2-3 new students per year have earned the blessing of the CGPSP [Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies] to begin their programs"(W. Huckle, personal communication, March 8, 2021) and many more pose questions wondering if the iPhD path is right for them.

Individualized and Interdisciplinary

An overarching theme in my experience, also recognized by others (College of Liberal Arts, 2021; Department of English, 2021; DO-IT Center, 2021, p.; University of Illinois Chicago, 2021), is that Disability is not a concept that can be investigated from a single disciplinary approach. In 2015, when I began constructing a PhD plan of study related to Disability in higher education, existing academic programs offered brief, partial glimpses into the construction of disability and its conceptualization within higher education or society, but they did not have the flexibility

that would be required to complete a curriculum that provides what this research puts forth: a broad foundation in higher education, a specific focus on Disability, and a wide perspective on the research process itself.

I began my own iPhD journey during the 2015–2016 academic year when I realized that my churning bucket of questions about Disability within higher education were not answerable solely through Engineering Education's (my then-current department) curriculum and expertise. Pursuing these questions in an interdisciplinary PhD program is a recognition that this work did not fit into any pre-existing category. While my coursework drew from different areas, the existing curricula of PhD programs present on Virginia Tech's campus were not conducive to the proposed plan of study. As Disability as an identity was the original focus of my proposed work, the fact that there is not a doctoral-level graduate program in Disability Studies available at Virginia Tech, or at many other institutions, meant that I had to forge my own path.

Application Materials

My application materials for the iPhD had to satisfy the Graduate School, not departmental requirements; the screenshot below lists the first 6 items, which were fairly straightforward and similar to other general applications to graduate studies:

Figure 2.1 2016 iPhD Requirements 1 through 6 (Virginia Tech Graduate School, 2016)

1. If required by any of the academic units with which the student will be working, the results of standardized tests such as GRE or GMAT.
2. International students must submit acceptable TOEFL (iBT = 80 total and 20 on each subtest) or IELTS (6.5) scores or otherwise satisfy Graduate School requirements for competency in English (e.g., earned a degree from an international university that provides all instruction in English).
3. A letter from a VT faculty advisor describing the student's potential for success and ability to conduct independent interdisciplinary research, and expressing willingness to chair the student's advisory committee.
4. Letters or email messages from 3-4 tenure-track VT faculty members willing to serve on the student's advisory committee. The committee should be comprised of faculty representing at least two colleges.
5. (for new applicants) Three letters of recommendation from faculty commenting on the student's ability to pursue an interdisciplinary doctoral degree
6. (for new applicants) At least one example of scholarly writing (e.g., introduction and conclusion of master's thesis, published research paper)

As I was a student at Virginia Tech *switching* programs, my GRE scores were already on file with the Graduate School (list item 1; being a current VT graduate student also negated the need to address list items 5 and 6). As a US-based student, I was never required to jump through any of the additional international hoops (list item 2). I had an amazing working relationship with my advisor, Dr. Lisa McNair, throughout my time in my original program of study and as an iPhD student (list item 3). My full committee represents multiple colleges and departments: Engineering Education within the College of Engineering (Dr. McNair and Dr. Riley), Human Development (Dr. Shivers) and Science, Technology, and Society (Dr. Shew) in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (as per list item 4).

The application process to become an iPhD student after already *being* a graduate student at Virginia Tech felt akin to the additional administrative processes of acknowledging and claiming Disability identity through “the proper channels'' to be recognized at the university level. I knew

that I could do this work, and that it was important, but I had to convince others of this as well, going beyond the requirements that my peers were faced with; this is why list items 7 and 8 are much more detailed, and required a depth of understanding of *why* I wanted to pursue an iPhD.

After completing these general application materials, I then worked to convince others that there was value in doing my work. I had to, as per list item 7 (screenshotted as Figure 2.2), articulate my career goals and rationale for the iPhD degree. Per my proposal document submitted in spring of 2016 to the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies (the CGS&P; now the Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies, CGP&P), I started by providing background information about my previous academic and professional experiences, pointing out how I had *never* stayed on a straight and narrow disciplinary path. My civil engineering undergraduate degree included coursework in business and history beyond plan of study requirements. I finished my civil engineering master's degree at Virginia Tech in 2018 with a project focused on K-12 outreach projects and tying them back to educational student outcomes. My administrative and service work at Virginia Tech includes serving multiple years on the Graduate Student Assembly's Executive Board, as well as the co-chair for the Disability Caucus. All the threads of who I am and what I do have combined to create the potential for an iPhD, a degree that as a whole would be greater than the sum of all these disparate parts. My iPhD further stretches the institutional approach to interdisciplinary work; instead of designing my degree around a specific *problem*, I designed it to create the opportunity to bring together my strengths in a powerful, meaningful, individualized configuration.

I believed when I turned in my proposal, as I do now, that my educational background and the potential expertise that would develop via this iPhD would prepare me for a wide variety of potential careers; again, instead of an iPhD focused on "solving" one singular type of problem, my approach results in being able to meet many different challenges. I postulated that a wide variety of non-academic opportunities would be available to me. There are advocacy groups that work to promote policy changes, and my iPhD would familiarize me with current policies, especially within education. Government positions that focus on the ADA and access issues, and developing such policies changes, would be another possibility. Serving as a consultant to conduct training sessions on Disability and accessibility issues to various workplaces (such as engineering firms or higher education institutes) was yet another potential path my career might follow. I could even be part of developing an accreditation standard for accessibility, either as part of larger accreditation systems (such as SACS) or as its own certification (such as LEED).

I also imagined a world where I was in the position to qualify as a faculty member (potentially with a dual departmental appointment) teaching civil engineering and disability-related coursework while continuing to research disability. Or, owing to my interests and experiences, I would be well-equipped to go to other institutions and help create a Disability Studies program or minor. Other paths within academia would also be open to me, especially those with administrative appointments. Careers within university ADA or Student Disability Services offices would allow me to advocate and develop policy changes that affect those on campus.

And, surprisingly enough, that is where I have landed. As of January 2021, I am the Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist at the University of Virginia. In this capacity, I advise students regarding AT options that might enhance their learning, I serve as a consultant to my coworkers, and I am becoming enmeshed in my latest institutional culture. Eventually, I will serve on campus committees that work on policy, on choosing what systems and methods will be supported to create "access to the full University experience" (Student Disability Access Center, 2017).

In short, I am already doing the work that I set out to do at the start of this process. But that does not mean that there were not *drastic* changes between the 2016 iPhD proposal document I submitted and then defended to the CGS&P in 2016 and the final products of my dissertation. That 28-page document—they added a page limit *after* my submission (Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies, 2016)—addressed the items listed in Figure 2.2:

Figure 2.2 Screenshot of 2016 iPhD proposal guidelines (Virginia Tech Graduate School, 2016)

- Proposed interdisciplinary dissertation title.
- Advisor and list of advisory committee members, including rationale for their inclusion on the committee and identification of areas of expertise relevant to the proposed research program.
- Completed and current coursework (transcripts).
- Coursework plan of study for the IPhD degree. Plan of study must include courses from multiple colleges and departments and must be distinct from plans of study of existing degree programs at Virginia Tech. A table including rationale for each course should be included.
- Career goals and personal motivation for pursuing an IPhD
- A description of the format and content of the preliminary examination, including topic areas to be covered from various disciplines involved.
- Detailed timeline from enrollment to graduation.
- A brief description of the interdisciplinary dissertation proposal. The proposal should be written with a general, interdisciplinary academic audience in mind. A short literature review along with a summary of objectives or anticipated products must be included. The description should make the case: 1) that the proposed project is truly scholarly in nature (i.e., worthy of a PhD dissertation) and 2) that the proposed dissertation can only be accomplished from an interdisciplinary standpoint.

This proposal document originally presented my dissertation title as *Invisible within the academy: The construction of disability within institutions of higher education*; this has been updated to reflect my methodological approach to this work (*Institutional Counter-surveillance using a Critical Disability Studies Lens*). My proposed coursework was *very* lengthy, and I will submit a plan of study change form (VT Graduate School, 2020) to complete my degree because those course ideas changed as well.

Five years later, my committee and advisor have remained constant. Every other element has adapted to meet institutional constraints and individual changes, reforming from its original structure to fit new needs; my dissertation title, my plan of study (a minor revision), the timeline (I originally thought that I would complete my work by 2020….then COVID-19 wiped

away all concept of time), and most especially, my proposed work and products of my dissertation.

I originally set out to explore the conceptualization of disability across higher education from an interdisciplinary perspective. I aimed to contribute to the interdisciplinary field of Disability Studies in terms of advancing the understanding of this identity throughout academia, by answering the following research questions:

Figure 2.3 Original research questions (screenshot of my unpublished 2016 iPhD proposal)

1. *What linguistic choices are made when constructing disability? How does this impact the performance of disability within different institutions and departments?*
2. *How are policies and procedures similar across institutions? How are they different?*
3. *How are different departments at the same institution similar when constructing and performing disability? How are they different?*
4. *What are the procedures in place to request access needs? How do institutions meet such needs?*

While doing some preliminary research, I soon discovered that my original questions were not necessarily as answerable as I initially believed. The difficulty I faced tracking down documents to answer these questions soon forced my dissertation into an entirely new direction, where I confronted the fact that I could not find the data I wanted to use. Instead of being able to easily find, collect, and analyze university-created materials, I found myself stumped time and time again by a lack of publicly-documented institutional history.

So, I swerved off of the path I had established for myself. Instead of addressing my original research questions, I reframed them to center my focus on the *counter-surveillance* of institutions of higher education. Counter-surveillance is a "process of detecting and mitigating hostile surveillance" (Secure Community Network, 2020); I call my own work counter-surveillance because instead of focusing on the Disability community on campus (as many do in studies cited later in this chapter), I turned the lens back towards the institutions themselves and their document practices on a large scale. I watched the watchers (Kemple & Huey, 2005; Ogden et al., 2017; Welch, 2011; Wood & Thompson, 2018) by asking the institutions themselves what they know: by searching for different documents across time, I explored where the gaps are in institutional history, with a specific interest in *Disability and Access* policies.

My emergent focus on such documents, their general availability and format, also meant rewriting my research questions, which evolved to those presented in Chapter 1 that ultimately framed this study:

1. What institutional policy and procedure documents have been produced at institutes of higher education (IHEs) regarding Disability between the passage of the ADA (1990) to 2015?
2. How can researchers systematically gather and organize the policy and procedure documents in order to answer these questions? How can we create a public, shareable, accessible dataset in the process of doing so? What work still needs to be done in order to create this easily accessible, public dataset?

This refocus on the larger institutional structure made sense in order to gain a better understanding of the context at each institution. If I was having difficulties finding documents, this was a way to see if I was having such issues across the board, so to speak, or just with the *Disability and Access* policies. The resulting collection of documents, and the process of finding and sorting them, provides a starting place for having deeper conversations about institutional disability discourse, access practices, and Disability identity in future work.

Disability History: Models and Identity

Disability is a category of identity that is routinely overlooked in the landscape of higher education, typically an omission in discussions of diversity and inclusion (Fox & Lipkin, 2002; Schuman & Olufs, 1995). More troubling, Disability identity and culture has been posed as "antithetical to diversity" (Davis, 2011, para. 4) practices within higher education, as the academic programs that "educat[e] people to erase and diminish disability" (Dolmage, 2017, p. 21) do not easily coexist with attempts to celebrate Disability pride. This antithesis further arises from the stigma that still exists around even using the word "disability" (Carter-Long, 2015), shying away by instead using terms such as "special needs" or refusing to mention it at all. This might be why current educational practices use accommodations in a reactionary manner, provided on an individual basis instead of incorporating universal design systemically across an institution. These accommodations are made on an as-needed, as-pointed out basis,

creating more work instead of being integrated to create an inclusive practice (Accessible U, 2021).

When Disabled students begin studies as a typical university, they must navigate institutional structures built around historical assumptions of how people access classes and campus. These assumptions build into course scheduling, class locations, campus navigation, transportation systems, housing, food venues, and administrative policies—all common elements of a campus experience that have effects on Disabled faculty and staff as well. This sets up a scenario where anyone who needs something different is a person that has to be adjusted to after the start of a semester. This approach leads to the inability of the Disabled community to begin on an equal footing within higher education; for example, students begin their educational experiences behind classmates when they need their texts in alternative formats or when they require a note taker to access course materials. An important step to removing these educational barriers is to understand how disability history is intertwined within institutional histories in the United States, before exploring what the institutional policies around Disability and accessibility are and how they are shared on campuses.

Disability History in the US

According to 2010 US Census data, approximately 19 percent of the civilian, non-institutionalized[2] population has a disability (Brault, 2012). There are ways that we communicate what disability is, and does, and looks like in the context of American society. This section provides background information, including history, evolving language, and models of disability.

All of these topics are, in and of themselves, huge undertakings that others have devoted entire books to explaining. Even the concept of disability history on its own is simply huge, spanning time and continents. What is being covered as part of this literature review is just the briefest glimpse trying to set the stage for my own research, specifically focusing on how what is going on might impact the current context of public American universities. Others have delved much further into the general topic of America's overall disability history itself, such as Nielsen's (2012) eponymous *A Disability HIstory of the United States*.

The history of Disability policy and procedures, both within the United States and globally, can be boiled down to the idea of "we don't want you here"—institutionizations (Fleisher & Zames,

[2] According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), "institutional" categories focus on housing considerations and include correctional facilities (detention centers and jails), juvenile facilities (such as group homes, residential treatment centers, and juvenile correctional facilities), nursing facilities, and other institutional facilities (psychiatric hospitals, in-patient hospice, military treatment facilities, and *residential schools for people with disabilities*).

2001; Oliver, 2009; Shapiro, 1994), immigration laws (Nielsen, 2012), eugenics (Earle, 2018; Indiana Eugenics Law, 1907; Nielsen, 2012), and outright murder (ASAN, 2021) are all part of the fraught tapestry of how policies and procedures have affected the Disability community. One example of this is that while many are rightly horrified by the impact of the Nazis' eugenics movement during World War II, few are aware that forced sterilizations have occurred in the United States. Indiana passed what is widely considered to be the first such law in 1907, which made sterilization mandatory for "criminals, *idiots*, rapists, and *imbeciles* in state custody [emphasis added]" (Indiana Eugenics Law, 1907). Following this was the US Supreme Court case of *Buck v. Bell*; an 8-1 ruling found forced sterilization (in this case, based on Virginian law) to be in the interest of the public welfare, thus legitimizing eugenics within the United State with Justice Oliver W. Holmes' statement that, "Three generations of imbeciles are enough" (*Carrie Buck v. John Hendren Bell, Superintendent of State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble Minded*, 1927). Virginia would not repeal this law until 1974, while the Supreme Court ruling on *Buck v Bell* has not been overturned.

Similarly, it took until the 1970s to repeal the last of the so-called ugly laws. These laws existed in major US cities such as San Francisco, Chicago, and Omaha, as well as the state of Pennsylvania (Schweik, 2010). Punishments and fines were levied for breaking codes. Chicago, IL was the last to repeal their ugly law, which lasted until 1974 (Schweik, 2010) and read:
No person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object or improper person to be allowed in or on the public ways or other public

places in this city, or shall therein or thereon expose himself to public view, under a penalty of not less than one dollar nor more than fifty dollars for each offense (Ugly Law, 1911).

This is *recent* history. These laws are relevant to my project as they are demonstrative of the broader societal perceptions of disability within the past generation. These perceptions informed institutional foundations and continue to shape not only the discourse within institutions of higher education, but their campuses and policies as well.

Rhetoric and Models

With such rich historical context and heavily-loaded terminology, paying attention to both the language choices and the intent behind them when reading and researching within disability issues is an important aspect of the work. Much of the literature focusing on students with disabilities, especially in higher education, uses phrasing such as *accommodation*, "*special needs*" and *self-advocacy*. These terms set up a divide between limitations (be they physical, cognitive, emotional, or psychiatric) considered to be non-normative and a given normative population. This dichotomy is similar to the unnamed norms (the identities that are just assumed to be ubiquitous and unremarkable) in other studies of minoritized groups. In racial studies, "white" is now being named as the comparison with all "people of color/POC" (Guess, 2006; Perry, 2001). Feminist critiques of men/males as the "norm" have spread beyond gender studies, such as Liu and Mager's (2016) observation that the exclusion of women in clinical trials impacts medical research. The language used to describe and examine these predetermined

non-normative populations in society reflect the dominant discourse that society employs to look at inclusion as a "numbers game."

Similarly, the tropes that exist within society about disability follow stereotypes of competence and objectification. These provide an initial taxonomy of disability narratives revolving around accounts of villainy, burden, fraud, inspiration, and (traditionally religiously-motivated) pity (Shew, 2021). Each trope carries within it the sources of popular culture memes that reflect the perceptions of society at large, influencing how the public interacts with disability as a concept as well as those in the Disabled community.

The narrative of overcoming disability, or being a "supercrip," common in both historical stories and modern news coverage, exploiting disability as a story by referring to individuals as "afflicted" or courageous individuals whose plucky attitudes are what gets them past structural and attitudinal barriers (Barton, 2007). Disabled individuals' stories are turned into heartwarming tales, where other factors (such as access to medical care, education, and money) are ignored in favor of simple stories.

In this time when the institutions of higher education in this study were being founded, Helen Keller was a keen example of someone "overcoming" their disabilities, in this case an unknown childhood sickness that meant she went through life deaf and blind. Many are familiar with the story retold in *The Miracle Worker* (Penn, 1962), where Anne Sullivan, said worker of miracles,

forced signed language to not only overcome Helen's previous limitations, but her physical resistance to help.

Though less well-recognized, Sullivan herself is another example of "overcoming" disability, along with poverty. She was raised in Tewksbury Almshouse, a crowded and uncared for location filled with people who were impoverished, disabled, and sick, transferring from Tewksbury to Perkins School for the Blind in 1880 (B. Winter, 2017). Tewksbury was later closed after claims of abuse, cruelty, and cannibalism (B. Winter, 2017); these types of claims are quite common when considering other institutions that have been used to warehouse people deemed disabled, defective, degenerate, or destitute.

In the cases of Keller and Sullivan, their access to education, and thus their capacity to "overcome" disability, was also based on their circumstances—Keller was born into a relatively wealthy family and Sullivan was present to demand schooling during an inspection at Tewksbury. They experienced support in order to access education (and thus other opportunities) instead of being left to languish under assumptions of incompetence.

By "overcoming,"' they both also managed to avoid the assumption that they would automatically, due to disability, be a "burden" and overall economic drain on society. Fears of disability representing societies' burdens are best represented by legislation and attitudes that support forced sterilizations and other forms of eugenics (including segregated housing and education, but also going so far as murder and genocide), focusing on eliminating impairments

and limitations named and reinforced by normative medical and economic paradigms (Lero et al., 2012).

Reflecting on her own experience in relation to these types of narratives, Disability activist Stella Young (2014) coined the term “inspiration porn” as a characterization of how her life and actions were seen as motivational in ways she did not like or appreciate. Disabled people being objectified and turned into motivational images permits nondisabled individuals to stare (Garland-Thomson, 2009) and put their own worries about aging, injury, or raising a disabled child into perspective, usually by connecting imagery of people with apparent disabilities (e.g., a wheelchair user on the beach or a person with Down’s Syndrome participating in an athletic event) with text quotes that are either of the generic “Just believe in yourself/The only disability is a bad attitude” nature or from named individuals, such as “The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched—they must be felt with the heart,” which is attributed to Helen Keller.

Language qualifying Disability continuously changes to reflect personal preferences, political correctness, and evolving models of disability. One common distinction today is that when discussing disability, one of the first considerations is to choose between either person-first (i.e., “person with a disability”) or identity-first (i.e., “disabled person”) language. There is no clear guidance on using one or the other, though organizations such as the National Center on Disability & Journalism have made attempts (B. Haller, 2016). For the purposes of this PhD, I will use primarily identity-first language, due to arguments that person-first language implies that

disability is a deviant and derogatory aspect of identity (Ladau, 2015); disability is a fact of life, not an expletive.

The various models of disability also serve important purposes, not only for indicating to others an author's level of familiarity with the subject matter at hand, but because they highlight ideas and perceptions related to Disability/disability. As Smart (Smart, 2001, 2004) further explains, models of disability also:

- Provide definitions and explanations;
- Guide the formation and implementation of policy;
- Provide reasoning for why some academic disciplines study and learn about disability (while others don't);
- Are in no way value neutral, as they
    - Provide potential causes for prejudice, discrimination, and bias; and
    - Provide cause for people to align their own identities and community with Disability.

There are two widely recognized and named models of disability. The individual model centers disability as a personal characteristic (and defect to be addressed). The social model recognizes a larger, communal context and the role that choices made by others can play in how disability is structured. The difference between the two most widely recognized models of disability are provided below in Table 3; while this is an oversimplification, these characteristics illustrate fundamental distinctions between the two models.

Table 2.1 Characteristics of disability models (Oliver, 1990)

Individual	**Social model**
Personal tragedy/problem	Social oppression/problem
Individual treatment	Individual and collective responsibility
Medicalization	Self-advocacy
Professional dominance/expertise	Experience
Individual adjustment/adaptation	Social change
Prejudice	Discrimination
Individual identity	Collective identity
Attitudes	Behavior
Control	Choice
Care	Rights
Policy	Politics

However, a more recent article by Retief and Letšosa (2018) outline a total of *nine* currently recognized typological models of disability. I summarize this work based on how Disability/disability is discussed:

- Moral/religious model: Disability is an “act of God” as punishment for sin (either by self or inherited);
- Medical/individual/”personal tragedy” model: Disability is to be eradicated on the individual level;
- Social model: Disability is a result of barriers in an environment;
- Identity model: Disability is part of positive self-image;

- Human rights model: Disability goes beyond barriers and must incorporate civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, respecting that some individuals' lives are impacted by disability even when physical/structural barriers are removed;
- Cultural model: Disability is less well-defined as it is dependent on context of specific culture;
- Economic model: Disability is a productivity challenge to be addressed;
- Charity model: Disability creates victims of circumstance that should be pitied; and
- Limits model: Disability is best understood with respect to the limits of the human body, focusing on related experiences.

Kafer's (2013) political/relational model is another way to rephrase the human rights model, considering disability as a barrier, on top of any individual's impairments, that is created by a hostile social environment. The disabled person is not the problem; what needs to be addressed are the social, architectural and economic obstacles and discriminatory thinking that lead to inaccessibility and exclusionary practices that bar full participation in society (Kafer, 2013). This model also guides my work, as I am searching for the policy documents within higher education that would lead to inaccessibility by virtue of not only how they are put into practice, but how they are disseminated to their users.

This background information on disability history, rhetoric, and models provides knowledge about the greater societal context that higher education functions within and prompts guiding questions: If the conversations on campus revolve around these narratives, how does the

understanding and inclusion of disability as a part of diversity move beyond such tropes? What is the place of Disability Studies as a field within higher education?

Disability as a Site of Scholarly Work

My undergraduate and masters field, civil engineering, has strong foundations that are well recognized by national associations and state-level licensing. Civil engineering dates back to the beginning of civilization and the development of structures; there are strong codes of ethics, such as the American Society of Civil Engineers', which dates back to 1914 (American Society of Civil Engineers, 2020). It has well-established boundaries and practices, marking it as separate from other fields such as mechanical engineering or music history.

In comparison, Disability Studies is a younger and less-structured discipline, taking cues from a wide range of perspectives to create an interdisciplinary field. Simi Linton (1998, p. 525) recognized this by stating that the "border between what is considered Disability Studies and what is not is fixed at different points by different authors;" I'm providing my own understanding of the field and how my work fits in, but anyone working near or around similar topics will likely have a slightly different flavor to their own interpretation. Indeed, there are even those who work in other disciplines that do so strategically, "infiltrating" (Acevedo Espinal, 2020, p. 270) these new fields to inject them with critical disability studies; my imagination makes this approach akin to a xenomorph's facehug that allows new disciplinary understandings to eventually, and somewhat painfully, emerge.

To me, the field is not about interventions or "cures" for disability conditions; it has foundational interest in defining and explaining Disability, along with providing critiques of those same understandings (Brilmyer, 2018b; Bury, 1996; Friedman & Owen, 2017; Grönvik, 2007; Hull, 1998; Miskovic & Gabel, 2012; Oliver, 1990; Retief & Letšosa, 2018; Riddle, 2013; Salvador-Carulla & Gasca, 2010; Smart, 2004; J. D. Smith & Polloway, 2008). It is concerned with the process of negotiating and disclosing Disability as an identity (Alshammari, 2017; P. Anderson & Williams, 2001; AWE Fund Organizing Committee, 2020; Carroll-Miranda, 2017; S. Kerschbaum, Eisenman, et al., 2017; O'Toole, 2013; Samuels, 2014; Sheldon, 2017; Thomas, 2001). The voices, perspectives, and experiences of Disabled people should be centered and celebrated in the work; it should not just be about the parents, caretakers, doctors, therapists, "disability professionals," and special education specialists (Acevedo Espinal, 2020; Garland-Thomson, 2013; Hall, 2019; Hosking, 2008; Lester & Nusbaum, 2017; Linton, 1998, 2005; Minich, 2016; O'Toole, 2013; Secules et al., 2021).

In short, Disability Studies "has emerged" (Garland-Thomson, 2013) as a disciplinary field and it bears the responsibility (as other foundational entities) to critically define and claim the ethical space it creates. As an interdisciplinary enterprise, it is also still in flux. That is part of the beauty and the mess involved within interdisciplinary fields—they can be stretched and poked and prodded into fitting different needs. I'm working here because my original research questions were concerned with Disability rhetoric and its impact within higher education. I'm working here because the policy and procedure documents I am most interested in are related to the process of claiming and using Disability in the process of seeking access. I'm working here

because I believe that those documents should center campus Disability expertise, and not just the people who got the expected degrees to provide access services. I'm working here because I think that this project can be the foundation to making a difference in the campus Disability experience. I am working here because I believe that it is dangerous to forget the foundations of how we came to be where we are today, not just regarding campus Disability experience, but in all the twists and turns institutions of higher education have to offer with their documents and archival practices.

Scholarly Focus on Disability at the Site of the Individual

Previous studies within higher education tend to focus on the individual experiences and responses regarding Disability and accessibility on campus. Some studies focus on the students—such as Marshak et al. (2010) conducting interviews with 16 college students with disabilities, focusing on the internal barriers (a.k.a., the internalized ableism) to seeking official accommodation services. Others might focus on the people on campus "dealing" with students, such as faculty and those in teacher-prep programs (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004; Burgstahler et al., 2000; Fore et al., 2002; McLeskey et al., 2004). Price's (Price, 2011b) *Mad at School* was the one of the first texts to use a disability-studies perspective to focus on the impact of mental disabilities on academic culture within institutions of higher education via personal narratives, while her work with Kershbaum, O'Shea, and Salzer (2017) spread the narrative challenge to more faculty members with deep discussions of disability within higher education.

While these narratives are fruitful, these are still focused on individual impacts. In *Academic Ableism,* Dolmage (2017) provides a critique of how universities have historically excluded students with disabilities, not to mention faculty and staff. While the "Steep Steps" from Chapter One's title are both a metaphor and a literal barrier to access, the text explores the way that the physical structures on campus are often used as part of the power struggle between the institution and the Disabled community—"Sorry, you'll have to go around" and "Sorry, you didn't tell us ahead of time, so we aren't prepared for you" put the onus on the individual to prepare the university for *them*, instead of the institution putting forth the effort itself.

Turning our stare back to the universities, Haller (2006) explored university recruitment materials, sending requests for materials in order to uncover what was sent to prospective students, especially when they specifically requested information about "provisions for students with disabilities." Haller notes key findings of the study: some universities seem to forget or ignore that such students exist, and when they do have an awareness, there is not much effort put into recruiting these students. Haller also points out that "If universities are ignorant about meeting the needs of future students with disabilities, that may say something about the campus climate for their current students with disabilities" (2006).

Flink (2019) found variability among the City University of New York (CUNY) websites regarding the provision of disability service information, along with variation in the names of the offices themselves; throughout the system of 24 colleges, there were 16 unique names. This

proliferation of names means that finding similar offices can cause confusion and frustration for those seeking basic information from institutes of higher education (Erickson et al., 2013).

These works demonstrate the need to continue investigations that countersurveil the institutions themselves to observe what they are doing around campus regarding Disability and access. Instead of asking people how they are managing to survive their own encounters with campuses, my work recognizes that Disability and accessibility issues are located in how the institutions have built their spaces and policies. This project aims to focus on specific institutionally-driven documents as a critical and liberatory means to "emphasize the granular ways in which values and omissions are also created and embodied within archives and their processes" (Brilmyer, 2020, p. 31).

Disability History: Federal Disability Policy and Policy at Institutions of Higher Education

These research studies, and the field of Disability Studies, came into existence after Disabled people really started existing on college campuses. This section will detail the pieces of legislation that led to requirements around accessibility, the sites pertaining to this study, and how archival practices have changed (specifically, those exercised within institutions of higher education).

Legal Compliance and Accessibility

Accessibility is often thought of in terms of legal compliance, of a set of guidelines to follow and rules to be measured against, of requirements to be "grandfathered" around; however, as many Disabled activists continue to point out, "accessibility cannot be achieved through checklists alone" (Montgomery, 2021). The following section outlines legislation that impacted such checklists used by institutions of higher education to maintain access to federal funds via their own compliance.

Architectural Barriers Act of 1968

The Architectural Barriers Act (Architectural Barriers Act, 1968) was the first piece of federal legislation that addressed civil rights beyond services or benefits. Though it was not strongly enforced, it set accessibility standards for future facilities open to the public and constructed or renovated with federal funding. Like future laws, the ABA did not explicitly fund implementation.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The Rehabilitation Act contained more civil rights provisions for people with disabilities; as part of this act, Section 504 provides that "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 1973). These regulations

have created requirements around “reasonable accommodations” for programmatic and education accessibility.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Even after these first two Acts, which already had laid out how barriers were to be removed (such as creating curb cuts and buildings with ingress/egress points that someone with limited mobility could use) and that people should not be excluded based on their disability status, there was still work to be done. On March 12, 1990, Disability activists with physical disabilities participated in the Capitol Crawl—their protest demonstration, which pushed the Congress to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act, involved pulling their bodies up the 100 front steps of the inaccessible Capitol. One of the activists, Michael Winter, later stated that,

> Some people may have thought that it was undignified for people in wheelchairs to crawl in that manner, but I felt that it was necessary to show the country what kinds of things people with disabilities have to face on a day-to-day basis. We had to be willing to fight for what we believed in. (2017, para. 6)

This “undignified” protest was a reaction to the inequitable manner that the United States had treated its disabled population. Shortly thereafter, the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990) became a civil rights law to protect against disability-related discrimination; this act more aligned disability discrimination issues with those concerning racial discrimination (which was put into law as the Civil Rights Act of 1964), reaffirming previous legislation. The ADA covers employment; public entities and transportation; public accommodations, including education, and commercial facilities; telecommunications; and other miscellaneous provisions.

The ADA, however, was once again an “unfunded mandate” (Gwin, 2014; Mills, 1995; Office of the Governor, State of Ohio, 1993) from the federal government which has been interpreted and enforced differently across different entities, including the institutions of higher education in this study.

Campus Accommodations

After the ADA passed in 1990, more provisions were put into place focusing on educational access. The IDEA/IEP plans, along with “No Child Left Behind,” were ideally a means to create equitable learning environments in the K-12 realm. Students moving through these systems would then make it into higher education, and then the workforce. Within American K-12 education, students with diagnosed disabilities might have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan (Understood Editors, 2014). In both cases, a team is involved in creating the educational plan. The IEP team includes at least one parent, a general education teacher, a special education teacher, an evaluation expert, and an administrative representative with authority over special education services. The 504 Plan team consists of a parent, teachers, and the school principal. Parents, not students, bring concerns and disputes to light.

The structures in place for K-12 education disappear once students enter higher education. There, the student who has been the subject of such discussions is now the theoretical author of their own destiny—with all the paperwork that entails. Disabled students who are dealing with the same college transitions as their peers must also learn where to self-identify as disabled and how to navigate administrative paperwork and policies at an accelerated pace.

Many students who speak out about these systems point out that they have “major flaw[s...as students] may not have enough time to get accommodations if they do not realize they need them until later in the semester, and most students have never had to be responsible for their own accommodations” (Avery, 2021).

These accommodations are enumerated on an official letter students are responsible for delivering each semester to each of their faculty and instructors. Faculty can then contact the office if they disagree with the listed accommodations should they feel it would significantly alter their course. There is not much room for students to dispute their “reasonable accommodations” without gathering more documentation through potentially lengthy and expensive evaluations from doctors and other qualified experts.

Students who had access to accommodations during their K-12 education may already be aware of what potential accommodations they might receive and the process for getting them in place at the university. Others might assume that, as they had a mandated accommodations plan in high school, the university will automatically be aware of their specific needs and do not realize that they are now responsible for documenting their disability, requesting accommodations, and seeing that the accommodations are actually enacted. Students with disabilities have to request accommodations for physical access to the classroom, for alternative texts, for note takers, for interpretation/captioning services; all of these accommodations take time and potentially occur after the semester starts, delaying learning opportunities.

One example of the messy process is presented through the story of Melissa Myers (Myers et al., 2014). Though the Canadian and American systems are different, her narrative emphasizes multiple common factors that go beyond what non-disabled students face transitioning to higher education - the physical barriers to access, variability of accommodations, personal care needs, fights to change policies at both an individual and institutional level, and the requirement for support.

Throughout this process, students, especially those with "invisible" disabilities, must constantly expose their accessibility needs. Similar to LGBTQ students (Cech & Waidzunas, 2009, 2011), some disabled students might "cover" or "pass" as being part of the normative, nondisabled student population. However, once these students "out" their need for accommodations to the university, they open themselves up to being seen differently than they were prior to announcing those needs. Those with visible disabilities never have this opportunity to "pass"—they are always out to their fellow students, instructors, and administration that they interact with on campus. Students without disabilities never have to consider this at all.

The process of disability disclosure is similarly difficult for transfer students, graduate students, faculty, and staff on campus (S. Kerschbaum, Eisenman, et al., 2017). At Virginia Tech, the Graduate Student Climate Survey is one way that data is collected and shared with the university community; while gender, race, age, and orientation are dissected and statistically analyzed, disability issues are briefly mentioned, but not emphasized by any means. The 2009

report lists disability not as its own demographic, but under the heading “Religious Beliefs” (Ellis et al., 2009). The 2014 report only commented on the 2.3% of graduate students that self-identified as disabled, mentioning that they experienced effects of being singled out due to their disability identity (Gomez Beane et al., 2014). The climate surveys represent yet another look at the “numbers” instead of actual inclusivity, looking at percentages instead of impact.

The use of large-scale surveys to recognize and describe issues faced by disabled graduate students also ignores factors such as intersectionality, students who have chosen to “pass,” and graduate student interactions with the disabled community in general, both in and out of the classroom. Disabled researchers and faculty continue to have more hoops to jump through to access adequate accommodations (Finesilver et al., 2020); while these are groups with more potential on-campus experience to draw upon, this messy process continues to reoccur. This is why turning the focus away from these individuals and *toward* the institutions is important. The act of conducting countersurveillance through a search for institutionally-created and mediated policy and procedure documents reframes disability and access as issues not housed in people, but in the environment of higher education.

Institution of Higher Education Sites for This Study

This dissertation is not focused on the national access-related documents, but rather the institutional documents in a “post-ADA” context. Authors like those referred to above have covered topics such as the history of disability in America in breadth and depth. This project focuses on three specific sites: three different individual institutions of higher education with a

public-serving face, the land grant, founded to support the people of their states. The focus on the policy and procedure documents at these sites sheds light on how these institutions themselves support or even provide guidance for those with disabilities who are metaphorically knocking against the campus gates.

This section provides some brief background on the context of each site whose documents were surveilled as part of this study. They were each chosen based on their status as a public, land-grant institution of higher education in their state.

Land Grants

The Morrill Act, originally passed in 1862 (Morrill Act of 1862, 1862) and expanded in 1890 to restrict racial discrimination (Racial Discrimination by Colleges Restricted, 1890), provided the opportunity for each state to establish universities focused on mechanical and agricultural studies; though these might have started as private institutions, the majority eventually grew in public universities with a wide variety of educational offerings.

Mission Statements

Each institution's mission stresses its commitment to the public. The latest version of the mission statement has been quoted from official university web presences, with emphasis added using italicized text to draw attention to institutional commitments to public service and improving lives. I include this as an element that emphasizes these universities' dedication to

the public, hence reinforcing the idea that the policy and procedural documents that they develop should also be publicly available.

Auburn University (AU)

"As a land-grant institution, Auburn University is dedicated to *improving the lives* [emphasis added] of the *people* [emphasis added] of Alabama, the nation, and the world through forward-thinking education, *life-enhancing* [emphasis added] research and scholarship, and selfless *service* [emphasis added]" (Auburn University, 2019c).

The Ohio State University (OSU)

> The University is dedicated to:
>
> - Creating and discovering knowledge to *improve the well-being* [emphasis added] of our state, regional, national and global *communities* [emphasis added];
> - Educating students through a comprehensive array of distinguished academic programs;
> - Preparing a diverse student body to be leaders and engaged citizens;
> - Fostering a culture of engagement and *service* [emphasis added].
>
> We understand that diversity and inclusion are essential components of our excellence. (The Ohio State University, 2016)

Virginia Tech (VT)

> Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) is a *public* [emphasis added] land-grant university *serving* [emphasis added] the Commonwealth of Virginia,

> the nation, and the world community. The discovery and dissemination of new knowledge are central to its mission. Through its focus on teaching and learning, research and discovery, and outreach and engagement, the university creates, conveys, and applies knowledge to expand personal growth and opportunity, advance social and community development, foster economic competitiveness, and *improve the quality of life* [emphasis added]. (Virginia Tech, 2006)

Name Changes

While the names currently used by these institutions are all recognizable within the United States (due to research activity and athletics), each of these universities have gone through revisions to reflect their changing focus and mission.

Virginia Tech

Founded in 1872, Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College first changed its name to reflect academic changes occurring on campus in 1896, becoming the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute; the common shortening of this name to Virginia Polytechnic Institute, or VPI, became official in 1944 (Virginia Tech, 2008). In 1970, the name of the institution again changed from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, which is regularly shortened to Virginia Tech (Virginia Tech, 2008, 2018b), reflecting the institution's changes to include the liberal arts.

Auburn University

Auburn University was chartered as the East Alabama Male College in 1856, admitting its first students in 1859 as a private institution focusing on the liberal arts (Auburn University, 2016a). Following a brief closure during the Civil War, control was transferred to the state of Alabama in 1872, making it the first land-grant separate from the state university and ushering in a name change to the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama; 20 years later, women were admitted (Auburn University, 2016a). During this time frame, yet another name change in 1899 turned the College into Alabama Polytechnic Institute (Auburn University, 2016a).

In 1960, the school officially acquired the name it has long been called and one more in keeping with its location, size, and mission—Auburn University; the seperately accredited Auburn University at Montgomery was established in 1967 (Auburn University, 2016a).

The Ohio State University

Originally founded in Columbus, OH in 1870 as the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College, doors opened in 1873 with the first men graduating in 1878 and the first woman in 1879 (Ohio History Central, 2005). The name of the institution was changed in 1878 to The Ohio State University to reflect the wider variety of courses offered (Ohio History Central, 2005; OSU Department of History, 2016). Fred Patterson was the first black man to attend Ohio State in 1889, and Jessie Frances Stephens became the first black woman to graduate in 1905 (E. M. Anderson & Oates, 1998).

Coeducation and Desegregation

Goldin and Katz (2010) found that the switch from single-sex to coeducational colleges was a relatively continuous process from 1835 to the 1950s that accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s, largely driven by the financial motives of a increase in the student body. In many states across the country, the desegregation of institutions of higher education was the result of a lengthy legal and social process that began after the American Civil War (1861–1865) and did not end before the 1970s. This led to the existence of historically Black colleges and universities across the United States, which were founded prior to 1964 with the primary mission to educate Black Americans (*What Is an HBCU?*, n.d.).

Virginia Tech

Virginia Tech is known for having a Corp of Cadets on campus; participation was mandatory for those attending college until the 1920s, when women were first admitted on campus (Virginia Tech, 2008). It should be noted, however, that the courses available to women were initially limited, and these limits were further strengthened by the 1944 merger with Radford College, creating the Women's Division of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech, 2018a). In 1964, the 1944 merger with Radford College was dissolved, allowing women to access all educational programs available at Virginia Tech, instead of only those with no equivalent at Radford (Virginia Tech, 2018b).

The first African American to enroll at Virginia Tech, Irving Peddrew III, was admitted in 1953 and left prior to graduation due to severe isolation; the first African-American to graduate,

Charlie L. Yates, was admitted in 1954 and graduated in 1958 (Wallenstein, 1997). It should be further noted that both chose to pursue engineering degrees as a recent Supreme Court case had mandated that white public colleges to accept qualified black applicants for programs not offered at state-supported black institutions of higher education, and that when such individuals applied, the state's attorney general was appealed to as a matter of course to see if universities could get around said mandate (Virginia Tech, 2018c; Wallenstein, 1997).

Auburn University

Auburn admitted the first three women as students in 1892 (Association, 2018). It took until 1964 for Auburn University to admit its first African American student, Harold A. Franklin (Auburn University, 2009).

The Ohio State University

OSU's student body did not undergo the same massive shifts to desegregation and coeducation as the other two schools. Doctoral researchers at The Ohio State University have written in depth about these students' existence from nearly the foundation of the school; Dr. Pritchard (1982) wrote her dissertation on "The Negro Experience at The Ohio State University in the first sixty-five years, 1873-1938: With special emphasis on Negroes in the College of Education" and Dr. Alcott (1979) wrote hers on "Women at The Ohio State University in the first four decades, 1873-1912."

Current Campus Disability and Access Groups

This section describes the current *Disability and Access*-related groups at each campus in the study. These use the current (i.e., the post-2015) institutional names, as these presented the starting point for the search process outlined in Chapter 3.

Virginia Tech

The Virginia Tech Services for Students with Disabilities office has an online presence that dates back to at least 2003, when the office was physically located in Henderson Hall (SSD, 2003). The employee- and public-facing office now known as "ADA and Accessibility Services" has gone through many name changes and organizational changes; before this, there was the University ADA Services (University ADA Services, 2008); prior to this, there seems to be an amalgamation of offices and names to remember—Policy Memorandum 178 listed the "Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action... Personnel Services ...the ADA Executive Committee, and the ADA Advisory Panel" (Torgersen, 1997, 2008) as responsible parties for campus accessibility.

While these groups are the named offices, others on campus *could* be focusing on these concerns. During the fall of 2014, InclusiveVT (President's Executive Council, 2014) requested that colleges and administrative units across Virginia Tech submit initiatives to increase diversity and inclusiveness on campus. However, even these efforts only go so far to include people with disabilities. Of the 86 university initiatives, there were four that include the term *disability* anywhere in the proposal; only two actually focus on specific disability-related issues.

There are also organizations on campus that have little to no administrative oversight of disability and accessibility, though they consist of members who care deeply about both. Virginia Tech has recognized the Disability Caucus (an employee-centered group for faculty, staff, and graduate students) as well as the Disability Alliance (a Registered Student Organization for undergraduate and graduate students focused on community advocacy and pride) since the fall of 2015 (Disability Alliance, 2017; Disability Alliance and Caucus, 2016). I've served as part of the leadership for both organizations, which is yet another way that my research became entwined with larger portions of my life.

Auburn University

Auburn University currently has the Office of Accessibility, which focuses on student accommodations and provides information regarding campus accessibility, such as their jAUnt door-to-door transportation system (Office of Accessibility, 2021b). The name "Program for Students with Disabilities" was used from the early 1990s through the early 2010s (Advocates for Disability Awareness, 2001a; Auburn University, 2012). The campus ADA Coordinator position appears to be in charge of all workplace (i.e., staff and faculty) accommodations (Office of Accessibility, 2021a).

The Advocates for Disability (or disAbility) Awareness was a student organization that began in 1991 as "People First" (the name was changed in 1994-1995), with a mission around student advocacy (Advocates for Disability Awareness, 2001a). Much of their leadership was required to be registered with the Program for Students with Disabilities (Advocates for Disability

Awareness, 2001b). As of today, the organization appears to be defunct; the last archive of the group's website stated that it was "taken down due to security and information control issues" (Caudle, 2008). As a small but fun side note, Auburn University's student-run radio station, WEGL, has the same place on the dial as The Ohio State University's The Underground—91.1 FM; I hosted a radio show during my time at Auburn.

The Ohio State University

The student serving office at The Ohio State University is called Disability Services (sometimes Office of Disability Services - ODS); this name dates back to at least the late 1990s (OSU Student Affairs, 1997). The ADA Coordinator's Office has similarly served the campus community during that time frame (OSU ADA Office, 2001). There is currently a student organization, the Buckeyes for Accessibility; their website lists a history page that is blank (Buckeyes for Accessibility, 2021).

Archival Practices

We know so much about these sites because it is part of their institutional history that they have made public. Whether they wanted to remember these moments, and preserved this information so that people could find it later, or whether this practice of public memory was imposed upon them by outside choices, choices were made at the institutional level of what was worth preserving for posterity. This section will describe the current campus archives, digital archival considerations, and the Internet Archive, a major source of the data in this project.

Campus Archives

Each of the three institutions of higher education in this study have their own version of archival practices embedded within their library systems. At Virginia Tech, the Special Collections and University Archives, housed within Newman Library, is “devoted to collecting, preserving, and providing access to primary source materials” (University Libraries, 2021). At Auburn University, the Special Collections & Archives “serves as the official repository of Auburn University records and publication” (Auburn University Libraries, 2021). At The Ohio State University, the University Archives “has served as the official memory of The Ohio State University” since 1965 (University Archives, 2021), proudly stating a collection size of over 30,000 cubic feet.

Such archives have the capability to contain material on any- or everything. 30,000 cubic feet can be reimagined as a room that is 50 ft by 20 ft by 30 ft; packed to the brim with paper material, estimated at 75 pounds per cubic foot, the weight of the archives would be over 2 million pounds. From archivists such as Drobik (2012) at The Ohio State University, we get a glimpse of what the realities of their work mean for projects such as mine:

> Patrons sometimes are baffled that we don’t know the exact chronology of certain individuals, organizational entities or student groups on campus. They wonder aloud, “Haven’t you made a list?”

> And the answer usually is, “No, we haven’t.” We’re archivists, so we’re very busy collecting, organizing and preserving our materials. We rarely have time for research; we rely on our patrons for such things. (paras. 1–2)

This means that, while everything I was searching for had the *potential* to exist in an intentionally preserved format, there was a lot more uncertainty than I had originally anticipated. The materials might be there but buried somewhere within the literal millions of pounds of extraneous papers.

Digital Archival Practices

As people have been preserving records long before digital preservation was introduced (hence the literal millions of pounds of materials at The Ohio State University), practices have had to change and update to reflect the new digital form. I could, for example, create literally thousands of copies of this dissertation document and store it in multiple locations, formats, and under a multitude of names. These documents could be scattered across the globe, situated like digital messages in a (USB jumpdrive) bottle, waiting for someone to find them.

But that doesn’t mean that they would be useful files. Digital archival practices have to contend with issues such as formatting and hardware obsolescence that are not present in analog formats; choosing a particular format now does not mean that the world will not move beyond that in the future, necessitating file migration and conversion. This is even true of projects focused on digital archival practices, such as the Personal Archives Accessible in Digital Media

(Paradigm) project, which explored issues involved in preserving digital private papers (such as notes, memos, etc.) by collecting them and putting them into a digital repository, learning how to process them while meeting archival and digital preservation requirements. Now, the project's original website has been shuttered (Paradigm, 2020) and remains in an InternetArchive time capsule (Paradigm, 2016).

Digital preservation, according to Hedstrom (1997), includes "the planning, resource allocation, and application of preservation methods and technologies to ensure that digital information of continuing value remains accessible and usable" (p. 190). Robotic and manual book scanners (Stanford University Libraries, 2021), digital photos of original documents (L. Miller et al., 2010), and "born digital" documents are some of the ways that digital preservation occurs. Some repositories are digitizing prior formats with accessibility in mind, applying captioning and optical character recognition (OCR); some go further and "encourage authors of these materials to take every available step to ensure that their files comply with best practices for accessibility" (Duke University Libraries, 2017).

With this in mind, this project pushes towards the Disability-centered notion of access in not only the final collection of documents presented in Chapter 6, but throughout the entire process. Any approach to digital preservation must also recognize the ethical considerations, focusing on "*why* we must save the cultural record, *who* does so, *what* is selected, and *how* it is done" (Berger, 2009, p. 58).

Therefore, the digital preservation being conducted as part of this study does not follow a proscriptive set of requirements, but outlines guiding principles and best practices as recommendations in Chapters 5 and 6. While the document formats used are intended to meet the highest “archival” standards, there is no way to ensure they will not eventually become obsolete like so many other formats of the past. It is the intentional practice of considering the *who, what,* and *why* that is vital to any similar endeavor.

Internet Archive

The campus archives have a very specific focus on their own institutional history and material in their preservation efforts. Their work moves “campfire tales'' about a campus beyond storytelling into referenceable objects, allowing others to come back to those institutional memories at a later time. Conversely, the Internet Archive is a well-recognized location where a *lot* of things on the internet are archived; this research involved a lot of time spent searching through the results of its web crawling and archival practices. The Internet Archive project is the oldest and largest public archive which began in 1996, and now contains over 475 billion web pages (Internet Archive, 2021a). The Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine is a tool that makes it possible to search through these billions of pages using the names of sites contained in the Archive (URLs), though they might be incomplete or full of broken links (Internet Archive, 2021b) as “archiving a web page is very different from archiving a physical object or even a static file such as a PDF” (Weigle, 2018, para. 5). Ogden et al. (2017) point out that web archival practices are continuously changing in the face of economic, legal, technological, and ethical

challenges; this means that a complete and accessible archival record still requires intentional practices on the part of those who manage, create, and use documents.

Disability Methods and Practices

While I did not initially set out to identify a gap in institutional knowledge, that's the big issue that my research questions solidified around—what is there, and how could anyone/everyone find it? I've spoken to this in terms of the background of the sites in question, the institutional changes that had to occur for other definitions of *everyone* to be present on campus, as well as digital archival practices that might make it possible for *anyone* to find these materials. This section will further discuss the process of "how to find" through an access-centered framework, focusing on the belief that there should be such documents available to the public and accessible to those who are affected by those policies. It is vital to consider institutional knowledge within such a framework, as so often laws, policies, and practices are enacted *on* our bodyminds, and not *with* them.

Critical Disability Theory

Critical Disability Theory (CDT) is an emerging framework, first presented in the late 2000s, used to study and analyze issues related to disability. Hosking (2008) outlined CDT as an interdisciplinary framework grounded in the previous work of critical theory; following Horkheimer's definition of what counts as critical theory, CDT is "explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time. That is, it must explain what is wrong with current social

reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation" (Bohman, 2016).

Hosking's (2008) seven elements of CDT are:

1. The social model of disability—disability is a social construct with a complex intermeshing of impairment, individual responses, and social environment, with the disadvantages of disability caused by barriers that fail to meet needs. I consider that this understanding of the social model could be expanded in a means to incorporate Kafer's (2013) political/relational model in terms of providing a critical perspective as well;
2. Multidimensionality—Disability/disability is one aspect of intersectional identity (Crenshaw, 2018), with multiple interconnected identities that any individual would navigate in daily life;
3. Valuing diversity—recognizing and valuing the existence of difference while striving for equality, as "Any systematic response to disability which purports to make disability invisible is inherently incapable of effectively protecting the rights of disabled people" (Hosking, 2008, p. 11);
4. Rights—recognizing the legal rights of the individual to autonomy and social rights to full participation;
5. Voices of disability—privileging and centering the stories and perspectives of Disabled/disabled people, over nondisabled voices;
6. Language—recognizes language is inherently political and non-neutral, examining attitudes reflected in word choices;

7. Transformative politics—the goal of CDT is not theory for the "joy of theorization, or even improved understanding and explanation" (Hosking, 2008, p. 13), but as a basis for developing policy responses to disability by exposing potentially hidden motivations (such as attitudes found in alternative models of disability or reoccurring narrative tropes).

Based on these characteristics, I am incorporating Critical Disability Theory as a perspective for analysis in my own work. It is well suited for my research methods and positionality, which will be discussed at great length in Chapter 3. My original research questions were poised to deeply focus on aspects of Critical Disability Theory in order to perform content analysis of collected documents. CDT is still a means to frame this project; by searching for *Disability and Access* documents specifically at each site, I am focusing on materials that would be valuable for future research.

Crip Methods and Critical Access

The methods that I use in this research are based in part on different Disability-centered perspectives that mesh well together. *Critical Access* examines how common approaches to accessibility, as well as how it is achieved, can showcase underlying values and assumptions about the value of this work (Hamraie, 2020). Critical Access is about bridging the gap between critical disability studies and methodology; it's not about a single file's accessibility, but about the larger context. Price and Kershbaum's (2016, p. 20) realization that "Disability *crips* methodology" (emphasis added) is so basic it is revolutionary—the boundaries and

requirements of research have to work for the researcher, and those doing the work should be empowered to reframe their methods in means that are accessible. As Price (Price, 2011a) further points out, a disability-studies methodology centers concepts of "access, activism, identification, and representation"; this project conducted a preliminary analysis of the accessibility of the found and identified documents with the hope of providing a foundation for future activism, based on the need for representation via the refrain of "Nothing About Us Without Us."

Methods that radically center access critique concepts such as "publish or perish" and harsh deadlines that ignore our lived realities. Framing this work as an exemplar of Critical Access Methods also provides an opportunity to recognize Samuels' (2017) "crip time"—considering travel time, grief time, broken time, sick time, writing time, vampire time. During this process, I have experienced crip time—my plans have fizzled out and been torn to shreds due to my body (car wrecks, pregnancy), my losses (multiple family members and friends passing away), my responsibilities (working on a graduate assistantship where my focus *could not be* my dissertation work). I'm working on building a different world (or at least, a different archive), one that reflects the need to center access, rejects an essentialist set of definitions or understandings, and continually asks questions about how things could be done differently.

"Cripping" Digital Archives

The Disability History Museum was founded as a digital archive in 2000 that aimed to provide everyone visiting the site, "people with and without disabilities, researchers, teachers and

students, with a wide array of tools" to use (Disability History Museum, 2021). One of the founders, Laurie Block, has written on the process of inventing an archive through "'borrow[ing]' artifacts (with permission) from existing public and private archives and convert[ing] them into XML documents or scanned images" (2007, p. 146). This process (minus the gaining of permission, as mine are all publicly findable and obtainable documents) is very similar to the work I ended up conducting to collect documents and then create my own curated archive.

Brilmyer's (2018a, 2018b, 2020) work on merging Disability studies with archival practices and methodology encapsulates much of where I ended up within this project. Disability studies can not only be influenced by what materials are found in the archives, it can also have a critical role in determining and pushing for preservation and organization within the archives themselves—there is the potential to build a relationship between the two in order to address how the "creation of records by and in service of those in power demonstrates how social, cultural, and ideological systems around disability…" (Brilmyer, 2020, p. 31) affect everyone within institutions of higher education.

Summary

The history and framing of Disability and access is a major reason for the finalized research questions that scope this study. These are huge concepts that have been studied and redefined in multiple ways. The means through which this final project has arisen has been a big, big

mess—it is not a clear-cut series of steps to follow, but an overarching perspective that centers access throughout the research process. This is also reflective of the larger iPhD process and the emergent field of Disability Studies. Fortunately, though the path I've taken to get to the point of conducting research has been a journey of discovery, the methods I used while collecting and analyzing documents are more straightforward. Chapter 3 will provide those clear steps for future researchers who choose to follow in my path; Chapter 4 will display the fruits of my labor; and Chapter 5 will discuss how this whole process would have been smoother if more people had taken *findability, consistency, cohesion,* and *transparency* into account throughout the entire document lifecycle.

Chapter 3: Methods

Why these methods?

I employ a comparative case study utilizing three separate cases based on different institutions of higher education. I work with both words and numbers, utilizing "sexy data" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1) that is richly descriptive of its context and yet leading to findings beyond my own initial framework and conceptual understanding of what it is I've set out to find. Having both words and numbers to work with and discuss is more appealing for readers, researchers, policy makers, and self-advocates (Miles & Huberman, 1994), as findings can be presented in a variety of ways. This project and my methods can be described in a variety of ways—concrete, pragmatic, direct, manageable, and straightforward. The work proposed is practical and appealing in its "cookbook" approach of following the details of a recipe while retaining the room to make a few changes during the process. It also aligns with my research area; Disability does not exist in a vacuum where a "one size fits all" approach is applicable.

One of the barriers to investigating Disability within higher education is that organizations do not record Disability as a category of identity for members of the campus community in the same way that other demographic information is tracked, an issue that is taken into consideration within the data collection of this study. This is further complicated by the reliance on "registering" disability in order for it to be recognized and accommodated; not everyone

attempts to register or is successful with this process. Therefore, I am proposing to collect and analyze the documents produced at institutes of higher education as a workaround to the obstacle posed by this "paradox of measures" (Strati, 2000, p. 66), as it is an alternative way to discern what is measured and reflected as important, valued, and worthy of resources. This also aligns with my concept of conducting counter-surveillance on the institutes of higher education themselves, as opposed to focusing on the people who may or may not be recognized as disabled by campus systems.

The Role of the Researcher: Positionality and Ethics

I am persistently aware of the privilege of performing this research, as well as its potential impacts on both the campuses being reviewed and my own professional trajectory. I am also aware of my own biases as a researcher and as a person who has been a student on two of the three campuses in this study. I also recognize that researcher bias isn't necessarily bad—it *informs*, using my "own experiences, values, and positions of privilege in various hierarchies [to illuminate how they] have influenced [my] research interests, the ways [I chose] to do [my] research, and the ways [I chose] to represent [my] research findings" (Harrison et al., 2001, p. 325). That is why my relationship to the research, my positionality, needs to be explicitly mentioned and taken into consideration throughout the course of a project (Secules et al., 2021). This is why it is critical that I constantly address my own relationship to the research topic, the research sites, and the motto of Disability rights, "Nothing about us, without us"—this is the purpose of my reflective memoing activities (Chenail, 2011; Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Ortlipp, 2008), which will be further detailed in Chapters 5 and 6.

This motto is a driving force behind my work, as I recognize that an overwhelming majority of stories and research related to Disability is driven by nondisabled people, and I have spent much of graduate school grappling with my own identification as a Disabled woman. I want to use document collection as a starting point (instead of interviews/surveys) as I propose counter-surveillance; instead of staring at Disabled bodyminds, I propose staring at the institutional documents that govern them on campus to showcase *why* the Disability Civil Rights motto is so important, as well as what sorts of barriers just get reinforced without this consideration.

I've protected both myself and my findings from accusations of fanciful results through the development of both my search framework and my database, focusing on the transparency of my data collection methods. My methods, analysis, and dissertation topic itself were a matter of strategic choices, though I have demonstrated my foundation on "high ground" with ethical data collection, organization, and analysis as well as providing explicit details about my relationship to the research topics and sites.

These strategic choices are also indicative of efforts to bridge the gap between Critical Disability Studies and other fields within my research methods (Svyantek, 2018b). I am proposing methods that are not dependent on doing work to pass as nondisabled within a research setting. My methods are attainable for other Disabled researchers, as they do not require travel, carry undue financial burden, or rely on a particular set of bodymind characteristics. My

data collection is based on using publicly available documents and websites gathered digitally (see Figure 3.2 for details regarding the IRB process), not on getting past gatekeepers or knowing how to connect with the right people at a site.

My analysis, however, hinges on the availability of documents to collect, as researchers can't collect what's not there. Finding such gaps in my proposed collection would lead to further questions about *why* the documents are missing—is this an "innocent silence that signifies nothing in particular…[or is it] 'a silence which betokens'" (McKnight et al., 2007)? I constantly return to my collected documents to support claims of what is or isn't present, not only in the sense of previous studies on this topic, but what gets saved for posterity.

Research Questions

In order to better understand the institutional context surrounding Disability within higher education, this study will address the following research questions:

1. What institutional policy and procedure documents have been produced at institutes of higher education (IHEs) regarding Disability between the passage of the ADA (1990) to 2015?
    a. How were/are these documents shared with the institutional community?
    b. How accessible were/are these documents?
    c. How do documents differ across institutions and years?

2. How can researchers systematically gather and organize the policy and procedure documents in order to answer these questions? How can we create a public, shareable, accessible dataset in the process of doing so? What work still needs to be done in order to create this easily accessible, public dataset?

I focus on these questions to elucidate from institutional documents what changes have been happening related to Disability/disability at any particular campus, over time and with respect to the actual users of that content. These questions are important because they point to the value of such documents within the institutional structure, as well as the role that campus archival practices play in preserving them (Brilmyer, 2018a, 2018b, 2020).

Data Collection

The data collected in this study relies on the previous work of countless people at each institution of higher education (IHE). This less obtrusive data collection utilizes data that does not have to be specifically produced for this project, demonstrating the values and language of a particular IHE as they occurred. Utilizing existing documentation that touches on Disability also removes the need to have prior knowledge of a specific institution and the "right" people. As Miles and Huberman (1994) note, documents and websites are public information sources that are defined by those within the research sites that are not hidden behind gatekeepers; my focus on publicly available documents and websites to analyze is reflective of which resources would be readily available to someone unfamiliar with a campus (e.g., a newly minted PhD

applying for a position, or a high school student deciding where to apply to college). Documents that are publicly available also demonstrate the dispersion of information and the effort required to find Disability as part of campus discussion at any of the institutional sites in question.

The use of documents additionally provides the opportunity to take a longitudinal view of the data, allowing for the collection and analysis of information spanning a quarter century instead of a semester. This sustained observation affords not a blink of knowledge and insider perspectives (as might be gleaned from interviewing people currently at an IHE) but a lengthy pause to review and reflect upon the data. For this research, I created my own data set by going through open, publicly-available information for different higher education institutions. The procedures for doing so are outlined below; this data set is intended to be a publicly available, replicable, and expandable resource after the completion of this project.

Site Selection

I have chosen to collect documents from similar institutions in order to focus on their differences and similarities related to Disability and accessibility on campus. These common threads among sites will provide a better understanding of Disability specifically, instead of attempting to tease out differences based on type of institution. Each site is a land-grant institute that has a mission to serve the public that grants research-intensive STEM graduate degrees at both the master's and doctoral levels. They have sports-intensive personas that create a sense of community, centers for learning, and host regional and national conferences

and events, reinforcing the sense that these are "public" spaces. They also all have different familiarities with the concept of Disability Studies as a field, and disability civil rights as a concept. The three different institutions of higher education I have chosen to use in this dissertation are: Virginia Tech (VT), Auburn University (AU), and The Ohio State University (OSU). This number contributed to developing a manageable document database (and baseline) without becoming overwhelming.

Boundaries of Search

The two major parameters that created the self-imposed boundaries of the search are the time frame of the study, the document sources, and the selection of specific institutions of higher education. By narrowly focusing the data collection, this project became both more manageable (in terms of collection and analysis) as well as more focused on answering the research questions regarding temporal and site differences, as well as the issue of creating a document collection for public use.

Time frame

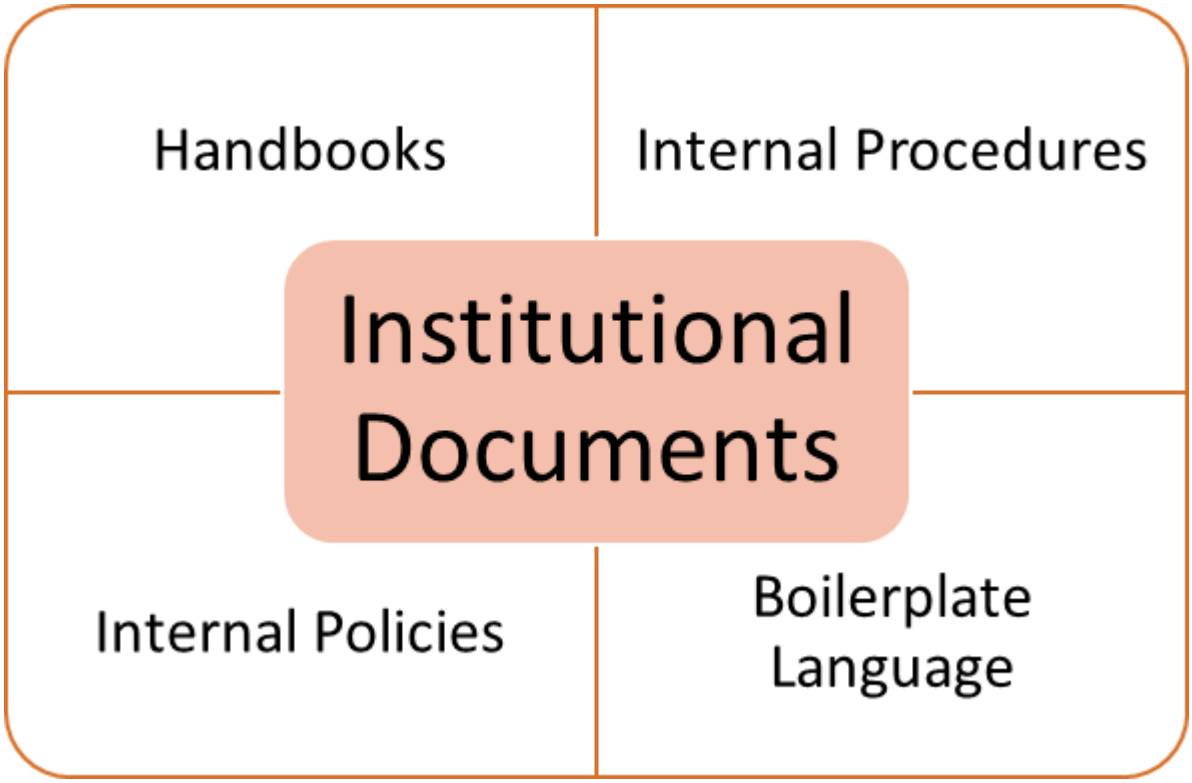
I strategically bound my search time frame from 1990 to 2015, owing the beginning mark to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 and ending with my own immersion and impact related to on-campus advocacy around Disability issues, such as involvement with the Disability Alliance and Caucus. This time frame is also directly linked to my research question asking, "What has occurred at these institutes of higher education (IHEs) regarding Disability during the quarter century since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act?"

Document Sources

The anticipated sources highlighted in Figure 3.1 below were chosen based on their relationship to the development of institutional culture. The foundational document sources for understanding how a university functions are the policies and handbooks that outline the official practices of an institution. Institutional procedures mediate how these policies are enacted across the entire campus. “Boilerplate” language suggested by service-providing offices related to accommodations give insight into the official tone and rhetorical choices from the institution itself. Specifically focusing on these materials and their online availability indicates what information specifically geared towards Disability is provided by an institution to a wide and public audience.

The following visualization outlines the sources where human-driven data collection occurred. In many instances, webpages or suggested links related to the specific content under consideration will have changed (potentially dramatically) between the two endpoints of the study. Therefore, archival tools such as the “Wayback Machine” were utilized to observe older versions of online materials where possible at specific intervals. This institutional “snapshot” occurred at five-year intervals (i.e., 1990, ’95, ’00, ’05, ’10, and ’15), using a July 1–June 30 calendar. This calendar aligns with the typical state and university fiscal year (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2012); it should be noted, however, that Auburn University follows the federal government’s fiscal calendar, which ends on September 30 (Auburn University, 2019b).

Figure 3.1 Sources for institutional document collection



These different sources were selected to provide a wide view of the institutional response to and consideration of Disability at each campus, with potential to explore the organizational response to local and national issues (e.g., campus barriers as well as legislation). The sources were examined based on their availability ***online*** and ***to the public*** (i.e., without a paywall or sign-in requirement)—two factors that are key to my study and that as limitations are reflective of the barriers that "outsiders" face when trying to pick a university as a place of future study or employment.

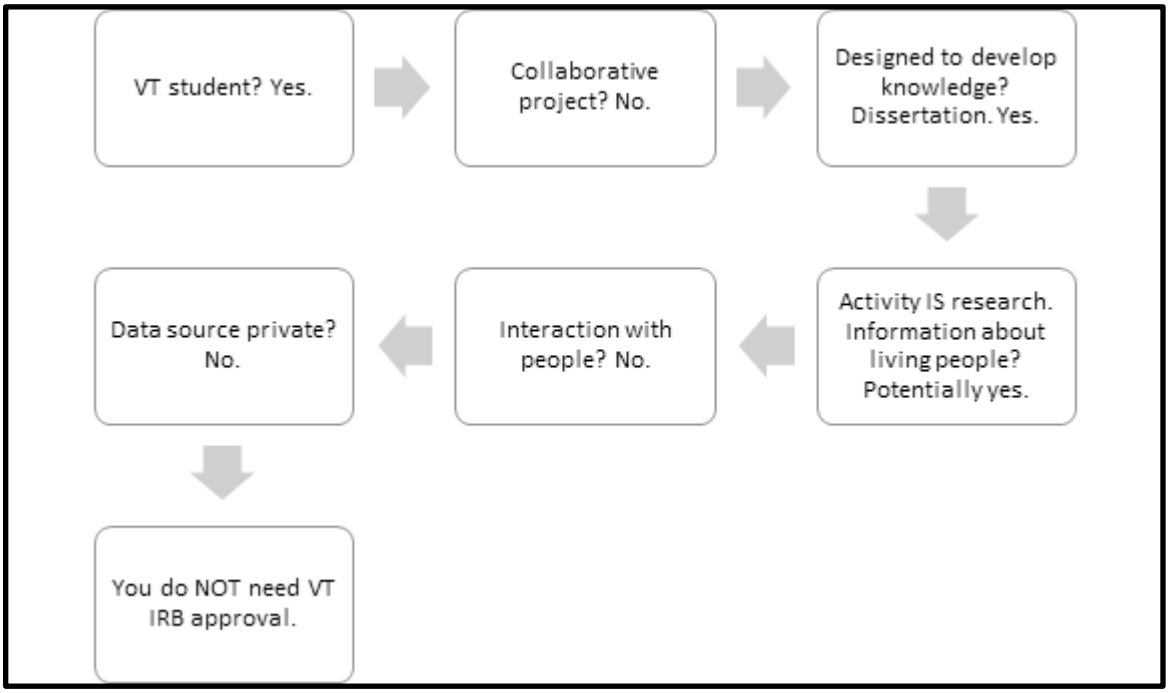
The sources included in Figure 3.1, however, are not exclusive. This initial list is based on recognition of existing campus culture and governance structures, the things that an institution

of higher education will have, even if they go by another name. Furthermore, the overall data collection process was exploratory, meaning that if a source is illuminated via the overarching search parameters from beyond these pre-exposed locations, it would warrant further investigation.

Role of Institutional Review Board for this Project

Per the IRB guidance, "Activities Requiring Virginia Tech IRB Approval," the documents under consideration for inclusion in this study do *not* necessitate an IRB review or approval of this project. The approval flowchart (Office of Human Research Protections, 2015) questions and appropriate responses based on this project are included in the figure below:

Figure 3.2 IRB flowchart response (Office of Human Research Protections, 2015



Search Methods

Data collection occurred via online searches, using an "incognito" web browser window to avoid collecting cookies related to the search. These cookies could potentially sway the search and data collection based on previous search history. These searches were conducted starting with the proprietary "search" tool from each institution's website, branching out to resources such as the wider Google search tool and the Internet Archive when necessary to determine the availability of any given document.

Table 3.1 Document collection matrix

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement Student Policy and Procedures ADA/HR Policy and Procedures University Accommodations Policy IT/EIT Policy						
Academic Graduate Catalog Academic Undergraduate Catalog Staff Handbook Faculty Handbook						
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract Graduate Student Housing Contract Student Conduct Handbook Parking and Transportation Handbook						

The initial documents under consideration at each institution are listed as part of the Document Collection Matrix in Table 3.1; this matrix provides an "at-a-glance" view of the breadth of the availability of institutional documents, providing an opportunity to compare by location and time frame. Each of the documents listed as found (indicated as "OCR" or "Digital") were

downloaded for further analysis. The proposed document collection called for identifying 13 documents at each site during 6 specific time frames, potentially including 78 documents at each institution. This collection, as a whole, called for searching for and evaluating 234 documents.

The naming convention for the downloaded file included a wealth of information that can be used to reference the file and organize the developing database, including information about why the file was included in the search results. File names are listed in a document source spreadsheet and further discussed in Chapter 6. During data collection, time was devoted to organizing the database and spreadsheets (to maintain a semblance of order within the chaos of document collection).

Memo Process

Another key task during data collection was reflective memoing; during this phase, I continuously reflected on the process and wrote memos on the state of affairs at the end of every collection date. These notes are my personal thoughts and considerations during my research process; normally, they would be solely for personal use as they reflect my intellectual process and property. They follow a specific reflective framework to allow me to document how the project data collection and analysis develops over time.

Based on feedback from the committee, the memos started by reflecting on the following themes:

1. Did I find the document I was looking for, based on my collection matrix?
2. Did I find something new or weird? Anything outside of the boundaries of the collection matrix should be added to a separate folder for each institution.
3. What questions do I have after this part of the search? Are they new or different?

Given the alterations to my project trajectory, these memos became of great importance. The memos related to collection at Virginia Tech are now part of the proof of concept presented in Chapter 6, as they provide a guide for how to follow the suggestions outlined later in Chapter 5.

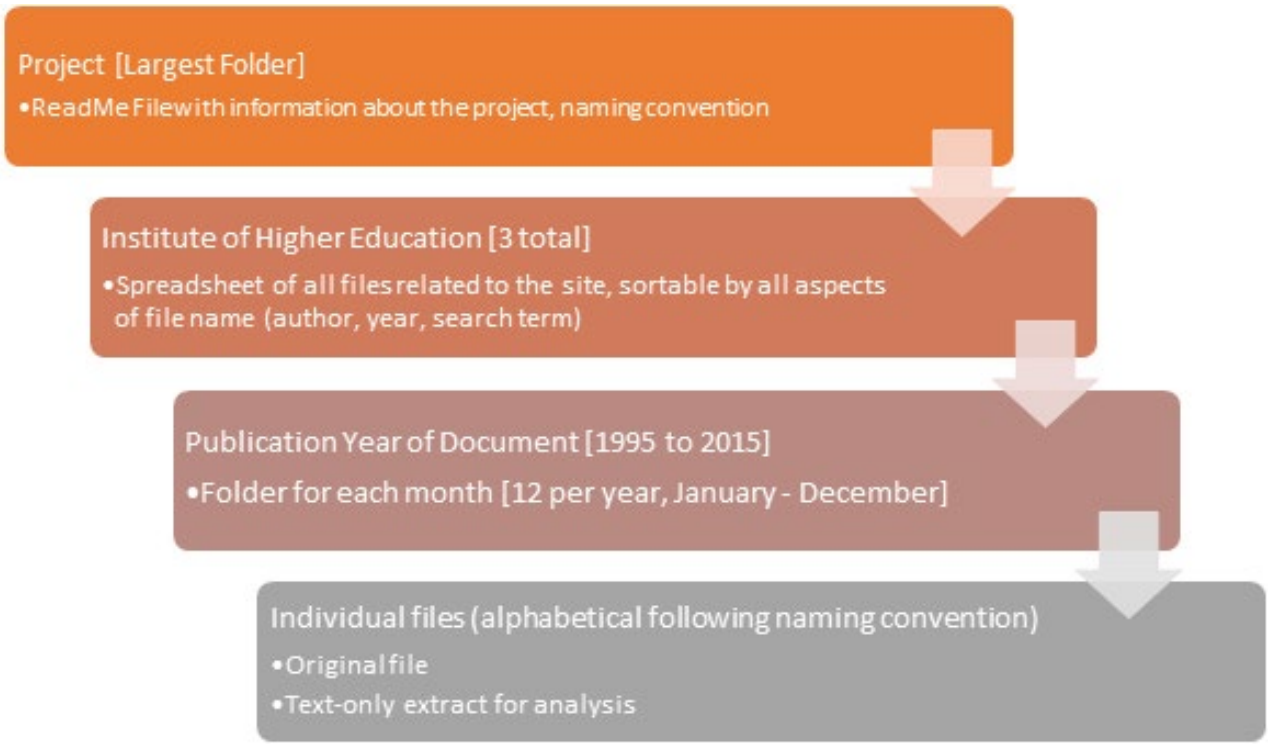
Missing Data

I asked a research question regarding history, "What institutional policy and procedure documents have been produced at institutes of higher education (IHEs) regarding Disability between the passage of the ADA (1990) to 2015?" which required that I collect and observe university-produced document sources to establish the mere presence of that information. My initial proposal for addressing the issue of missing data was to look at the existence of such documents in general, based on their availability and accessibility. This has developed into framing my search results based on their findability, consistency, cohesion, and transparency in Chapter 4.

Data Management Plan

My original goal with the document collection process was to create a personal database of files from publicly available sources. Therefore, I had a plan in place before starting collection to enhance the long-term usability of my findings. Returning to previous statements on research positionality, one of my approaches to mitigate unsubstantiated claims was through making my data available to others. As all of the materials were collected from sources that are openly available to the public, one of the end goals for this project is to make this database openly available as well, in the hopes that others can use both the data and framework developed to further research around Disability culture in higher education.

Figure 3.3 Proposed folder framework within database



A “locked” database was constructed as one outcome of this project, following the logical flow similar to the one outlined above in Figure 3.3. After the dissertation has been completed and published in appropriate sources, this database will be “unlocked” to promote ethical research transparency and collaboration. Sharing my developed database, along with my data collection methods and organizational standards, has the potential to create a ripple effect based on this work. This database could undergo expansion by providing a framework that others can follow to include additional institutes of higher education as cases to study. The initial version of this database will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Data Analysis

I incorporate Critical Disability Theory as a guiding perspective for my analysis, as its interdisciplinary framework and key elements align with the work I am proposing—describing the accessibility of specific documents that discuss and circumscribe the rights of Disabled people on campus. I additionally consider that the results of such analysis might serve as a guide for future work on different campuses to push for a transformation in policies and procedures similar to the ones I will observe in this study.

The boundaries of my search provide me with ample opportunity to apply this perspective, as it will involve observing change over time and between institutions. The lengthy period of time involved (twenty-five years) provides the opportunity to determine where and when changes occurred regarding policy and procedural documents, working to answer both of the guiding

research questions of this study. The use of multiple cases also allows for the exploration of similarities and differences among the institutions, leading to further questions of “major events'' that shaped the institutional context that guided such changes.

The quantitative meta-analysis of the large-scale data collection began by asking what documents were even *findable*—which ones left a digital record of their existence. I initially began layering other characteristics of the collected documents within the same table, and quickly realized that presenting my results in such a fashion was overwhelming. Thus, more tables emerged that separated the *cohesion*, *consistency*, and *transparency* (these terms will be explained in great detail in Chapter 4) of the documents as further layers of analysis. These layers point to larger trends in the database, such as if one institution had a wide variety of collectible information or if, comparably speaking, the Disability-related search results for documents at a site comprised the metaphoric sound of crickets chirping into an otherwise silent environment.

Observing documents from institutions of higher education is not about locating Disability within people or society, it’s about *locating inaccessibility in the systems and structures that surround them*—a stance that reiterates my own relationship to this work while utilizing a Critical Disability Theory perspective. Given the chosen time frame, I expected that universities in the 1990s/2000s might have exhibited “gaps” in finding any documents due to previous archiving practices; the act of performing this data collection and analysis also highlighted a lack of Disability-related materials, based on time, location, and document type.

Summary

I set out to find a lot of different document materials from three public, land-grant institutions of higher education over the course of a quarter century. I initially suggested that it would be relatively straightforward to determine the existence of, and then collect, these documents. I was wrong, and my error led to the development of Chapter 5 as a response to what I did and did not find, as presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Looking, Finding, and Collecting

Overview

This chapter discusses the results of the search process outlined in Chapter 3 focusing on the first research question, "What institutional policy and procedure documents have been produced at institutes of higher education (IHEs) regarding Disability between the passage of the ADA (1990) to 2015," refined and crystallized to reflect accessibility patterns of publicly available materials. While this is the driving question, throughout this dissertation I also utilize much more basic questions to peel apart the layers of my findings and facilitate my discussion—who, what, when, where, why, and how. Why I am conducting this study has been covered previously (via my Introduction chapter), while who (institutions of higher educations) and when (1990 to 2015) are further embedded within the research question itself.

As outlined in the previous chapter, these documents (the *what*—what was I looking for and what did I find?) cover access-related policies, handbooks that regulate academic progress and employment, and materials related to campus life. These are grouped together in Table 4.1 below, with color used to indicate grouping visually reinforcing the organization of the table. One of the initial findings of the search was that these materials were not equally findable across time and space, leaving an impression of a "digital wall" that served as an insight into

the barrier to finding any materials due to lack of digital preservation, as opposed to a barrier of Disability-exclusive practices and inaccessibility.

At each of the three institutions of higher education, I worked through my search protocol in an attempt to find 13 documents within six different time frames (see Table 4.1), overall looking for 234 different documents. The found documents and their online contexts are analyzed and discussed in depth, focusing on overall "*findability*" of the documents, then refining the results matrices to highlight the cohesion of the locations (*where*), consistency of the materials (*what*), and transparency of the included information (*how*) of the documents in the search.

These forms of discussion build on the blank search result matrix (Table 4.1) for each institution, highlighting different perspectives to use while considering the results of the document search process. First, the blanket "*findability*" of the materials in question allows us to consider if such documents are available *at all* in a way that could be perceived. These results lead into a discussion of the "digital wall," along with three further ways to discuss the found materials:

- *Cohesion* - the multiplicity of documents, regarding how many "pieces'' a document was in at a given time;
- *Consistency* - the source of the documents, meaning if they were from a university-related site or not; and
- *Transparency* - the searchability of text, meaning that the file included machine-encoded text (or Optical Character Recognition, OCR).

These are all important characteristics to discuss when considering if these materials, originally from public institutions, can be called publicly available and "accessible" as well. Each of these considerations builds into how we, as researchers and activists, can discuss access to documents—are they complicated to find and identify? Are they maintained by campus resources? Do they require lengthy searches? And, crucially, are they directly available to the individuals who want to use their information?

Within each of these perspectives, I present each institution as an individual case (using the order of the search: Virginia Tech, Auburn, and OSU) before comparing the results. Each site is described using a completed matrix following the organization of Table 4.1, with the cells containing categories based on each section. I will also include examples from my VT search, which have been included as part of my *Access in higher education: A document collection* project in the Qualitative Data Repository (QDR), which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Table 4.1 Blank search result matrix

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement Student Policy and Procedures ADA/HR Policy and Procedures University Accommodations Policy IT/EIT Policy						
Academic Graduate Catalog Academic Undergraduate Catalog Staff Handbook Faculty Handbook						
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract Graduate Student Housing Contract Student Conduct Handbook Parking and Transportation Handbook						

Findable Documents

The first layer of answering the question, "What institutional policy and procedure documents have been produced at institutes of higher education (IHEs) regarding Disability between the passage of the ADA (1990) to 2015?" involves actually looking for documents and recording the results of that search. To do this, I developed a set of four categories (outlined in Table 4.2) to quickly provide a response regarding each document-time combination; the use of both the letter code and the pattern in the table provides multiple layers of coding with visual cues as well as information that would be available to screen reader software moving through the table.

Table 4.2 Description of coding used in *Findability*-related matrices

Name	**Description**	**Letter Code**	**Pattern**
Nothing	No record or mention	a	Solid Black
DNE	Later versions have start date outside of time frame	b	Dark Shading
Findable	Records hint at physical reference	c	Light Shading
Digital	Something exists online	d	None

The first response, "Nothing" indicates that during all search activity, there was no definitive document (or reference to such a document) found. "Nothing" also is the code used when there is the *implication* that a physical file or a digital version *might* exist, but no record or listing confirms that existence. This is the case for time-document cells such as Virginia Tech's 2005 *Parking and Transportation* document; while the existence of other documents (e.g., the digitally-available 2000, 2010, and 2015 versions) imply that a 2005 version should exist, this is an assumption without further evidence.

This is different from the "DNE," or Does Not Exist, response, which relies on later versions of documents that definitely states that such a policy or material *did not exist* until a certain date. The third category, "findable," indicates that there is a record referring to the *potential* existence of such a document, but that nothing definitely exists online in a digital format (e.g., a search through a university's archival collections might lead to the belief that, in person, one

could search through filed documents and possible find a physical version of the material in question). Finally, there are the materials that were available, in some form or fashion, online—these are the "digital" documents for the purpose of these matrix results.

Institutional Results

Virginia Tech

Table 4.3 Virginia Tech *Findability* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement				d	d	d
Student Policy and Procedures				d		d
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures				d	d	d
University Accommodations Policy	b		d	d	d	d
IT/EIT Policy	b	b	b	d	d	d
Academic Graduate Catalog	c			d	d	d
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	c	c	c	d	d	d
Staff Handbook				d	d	d
Faculty Handbook		c	c	d	d	d
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract	c			d	d	d
Graduate Student Housing Contract				d	d	d
Student Conduct Handbook	c			d		
Parking and Transportation Handbook	c		d		d	d

Overall, there were 28 "nothing" results, 4 "does not exist" results, 9 "findable" documents, and 37 digital documents observed from Virginia Tech. Virginia Tech's documents exemplify the concept of the "digital wall" in that, prior to the 2005 searches, only 2 (out of 39) documents were available online. Corroborating the outline of the "digital wall" is the finding that the 2005–2015 time period had four of 39 items (10%) that were not findable, a major increase in *findability* from the first half of the time frame.

As previously stated, in the 2000 time frame, Virginia Tech only had 2 items available in a digital format—the university-governance level accommodations policy and the parking handbook. In 2005, the only material that was *unavailable* digitally was the transportation handbook, which was listed but not archived in multiple locations (Svyantek, 2019d, p. 2). The remaining documents from 1990–2000 either had no findable records or were only intimated to exist via later versions; the exception being the *IT/EIT Policy*, which definitively did not exist until the 2005 search period. This is due to state-level decisions and policy; in 2005, the "Commonwealth of Virginia Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act of 2005 grant[ed] institutions additional authority over financial and administrative operations, on condition that certain commitments to the Commonwealth are met," thus necessitating a need for developing an institution-level policy (Svyantek, 2019f, p. 1).

Auburn

Table 4.4 Auburn *Findability* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement			d	d		d
Student Policy and Procedures			d		d	d
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures				d	d	d
University Accommodations Policy					d	d
IT/EIT Policy	b	b	b	b	b	b
Academic Graduate Catalog	c	c	d	d	d	d
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	c	c	d	d	d	d
Staff Handbook			d	d	d	d
Faculty Handbook	b			d	d	d
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract					d	d
Graduate Student Housing Contract				b	b	b
Student Conduct Handbook	c	c	c	d	d	d
Parking and Transportation Handbook				d		d

Overall, there were 28 “nothing” results, 10 “does not exist” results, 7 “findable” documents, and 33 digital documents observed from Auburn. Auburn’s “digital wall” pushed further into the 2000 time point; 5 of the 13 documents, the academic catalogs as well as materials specifically related to student disability services, were findable online.

The 1990–2000 time frame had 23 of the 28 “nothing” results, while the 2005–2015 time frame had 5 of 28 “nothing” results. This indicates that, similar to Virginia Tech, there was a major increase in *findability* in the second half of the time frame.

Similar to the VT findings, the *IT/EIT Policy* actually did not exist during the 1990–2000 time period, though it is unclear if this is due to a similar state-level context (in Virginia, there was a legislative policy change in 2005 that spurred the creation of the VT-specific I*T/EIT Policy*). This lack of existence persisted throughout the entire 25 years under observation.

OSU

Table 4.5 The Ohio State University *Findability* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement				d		d
Student Policy and Procedures			d	d		d
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures	b		d	d	d	d
University Accommodations Policy	b	b			c	d
IT/EIT Policy	b	b	b	d	d	d
Academic Graduate Catalog	d	d	d	d	d	d
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	d	d	d	d	d	d
Staff Handbook			d	d	d	d
Faculty Handbook			d	d	d	d
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract	c	c	c	c	d	d
Graduate Student Housing Contract	c	c	c		d	d
Student Conduct Handbook			c	d	d	d
Parking and Transportation Handbook			d		d	d

Overall, there were 20 “nothing” results, 6 “does not exist” results, 9 “findable” documents, and 43 digital documents observed from The Ohio State University. OSU did not exhibit the same solid digital wall at the 2000 or 2005 time point; the student academic catalogs were findable throughout the entire time frame, while more items were hinted as existing through university record sources.

As with the VT and Auburn findings, the *IT/EIT Policy* did not exist until the 2005 time period.

Comparisons

Table 4.6 Three-school comparison of *Findability* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement			a d a	d d d	d a a	d d d
Student Policy and Procedures			a d d	d a d	a d a	d d d
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures	a a b		a a d	d d d	d d d	d d d
University Accommodations Policy	b a b	a a b	d a a	d a a	d d c	d d d
IT/EIT Policy	b b b	b b b	b b b	d b d	d b d	d b d
Academic Graduate Catalog	c c d	a c d	a d d	d d d	d d d	d d d
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	c c d	c c d	c d d	d d d	d d d	d d d
Staff Handbook			a d d	d d d	d d d	d d d
Faculty Handbook	a b a	c a a	c a d	d d d	d d d	d d d
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract	c a c	a a c	a a c	d a c	d d d	d d d
Graduate Student Housing Contract	a a c	a a c	a a c	d b a	d b d	d b d
Student Conduct Handbook	c c a	a c a	a c c	d d d	a d d	a d d
Parking and Transportation Handbook	c a a		d a d	a d a	d a d	d d d

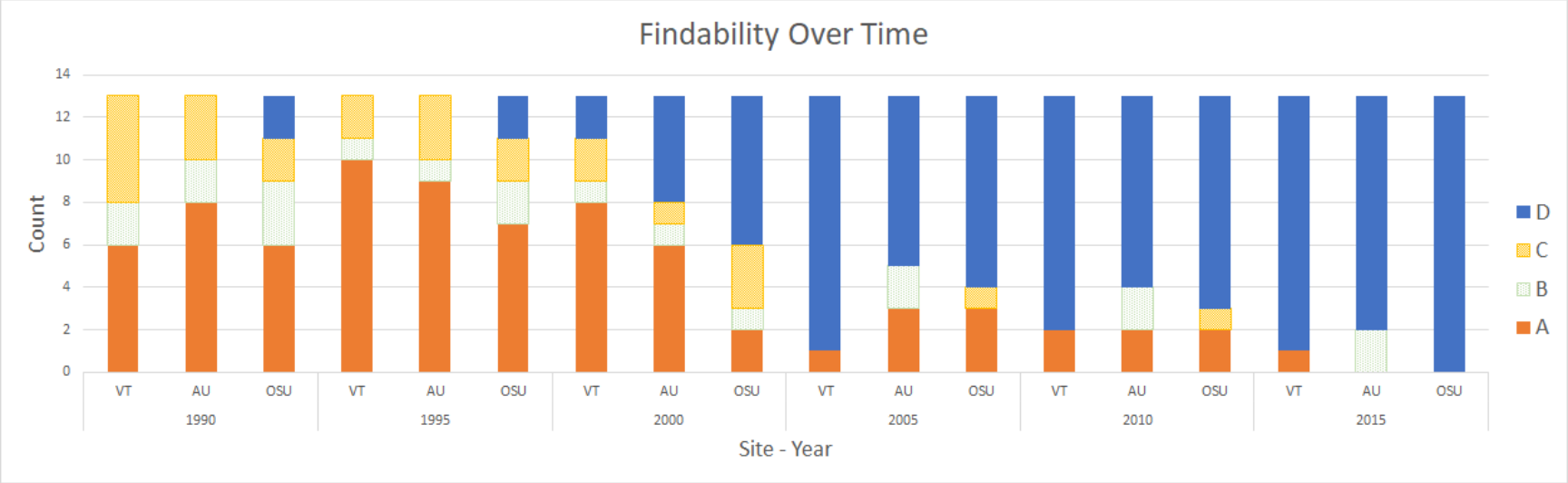
Note: The notations displayed in the table above follow the order of the institutional results: Virginia Tech, Auburn, OSU. Each section and each comparative table in this chapter follow this order.

In the above table, all three schools' "findability" results have been combined in a matrix to highlight commonalities and differences. Overall, there were 34 of 78 combinations where the three institutions provided the same search results: 8 "nothing" results, 3 "does not exist" results, and 23 digital documents observed in common. Solid black cells (8 of 78) again represent items that did not have definitive records; these were mainly student-focused access materials (4 of 8), as well as early *Staff Handbooks* (2 of 8). The white cells represent document-time combinations that were findable in a digital format at all three institutes of higher

education; out of 78 combinations, less than one-third of the searched-for documents (23) were available in some format online across all sites. Of these findable materials, twelve were student course catalogs or employee handbooks during the 2005–2015 time frame—materials that have direct impact on the general functioning of higher education.

It is interesting to note that the *IT/EIT Policies* were the only documents that uniformly did not exist at any of the three universities prior to the 2005 time frame. While other document types were difficult to track down, these policies contained official "start" dates—the first *IT/EIT Policy* type document at VT was written in 2006; at Auburn in 2016; and at OSU in 2001. The existence of start dates, as well as tracked revision dates in later materials, provided conclusive evidence that these documents *did not exist*, as opposed to being unfindable while using my search process.

Figure 4.1 *Findability* across all three sites presented as stacked-clustered bar chart



When observing the results of the search using different visual formats, additional patterns emerge. Each of the bars in the graph above contains all thirteen results for a given site during a given year; for example, the 1990 VT bar indicates there were 6 “Nothing” results (category A), 2 “DNE” results (category B), and 5 “Findable” results (category C). More documents readily appear at either end of the *findability* spectrum—there is either no record of them or they were findable in a digital format online; this is demonstrated by the solid bars for categories A and D being the dominating response for each institution, no matter the year. Additionally, it can be easily observed from Figure 4.1 above that earlier documents were typically not available online (years 1990–2000), while later documents trend toward digital availability in the latter half of the search time frame (years 2005–2015). The

2000–2005 time frame indicates a shift in the availability of digital documents; while 2000 results contained more items coded as A ("Nothing"), by 2005 the majority of the results indicated the presence of a digital file, coded as D ("Digital").

Figure 4.2 Change in *Findability* over time

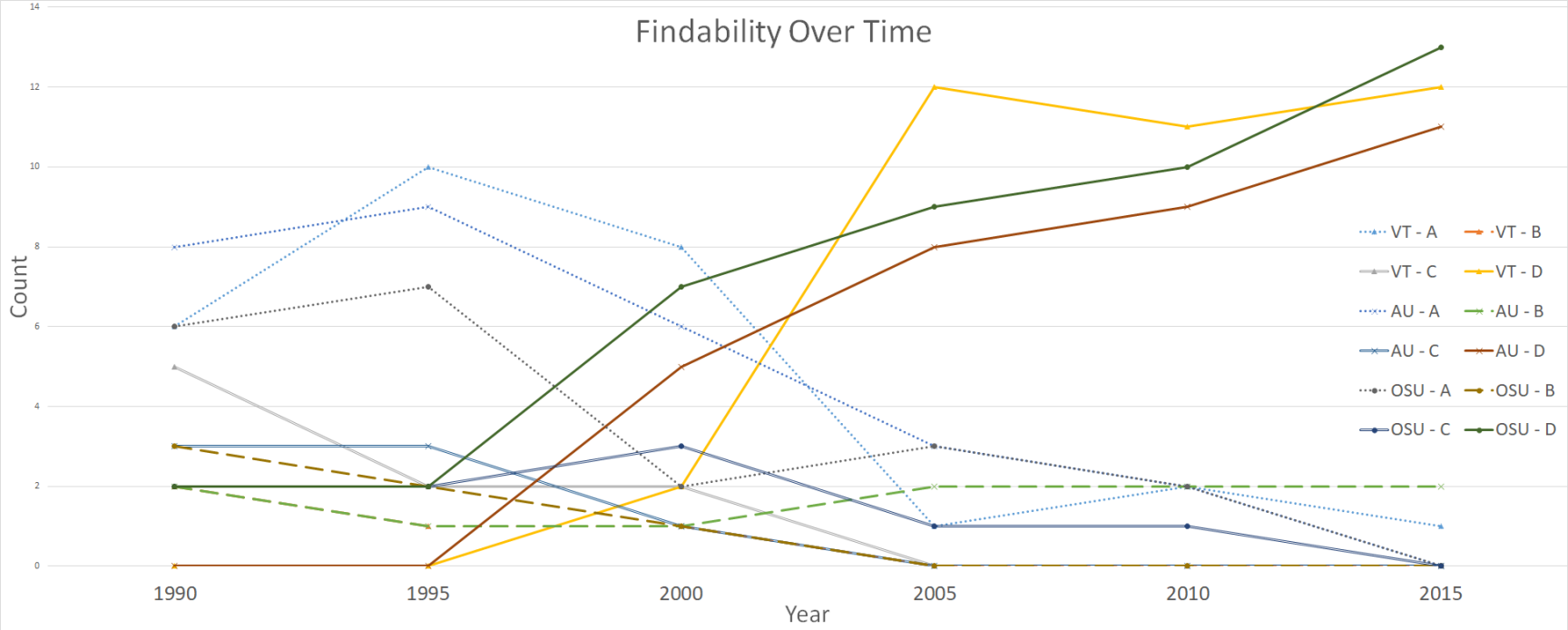


Figure 4.2 (above) seems at first glance like it is trying too hard to share information; it has been included as it reinforces the information shared in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.1 in a different visual presentation. Each site has its own data marker style (VT =

triangles, AU = *x*es, OSU = circles), and each coding category has a specific line weight (A = short dashed lines, B = long dashed lines, C = double-lines, and D = solid line). A key takeaway from this graph, as well as the comparative matrix, is that, as expected, **all three schools** have a marked increase in the number of documents available digitally at the end of the time frame under investigation. Similarly, the number of materials without findable records decreases greatly over time. There is a nexus around the 2000–2005 years where the physical and unrecorded materials dramatically decrease as the digital materials become available. This indicates that, overall, there was an institutional shift at all three schools to have more documents available to the public with the digital, online mode as a default information source.

Key Takeaways

When discussing the *findability* of a document during my search, there were two major findings that I want to highlight. First, during the overall 1990–2015 time frame, there was a marked change in the availability of materials in a digital format—I call this the "digital wall" in my search. Second, the category of "Does Not Exist" emerged as a category that contained materials that definitively did not exist prior to a given time frame because later versions of such documents included what amounted to a start date.

Discerning the "Digital Wall"

Prior to the 2005 search year, there were very few findable materials at Virginia Tech. This held true across all types of documents under investigation, whether specifically focused on Disability and accessibility, or not. I refer to this lack of online materials as the "digital wall"—a barrier to my specific search for documents related to my collection that would inhibit others conducting research using similar methods. What was "findable" prior to the 2005 time frame were records that pointed to actual physical materials located in the University Special Archives. The actual relevance of these materials were verified at Virginia Tech by accessing the Archives during the summer of 2019, when I located the physical copies of these documents. These materials were marked "findable" in the document collection matrix, as the record of their existence can be found online.

In contrast, this "digital wall" of findable materials was not as solidly defined at Auburn or OSU. At Auburn, more materials were verifiable, either through explicit notation that the documents did not exist during a specific time frame, or through online findability. Exceptions to findable materials included student housing materials, both at the undergraduate and graduate level, and information about parking during the 1990–2000 time frame. This findability also did not extend to the majority of documents *specifically regarding accessibility* (this is a larger point that will be addressed at the end of the chapter). Such materials at Auburn faced a "digital wall" for 1990 and 1995 across the board, with student-facing access documents existing during the 2000 time frame.

Interestingly, Auburn was the only school that did not have an *IT/EIT Policy* specifically related to accessibility throughout the entire study. Virginia Tech's policy was first findable during the 2005 year (along with most Virginia Tech materials), which is mirrored by OSU's similar policy.

The Ohio State University had the fewest unfindable materials; while there were occasional unarchived materials, the "digital wall" was not as insurmountable for earlier materials as it was at Auburn or Virginia Tech. Handbooks (student, faculty, staff, and parking) along with student-facing accessibility policies were unavailable for the 1990 and 1995 years.

"Does Not Exist"

One of the important considerations when categorizing the collected documents, and the lack thereof, was to provide a notation for "this did not exist, yet or at all, based on later documents." Thus, "DNE" is used to indicate documents that *did not exist* at a given time.

"DNE" was used, for example, to mark the complete *lack* of an *IT/EIT Policy* related to accessibility measures at all three institutions during certain years. Auburn, for example, did not have a dedicated policy during the entire 25-year period under observation, while VT and OSU *IT/EIT Policy* documents did not exist in time frames prior to 2005. Internet and communication technologies (ICT) were, however, available throughout the entire 1990–2015 period.

This is important to note because, while these institutions were making shifts to use technology and incorporate it into their campuses, they did not explicitly consider the access impacts of these technologies. They excluded accessibility considerations within their governance of communication and information for years past their adoption, as well as the adoption of the ADA. Part of document accessibility, as well as general usability, is in the way that organizations package their materials, which leads into the discussion of the *cohesion* of the documents.

Cohesion

After determining that documents existed in some form or fashion, discussing the findings in different ways is a necessary step to make sense of all the findings. These are again results that

are concerned with materials that were publicly available (i.e., no paywall, login, or credentialing required to gain access) through either the institution under observation or the Internet Archive. *Cohesion* here refers to the number of pieces that were found for a specific document type in a specific time period; if there was a single file that contained the information, the documents were not only easier to find, but also easier to identify for the purpose of this project. In many cases, "multiple" files or sources were found for materials that were not available in a downloadable format, but rather spread across multiple web pages and linked sub-pages. This was especially true for accessibility-related materials, and often for employee handbooks and housing materials.

Table 4.7 Description of coding used in *Cohesion*-related matrices

Name	**Description**	**Letter Code**	**Pattern**
Nothing	No downloadable file	N	Solid Black
Single	A single, downloadable file was discovered	S	Light Shading
Multi	Multiple files were discovered	M	None

Institutional Results

Virginia Tech

Table 4.8 Virginia Tech *Cohesion* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement				s	s	s
Student Policy and Procedures				m		m
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures				m	m	m
University Accommodations Policy			s	s	s	s
IT/EIT Policy				s	s	s
Academic Graduate Catalog				s	s	s
Academic Undergraduate Catalog				s	s	s
Staff Handbook				s	s	s
Faculty Handbook				s	s	s
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract				m	m	s
Graduate Student Housing Contract				s	m	s
Student Conduct Handbook				s		
Parking and Transportation Handbook			s		s	s

Overall, there were 41 “nothing” results, 29 “single” results, and 8 “multiple” digital documents observed from Virginia Tech. This translates to over half (53%) of the search returning no downloadable materials, 37% with a single file, and 10% with multiple files to download at a given time.

During the 1990–2000 time frames, only two documents were available online: the *University Accommodations Policy* and the *Parking and Transportation Handbook*, both from 2000. Beginning in 2005, it was rare to have a non-downloadable result (4 of 39, or 10% of the

results). Of the four non-downloadable results, only one was related to disability and accessibility documentation (the 2010 *Student Policy and Procedures*).

During the 2005–2015 time frame, 8 of 39 documents were findable in multiple "pieces"—typically web pages with link after link to different subpages to follow instead of a *cohesive* whole document. These include the 2005 and 2010 *Undergraduate Student Housing Contract* and the 2020 *Graduate Housing Contract*, which wildly differed based on different housing needs and levels (e.g., there was a different form for incoming students versus returning). In addition, all of the found access-related documents for *Student Policy and Procedures*, as well as the *ADA/HR Policy and Procedure*s, from 2005 to 2015 (barring the non-result for 2010 *Student Policy and Procedures*) were in multiple pieces.

Focusing specifically on the top part of the table (the Disability and Access documents), a third of the findable documents (5 of 15) were in multiple pieces. Further, only half of the documents were findable at all (15 out of 30), pointing to access implications related to universal design principles and document usability; by putting information in multiple locations, it demands that the people who would most benefit from using single-source documents do the most work in order to access information.

Auburn

Table 4.9 Auburn *Cohesion* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement			s	s		s
Student Policy and Procedures			m		m	m
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures				m	m	
University Accommodations Policy					s	s
IT/EIT Policy						
Academic Graduate Catalog			s	s	s	s
Academic Undergraduate Catalog			s	s	s	s
Staff Handbook			m	m	m	m
Faculty Handbook				m	s	s
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract					m	m
Graduate Student Housing Contract						
Student Conduct Handbook				s	m	m
Parking and Transportation Handbook				s		s

Overall, there were 46 “nothing” results, 18 “single” results, and 14 “multiple” digital documents observed from Auburn. This translates to over half (59%—a slight increase compared to VT) of the search returning no downloadable materials, 23% with a single file (a decrease from VT’s results), and 18% (nearly doubling VT’s numbers) with multiple files to download at a given time.

Similar to the results from Virginia Tech, the 1990 and 1995 time frames had no documents available online. Documentation became available in 2000, with 5 different types online, including two related to accessibility (the *Syllabus Statemen*t and the *Student Policy and Procedures*). While more documents were available online at the end of the time frame, there were still many that were not, including the non-existent *IT/EIT Policy*. Again it is important to

note that there *was no policy* about accessible electronic information at Auburn during the entire time frame. Whether this has a direct impact on the availability of documents in general, however, is uncertain.

What can be known is that of the 30 data points related to Disability and Access documents at Auburn, only 5 (17%) were in a downloadable single-source document. This again points to the access implications highlighted at Virginia Tech—it was highly difficult to track down a single source of information regarding the *Student* or *ADA/HR Policy and Procedure* documents.

OSU

Table 4.10 The Ohio State University *Cohesion* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement				s		s
Student Policy and Procedures			m	m		m
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures			s	s	s	s
University Accommodations Policy						s
IT/EIT Policy				s	s	s
Academic Graduate Catalog	s	s	s	s	s	s
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	s	s	s	s	s	s
Staff Handbook			m	m	m	m
Faculty Handbook			m	m	s	m
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract					s	s
Graduate Student Housing Contract					s	s
Student Conduct Handbook				s	s	s
Parking and Transportation Handbook			m		m	m

Overall, there were 35 “nothing” results, 30 “single” results, and 13 “multiple” digital documents observed from OSU. This translates to under half (45%—the lowest rate of all three

schools) of the search returning no downloadable materials, 38% with a single file (the highest rate of all three schools), and 17% with multiple files to download at a given time.

The Ohio State University differs from the other two institutions in that during the 1990 and 1995 time frames there were documents available online: the *Academic Graduate Catalog* and the *Academic Undergraduate Catalog*. These were available in single-source documents across the entire span of the study. Again, in 2000, the availability of online documents began to expand, with more documents available than not (7 online, 6 not). It is interesting to note that OSU is the *only* institution that had all 13 documents available online during any time frame (2015).

Focusing specifically on the Disability and Access portion of the table, we find that OSU follows the pattern of VT and Auburn regarding completeness of their *Student Policy and Procedures* documentation—this was in multiple pieces when found online.

Comparison

Table 4.11 Three-school comparison of *Cohesion* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement			n s n	s s s	s n n	s s s
Student Policy and Procedures			n m m	m n m	n m n	m m m
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures			n n s	m m s	m m s	m n s
University Accommodations Policy			s n n	s n n	s s n	s s s
IT/EIT Policy				s n s	s n s	s n s
Academic Graduate Catalog	n n s	n n s	n s s	s s s	s s s	s s s
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	n n s	n n s	n s s	s s s	s s s	s s s
Staff Handbook			n m m	s m m	s m m	s m m
Faculty Handbook			n n m	s m m	s s s	s s m
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract				m n n	m m s	s m s
Graduate Student Housing Contract				s n n	m n s	s n s
Student Conduct Handbook				s s s	n m s	n m s
Parking and Transportation Handbook			s n m	n s n	s n m	s s m

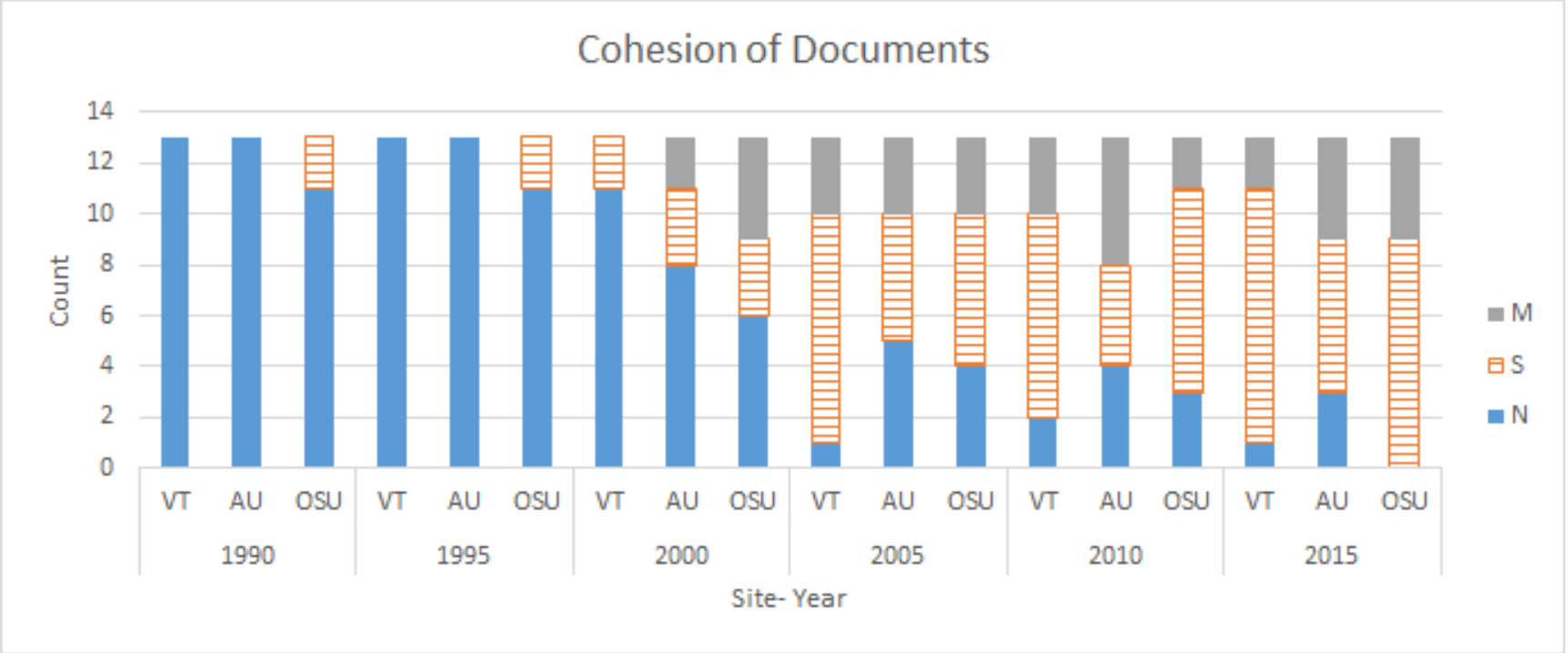
Note: The notations displayed in the table above follow the order of the institutional results: Virginia Tech, Auburn, OSU. Each section and each comparative table in this chapter follow this order.

In the above table, all three schools' *cohesion* results have been combined in a matrix to highlight commonalities and differences. Overall, there were 33 of 78 combinations where the three institutions provided the same search results: 26 “nothing” results, 11 time/ single document combinations, and 1 instance where multiple documents were found for each site.

These combinations provide some insight into the documents at each site. It is clear that, once the *Academic Graduate* and *Undergraduate Catalogs* were available online, they were

consistently presented as single, if rather large, downloadable documents. The other types of documents are much less regular in their *cohesiveness*—while there are pockets of singularity (the 2005 *Student Conduct Handbook*, for example), there are no clear overarching patterns by types of document. One anomaly in the table combining results is that the 2015 *Student Policy and Procedures* document was in multiple pieces at each site; this is the only document type that was both *findable* and in pieces for each site.

Figure 4.3 *Cohesion* of documents across all three sites presented as stacked-clustered bar chart



When observing the results of the search in a graphic format, additional patterns emerge. The documents that were coded as "N" (Nothing, no records to download) shrinks over time; it is an easily observable fact from Figure 4.3 that earlier documents were less likely to be available online. An "N" is the overwhelming search result during the 1990 and 1995 time frames, trends downward in 2000–2005, and is a rare result for 2010 and 2015. Prior to 2000, if a document was available online, it was in a single file (and importantly, it was at The Ohio State University).

The availability of single-source documents during the 2005–2015 time frame made these items easier to find, identify, and download. They also are easier to determine if they came from a *consistent* source (either from university records or from the Internet Archive) and determine if they were *transparently* available (i.e., the text in the document was searchable), the next two ways that the documents were categorized. In both categories, multi-source documents were *excluded* from review as they did not represent a cohesive and comprehensive source of information.

Key Takeaways

When discussing the *cohesion* of a document during my search, there are two findings that I want to highlight. First, in a reflection of the *Findability* results, during the overall 1990–2015 time frame, there was a marked change in the availability of materials in a digital format. Second, if information was more broadly applicable, it was more likely (but not guaranteed) to be in a single document.

Downloadable Materials Available Later

The "N" results of the search process were most prevalent during the 1990 and 1995 time frames, echoing the general *findability* of the documents and reinforcing the shape of the previously proposed digital wall. More materials were available later in the time frame under surveillance, though that did not necessarily mean that they were presented in a cohesive fashion.

General Information Single-Source

Observing the results at each site, the documents most likely to be presented in a single source were broadly usable to a large portion of the university population: the general student body. The *Academic Catalogs* (*Graduate* and *Undergraduate*) as well as the *Student Conduct Handbook* were some of the few cross-site instances where all documents were from a single source at a given time. Interestingly, the *Syllabus Statement* (2005 and 2015) and the *University Accommodations Policy* (2015) were also among this number, which may be due to their potential usability across multiple parts of the university: students, faculty, and general audience. This will be further discussed in the "Accessible Accessibility?" section of the Discussion towards the end of the chapter.

The next piece of analysis focuses on where those potential audience members might be able to find these materials.

Consistency

One method to discuss the consistency of the documents is through observing *where* the documents were found. I am using the single-source documents for this part of the analysis, while re-stating that some documents come from multiple sources; excluding multi-source documents from this layer of analysis channels the results of the *Cohesion* section. Within this study, the sources were found either directly from the institutions of higher education themselves or via the "WayBack Machine '' on the Internet Archive. Discussing these two

sources provides a means to focus on the public availability of these materials—have these IHEs preserved certain types of documentation for use today? Is there a discernible pattern to when these efforts have taken place?

While I make recommendations for **WRITERS** in Chapter 5, I ultimately forego a large line of questioning within the scope of this project that originally focused on naming and acknowledging authorship of the collected documents. That is a layer of analysis that will provide a direction for future research. Beyond a discussion of the source of the document download (however long past the original publication date), this would focus on which institutional authors (e.g., offices, named staff members, committees, task forces, etc.) were responsible for writing the document.

Table 4.12 Description of coding used in *Consistency*-related matrices

Name	**Description**	**Letter Code**	**Pattern**
Nothing	No downloadable file	n	Solid Black
Multi	Multiple sources for document type	m	Dark Shading
Archive	File source was from the Internet Archive	a	Light Shading
Uni	File source was from the IHE site	u	None

Institutional Results

Virginia Tech

Table 4.13 Virginia Tech *Consistency* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement				a	a	a
Student Policy and Procedures				m		m
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures				m	m	m
University Accommodations Policy			a	a	a	a
IT/EIT Policy				u	u	u
Academic Graduate Catalog				u	u	u
Academic Undergraduate Catalog				a	a	u
Staff Handbook				a	a	a
Faculty Handbook				u	u	u
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract				m	m	u
Graduate Student Housing Contract				a	m	u
Student Conduct Handbook				a		
Parking and Transportation Handbook			a		a	a

Overall, there were 41 “nothing” results (53%), 8 “multi” results, 12 (15%) downloads from university sources, and 17 (22%) downloads from the Internet Archive for Virginia Tech documents.

Of the single-source materials related to Disability and Access, 3 of 10 (30%) were findable from the university itself. This sole document was the *IT/EIT Policy*, which was originally published on June 12, 2006 and *never changed* during the time under surveillance; this was made clear when uploading the 2005, 2010, and 2015 documents (2019f, 2019g, 2019h) into the QDR project, a point that will be discussed later in Chapter 6.

Auburn

Table 4.14 Auburn *Consistency* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement			a	a		a
Student Policy and Procedures			m		m	m
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures				m	m	
University Accommodations Policy					a	u
IT/EIT Policy						
Academic Graduate Catalog			u	u	u	u
Academic Undergraduate Catalog			u	u	u	u
Staff Handbook			m	m	m	m
Faculty Handbook				m	a	a
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract					m	m
Graduate Student Housing Contract						
Student Conduct Handbook				a	m	m
Parking and Transportation Handbook				a		a

Overall, there were 46 “nothing” results (59%), 14 “multi” results (18%), 9 downloads from university sources (12%), and 9 downloads from the Internet Archive (12%) for Auburn documents. Similar to what was observed at Virginia Tech, there were no documents at Auburn prior to 2000 in a digital format; however, there were 5 items available in some manner digitally in 2000, compared with the two from VT. Of the single-source materials related to Disability and Access, 1 of 50 (20%) was findable from the university itself. This sole document was the 2015 *University Accommodations Policy*.

OSU

Table 4.15 The Ohio State University *Consistency* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement				a		a
Student Policy and Procedures			m	m		m
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures			a	a	a	a
University Accommodations Policy						a
IT/EIT Policy				a	a	a
Academic Graduate Catalog	u	u	u	u	u	u
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	u	u	u	u	u	u
Staff Handbook			m	m	m	m
Faculty Handbook			m	m	a	m
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract					a	a
Graduate Student Housing Contract					a	a
Student Conduct Handbook				a	a	a
Parking and Transportation Handbook			m		m	m

Overall, there were 35 “nothing” results (45%), 13 “multi” results (17%), 12 downloads from university sources (15%), and 18 downloads from the Internet Archive (23%) for OSU documents.

One of the most prolific areas of university-held materials was the *Academic Catalogs* (both the *Graduate* and *Undergraduate* versions); these were available online during the entire duration of the study (1990 to 2015). Additionally, at the 2000 time frame, two types of accessibility policy documents were available (the *ADA/HR Policy and Procedures*, as a single file from the Internet Archive, and the *Student Policy and Procedures*, as multiple pieces) while all handbook types (*Academic Graduate Catalog, Academic Undergraduate Catalog, Staff Handbook,* and *Faculty Handbook*) were available in some digital format.

Comparison

Table 4.16 Three-school comparison of *Consistency* results

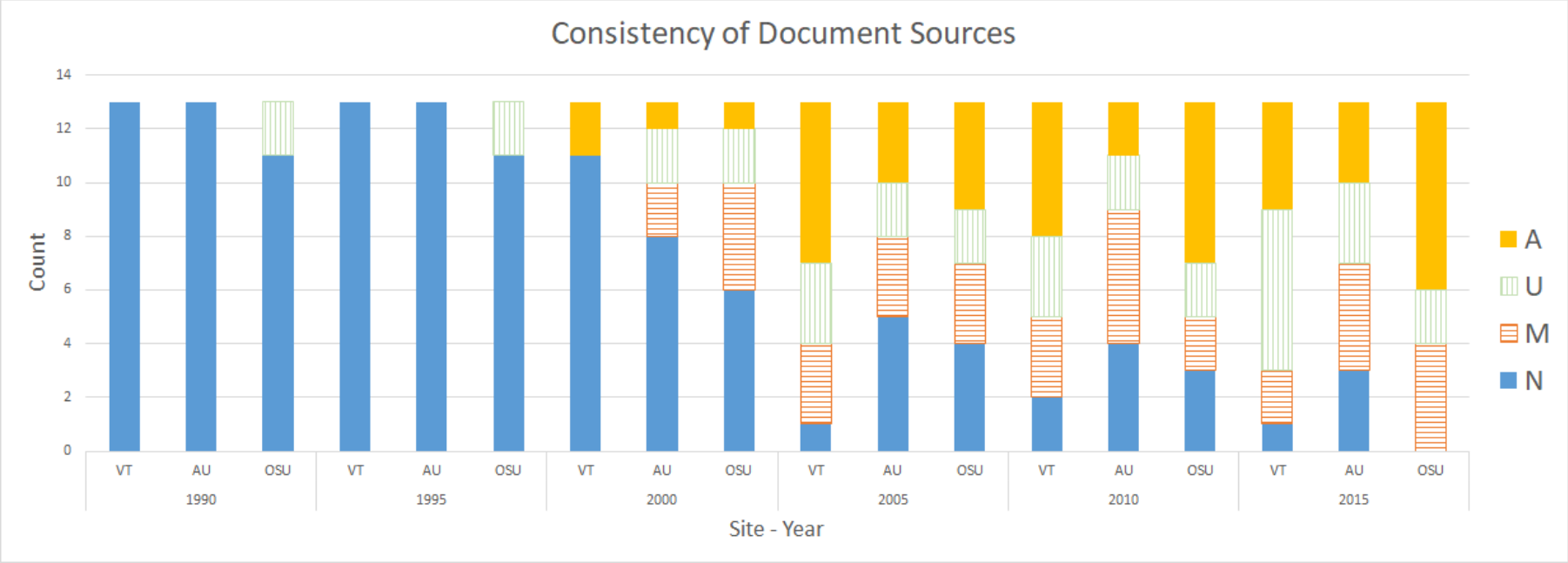
Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement			n a n	a a a	a n n	a a a
Student Policy and Procedures			n m m	m n m	n m n	m m m
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures			n n a	m m a	m m a	m n a
University Accommodations Policy			a n n	a n n	a a n	a u a
IT/EIT Policy				u n a	u n a	u n a
Academic Graduate Catalog	n n u	n n u	n u u	u u u	u u u	u u u
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	n n u	n n u	n u u	a u u	a u u	u u u
Staff Handbook			n m m	a m m	a m m	a m m
Faculty Handbook			n n m	u m m	u a a	u a m
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract				m n n	m m a	u m a
Graduate Student Housing Contract				a n n	m n a	u n a
Student Conduct Handbook				a a a	n m a	n m a
Parking and Transportation Handbook			a n m	n a n	a n m	a a m

Note: The notations displayed in the table above follow the order of the institutional results: Virginia Tech, Auburn, OSU. Each section and each comparative table in this chapter follow this order.

In the above table, all three schools' “consistency” results have been combined in a matrix to highlight commonalities and differences. Overall, there were 34 of 78 combinations where the three institutions provided the same search results: 26 “nothing” results (33%), 1 area of multiple downloads (1%), 3 Internet Archive file location(4%) , and 4 university-sourced documents (5%) observed in common.

The four documents that were universally single-source documents still housed on university URL spaces were also all *Academic Catalogs*—the 2015 *Undergraduate* and the 2005–2015 *Graduate* offerings.

Figure 4.4 *Consistency* across all three sites presented as stacked-clustered bar chart



The coding in Figure 4.4 above follows the coding presented in Table 4.1; N ("Nothing"), M ("Multi"), U ("Uni"), and A ("Archive"). It is very clear from this way of portraying the results that OSU's 1990 and 1995 materials are a rare digital find, given the search parameters. In 2000 and 2005, I again found that more materials became available digitally. Files were also more likely to be sourced from the Internet Archive than the universities themselves, in general. Though the overall trend at each site towards the end of the

time frame was for materials to be findable, OSU is the only institution that had findable materials for *each* document type for *any* year in the study (2015).

Key Takeaways

When discussing the *consistency* of found documents from my search, there are two major findings that I want to highlight. First, the Internet Archive was a slightly more probable source for the materials under surveillance. Second, the issue of single or multi-source documents is present when discussing *consistency* as well as *cohesion*.

University or Internet Archives?

For the majority of the search's data points, 122 of 234 (52%), there was nothing findable online. Fifteen percent (35 of 234) of the data points had multiple pieces of information. Thirty-three of 234 (14%) data points could be confirmed using university sources, while 44 (19%) data points were only findable when finally turning to the Internet Archive.

Thinking about what this means, overall, for institutions is troubling. The institutional sources (14% of found documents) do not portray a systematic effort to preserve materials that they put the time and effort into creating. The materials that were available were most likely to be the *Academic Graduate Catalogs* and the *Academic Undergraduate Catalogs*, which makes sense if the driving focus within higher education is the academic pursuits of students. However, the number of data points represented by these documents (36) is still greater than the number of *total* documents found using university sources at all (33).

The Internet Archive's WayBack Machine is also an imperfect source for the materials I attempted to surveil. While more materials were findable, there was no true pattern to what would or would not be available via this source. According to their FAQ, the Internet Archive began their work archiving the web in 1996, and only includes publicly available materials via web crawls (*Wayback Machine General Information*, 2018). People can additionally use their "Save Page Now" function to capture web pages now for future use, which could be used intentionally in the future for preservation of materials.

Yet that doesn't address the major issue raised by these findings; while these materials were likely to exist, at each of these institutions and time frames (barring the DNE documents), they are simply very difficult to track down. Universities are not keeping these materials around for public use, which might even mean that institutional history is not being transferred internally (e.g., when people move into and out of roles with the university) because the information isn't there as a reference. Additional means to address the preservation of university-created materials will be further discussed in Chapter 5 about *how* the work of **KEEPERS** can be done by intentionally incorporating digital archival practices.

Multiple-source documents

The "multiple-source" documents (15% of the overall search results) were probably some of the worst to work with, as those tended to be website-only materials. This means that there was not a single file to find, so someone searching for this material could easily overlook pertinent

information because it was stored in so many places that they could not unearth. Part of this relates to the changing URL structure with materials that are stored within the Internet Archive. The URLs used today, in the post-study world, do not necessarily match the URLs that were used during the time frame. This made it difficult to go further and further "back in time" while any changes to university structure or choices (such as how VT Parking Services became its own entity, URL-wise, outside of the Facilities group) meant that the concept of a clean, straightforward search was a naive assumption on my own part.

Having more single-source documents would make the research process easier, but it would also mean that those at each university would find it less strenuous to gather information regarding campus resources. For the purpose of this study, after documents were gathered, the last piece of analysis conducted was to determine if the information presented was *transparent*, meaning that there was machine encoded text.

Transparency

Only the single-source documents that were available were checked for their *transparency* vis-a-vis using the search function (CTRL+F) to determine if the text could be perceived via optical character recognition software; in short, if the search function could "read" the document, then screen reading software could "read" the text aloud.

Interestingly enough, if the document was findable online, the search function was usable; performing this test on every file found searchable text on every file. It is still important to note which documents underwent this test, and compare the differences between the institutes.

Table 4.17 Description of coding used in *Transparency*-related matrices

Name	**Description**	**Letter Code**	**Pattern**
Nothing	No record or mention; no single file	N	Solid Black
Blank	The text within the file is not searchable	B	Light Shading
Find	The CTRL+F function works within the document	F	None

Institutional Results

Virginia Tech

Table 4.18 Virginia Tech *Transparency* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement				f	f	f
Student Policy and Procedures						
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures						
University Accommodations Policy			f	f	f	f
IT/EIT Policy				f	f	f
Academic Graduate Catalog				f	f	f
Academic Undergraduate Catalog				f	f	f
Staff Handbook				f	f	f
Faculty Handbook				f	f	f
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract						f
Graduate Student Housing Contract				f		f
Student Conduct Handbook				f		
Parking and Transportation Handbook			f		f	f

All of the single-source files were available in a format that had searchable text; 29 of the 78 files were in a single-source format.

Auburn

Table 4.19 Auburn *Transparency* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement			f	f		f
Student Policy and Procedures						
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures						
University Accommodations Policy					f	f
IT/EIT Policy						
Academic Graduate Catalog			f	f	f	f
Academic Undergraduate Catalog			f	f	f	f
Staff Handbook						
Faculty Handbook					f	f
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract						
Graduate Student Housing Contract						
Student Conduct Handbook				f		
Parking and Transportation Handbook				f		f

All of the single-source files were available in a format that had searchable text; 18 of the 78 files were in a single-source format. Auburn had the fewest available single-source materials across all three institutions.

OSU

Table 4.20 The Ohio State University *Transparency* results

Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement				f		f
Student Policy and Procedures						
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures			f	f	f	f
University Accommodations Policy						f
IT/EIT Policy				f	f	f
Academic Graduate Catalog	f	f	f	f	f	f
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	f	f	f	f	f	f
Staff Handbook						
Faculty Handbook					f	
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract					f	f
Graduate Student Housing Contract					f	f
Student Conduct Handbook				f	f	f
Parking and Transportation Handbook						

All of the single-source files were available in a format that had searchable text; 30 of the 78 files were in a single-source format. OSU had the most single-source documents observed, edging out Virginia Tech for the highest rate by a single file.

Comparison

Table 4.21 Three-school comparison of *Transparency* results

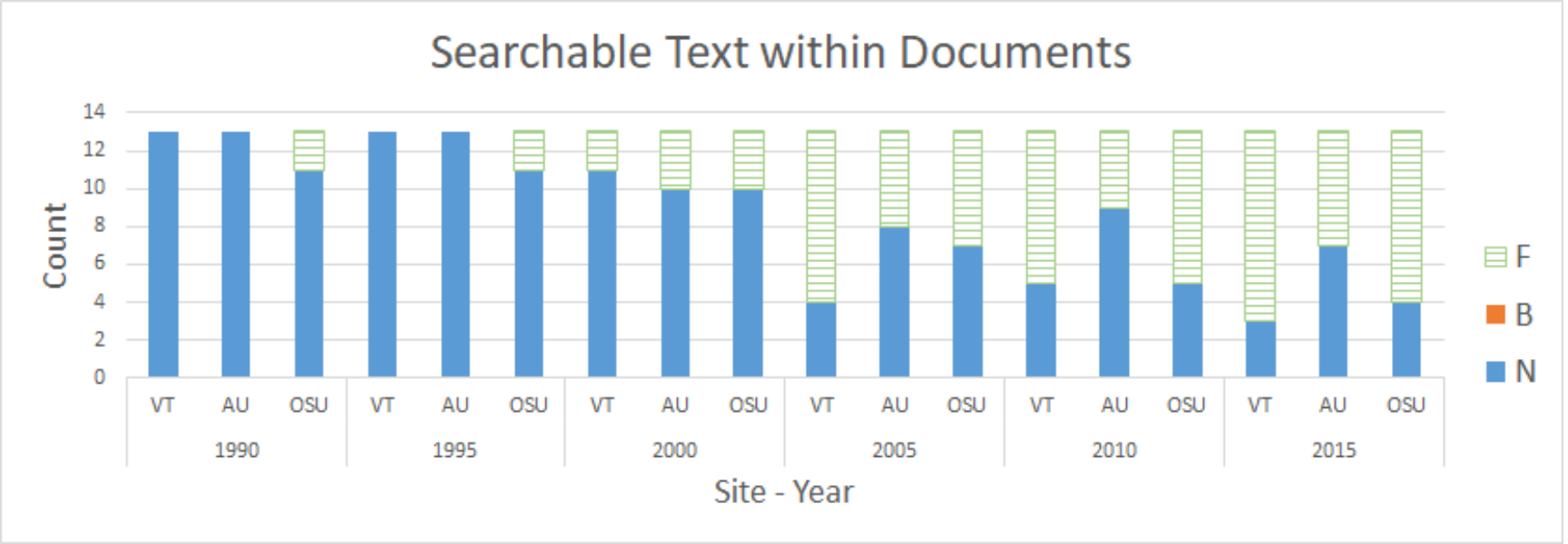
Document	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Syllabus Statement			n f n	f f f	f n n	f f f
Student Policy and Procedures						
ADA/HR Policy and Procedures			n n f	n n f	n n f	n n f
University Accommodations Policy			f n n	f n n	f f n	f f f
IT/EIT Policy				f n f	f n f	f n f
Academic Graduate Catalog	n n f	n n f	n f f	f f f	f f f	f f f
Academic Undergraduate Catalog	n n f	n n f	n f f	f f f	f f f	f f f
Staff Handbook	n n n	n n n	n n n	f n n	f n n	f n n
Faculty Handbook	n n n	n n n	n n n	f n n	f f f	f f n
Undergraduate Student Housing Contract					n n f	f n f
Graduate Student Housing Contract				f n n	n n f	f n f
Student Conduct Handbook				f f f	n n f	n n f
Parking and Transportation Handbook			f n n	n f n	f n n	f f n

Note: The notations displayed in the table above follow the order of the institutional results: Virginia Tech, Auburn, OSU. Each section and each comparative table in this chapter follow this order.

In the above table, all three schools' “transparency” results have been combined in a matrix to highlight commonalities and differences. Overall, there were 44 of 78 combinations where the three institutions provided the same search results: 33 “nothing” results and 11 combinations of document type and time point where a searchable file was observed. All of the single-source digital materials were “accessible” using the most basic attempt of using text recognition. This is an important aspect of these documents due to both my research positionality and the fact

that these are, in theory, materials openly available to the public. Therefore, people who use screen reader tech should be able to access such documents, especially the ones concerned with accessibility.

Figure 4.5 *Transparency* across all three sites presented as stacked-clustered bar chart



The figure above (Figure 4.5) shows that in every case the documents that were found, downloaded, and tested using Ctrl+F to determine if they contained searchable text *did*, in fact, contain searchable text. This means that *all* of the single-source digital materials were "accessible" using the most basic attempt of using text recognition. Further testing, such as determining whether alt-text was included for images, the document flow using a screen reader, or the accuracy of text itself, was not a part of this study (see Chapter 6 for suggestions of future work).

Key Takeaways

When discussing the *transparency* of a document during my search, there is one major point to make: if an item was a single-source document, then it had searchable text. Every single file was, in fact, in possession of text, and not just an image. This means that for those using technology to interact with documents, these documents could be read aloud. This might not be a perfect narration, as page formatting can create major hurdles, but at least they did not present an utterly empty file, either.

Discussion

The initial "big mess" of the document search, and trying to determine how to discuss the findings, led to a return to the basic questions used to gather information. These basic questions align with aspects of the study's boundaries (the search sites and the time frames) as well as different means to discuss the results (*findability, cohesion, consistency,* and *transparency*).

Interestingly, there were major findings that "shook out" from the big mess. These include the identification of a temporal "digital wall" as well as the need to describe some types of documents as non-existent within the search parameters. The overall findability of specific accessibility policy and procedure documents also points to an area of further interest—the

visibility within each institution of such documents is lower than that of other types of documents.

It's Not There

The "Does Not Exist" category first discussed in the section on *Findability* initially arose from the *IT/EIT Policy* documents. This is in fact an important category, as it provides a clear sense of *why* documents could not be collected, as opposed to uncertainty. It is a category that highlights an issue of when documents first began to be produced; though the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990, there were many *Disability and Access* documents that *did not exist* at each institution.

One surprise result from this search was that there were items outside the *Disability and Access* category that were marked DNE, specifically at Auburn University. Their *Faculty Handbook* was first printed in 1994 (Office of the Provost, 2001), meaning that such a document did not exist cohesively prior to that time. Auburn additionally stopped offering graduate student housing during the time frame under surveillance, hence a DNE result for the 2005–2015 time points.

IT/EIT Policy Documents

In 2020, the internet is a ubiquitous presence in the life of the university; course management, communication, marketing, event calendars, admissions applications, and job applications are now almost entirely handled online. As previously mentioned, electronic and information technology (IT or EIT; sometimes also referred to as ICT, or information and communication

technology) policies did not exist at all three schools across the 25 years of the study. Even with emails between Auburn University and "employees and students and external parties" (Auburn University, 2019a) being recognized as an "official form" of communication in 2006, Auburn's first *IT/EIT Policy* was not created until *2016* (Auburn University, 2016b).

Meanwhile, both Virginia Tech and The Ohio State University had policies in place by the 2005–2006 academic year. While these policies have now been in place for over a decade, they came into existence long *after* the passage of the new Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in 1998, the passage of the ADA in 1990, and the original Section 508 amendment of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in 1986 (as mentioned in Chapter 2), all of which addressed legal compliance and technical standards of accessibility. This means that, even at the institutions *with* such a document, that they were not part of university policies for nearly two decades after federal-level developments.

Both the Virginia Tech and OSU policies had a stated purpose of providing equal access, but the way that the scope of each policy was worded dramatically changed what was covered by each policy; this may have something to do with the offices responsible for the policy. Virginia Tech's policy has always been part of the purview of the Division of Information Technology, with its scope applying to all "colleges, departments, auxiliaries, research, and administrative entities with the Information Technology organization supporting the programs or services of the university" (Svyantek, 2019f). In contrast, OSU's scope only covers "any website conducting

university business" (The Ohio State University, 2005), and was issued by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

This is an important distinction within this type of document—one covers *all* EIT, while one focuses solely on websites. This is especially difficult to parse out without the use of the WayBack machine's archives, as the latest version of OSU's policy (again, with initial website-only coverage) *does* extend to all *digital* information and services. The policy not only undergoes a name change (from Web Accessibility to Digital Accessibility), but moves offices from the Office of Academic Affairs to the Office of Chief Information Officer, maintaining the Office of Diversity and Inclusion as its sub-unit.

This organizational shuffle and name change would not be as confusing if one ignored the issue and revision dates. OSU's latest documents and websites state that the Digital Accessibility policy is from 2003; however, there is no mention of *Digital* Accessibility this early—the focus is websites. This shift occurred in 2018, and states that each unit at the university must appoint a Digital Accessibility Coordinator to ensure compliance with this policy. This latest policy version, therefore, has teeth in the form of recognizing responsibility for accessibility across the institution.

Older versions of OSU's policy, as well as Virginia Tech's, are more ambiguous when it comes to the determination of "who is responsible" for accessibility. OSU created a reporting structure requiring a "status report summarizing the progress towards fully accessible web space (as

defined by the 6/30/04 standard) over the past year and targets for the upcoming year shall be included in the annual reports to the Provost submitted by the Colleges and Vice Presidential areas" (The Ohio State University, 2005) without clearly identifying what offices or roles within those areas were responsible for creating such report.

Meanwhile, Virginia Tech's original policy set forth standards, guidelines that applied to all "colleges, departments, auxiliaries, research, and administrative entities with the Information Technology organization supporting the programs or services of the university" (Svyantek, 2019f), without providing any structure for the responsibility of performing the work, or reporting progress.

In each instance, there are guidelines of what *should* happen (and *how*, given accessibility standards), but not an outline of who is ultimately responsible for enacting those changes across different parts of the university. This pattern might be repeated throughout other types of policies as well, which would be a generative topic for future work with this data set.

Archival Practices

The overall paucity of campus-materials in campus archives was surprising. I've thought, the entire time that I have been doing my own studies and research, that the purpose of places such as Virginia Tech's Special Collections and University Archives was to preserve information related to the university, its infrastructure, and its daily functioning, so that when someone has a project such as mine, there would be primary-source materials to access. This concept was

only reinforced by evidence such as Virginia Tech's 1590-page long Records Group document, which details materials held in the University Archives directly related to the institution (*Guide to the Record Groups in the University Archives*, 2020); some of this material goes back to the late 1800s and the university's foundation, while my search couldn't find documents from the last 2000s.

This inconsistency was one of the common themes discovered by comparing all three institutions; there was a "digital wall" regarding general material availability (specifically during the 1990s). Most things I was interested in simply weren't *findable*. The fact that specific types of materials, such as the *Academic Catalogs*, were more readily available across all institutions and time frames in this study (see *Consistency* Figure 4.4) this points to a level of intentionality. This could reflect institutionally-driven choices, or the choices of individuals working in the archives; in either situation, there was a choice concerning acquiring and preserving the materials I found myself interested in for this study, and that someone else within the archival process did not consider worth keeping.

Maintenance of institutional history that is considered worth keeping in a *findable* manner can also be difficult for numerous reasons. At Virginia Tech, piecing together institutional history is made more difficult "considering that our records burned, along with our administrative building, just after the turn of the 20th century" (Cox & Robertson, 2010). The VT Historical Digest is a resource now available digitally due to print publication costs, and the information presented therein has been further framed by access to individuals who provided information,

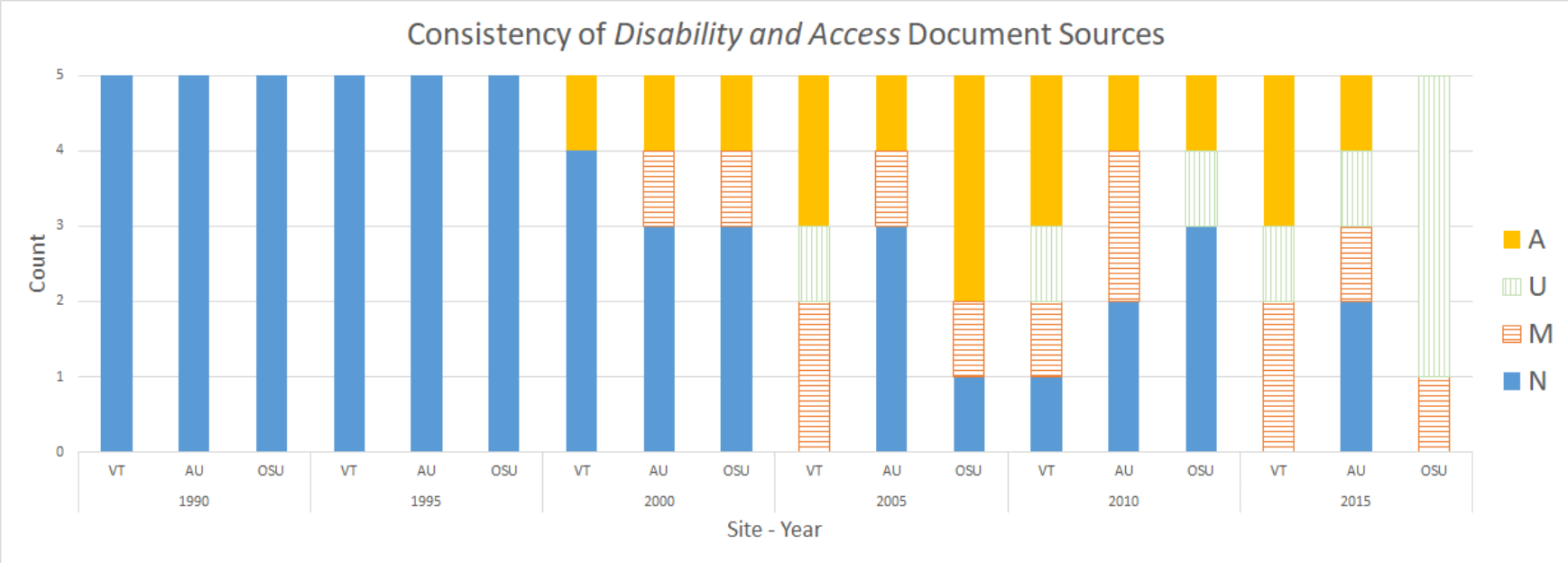
as opposed to independently-verifiable source material. In short, there is a large body of knowledge, both past and present, that is not being preserved due to risks and restrictions such as lack of materials, the passage of time, and extreme circumstances that could affect any institution (The National Archives, 2013).

Accessible Accessibility?

As discussed in the *Transparency* section of this chapter, if a document was *findable* in a *cohesive* fashion (i.e., there was a single-source document that could be downloaded), the text of the document was also *transparent* (the CTRL+F command could be used to find text). This is an initial discussion of the document's accessibility, which does not go into an analysis of the document structure. Tracking accessible practices such as proper use of headings, tags, alt-text for images, formatted tables, extra tabs to create columns, etc., is a potential future level of analysis with the project's document collection.

However, such analysis requires documents to analyze. While the general unavailability of documents was discovered across all three institutions, I want to draw particular attention to the lack of single-source materials specifically related to Disability and accessibility. To do this, I want to go back to the results presented in the *Cohesion* and *Consistency* sections, emphasizing the single-file nature of the documents, along with their inclusion in discoverable university archival locations.

Figure 4.6 *Consistency* of *Disability and Access* documents across all three sites presented as stacked-clustered bar chart



The coding in Figure 4.6 above (and Table 4.22 to follow) follows the coding first presented in Table 4.1; N ("Nothing"), M ("Multi"), U ("Uni"), and A ("Archive"). For the first decade of the search, there were no documents to find online, at any institution; this is not necessarily surprising, given the results of the entire search presented earlier in Figure 4.4. However, we know that each institution does have the capacity to gather and store its own materials via the existence of their library collections structures, as well as the presence of institutionally-available materials related to this study.

Comparing the overall coding results to the specific *Disability and Access* results, there was not a significant difference, when comparing percentages, in how the materials were or were not available from different sources. Table 4.22 below shows the difference in the percentages of each code; while there was some minor variation, these documents followed similar patterns compared to all documents.

Table 4.22 Disability and Access *Consistency* results compared to all *Consistency* results

Code	**Disability and Access (%)**	**All results (%)**	**Difference (%)**	**All w/o *D and A* (%)**	**Difference (%)**
A	18	19	-1	19	-1
U	10	14	-4	17	-7
M	14	15	-1	15	-1
N	58	52	+6	49	+9

Note: All numbers expressed as a percentage; total number of *Disability and Access* documents is 90, total number of all documents is 234; total number of all (w/o *Disability and Access)* documents is 144.

If the *Disability and Access* document results are compared to the full document collection from this search, there is a higher percentage of materials that weren't found digitally (a difference of 6%), and a lower percentage of materials found using university sources (a difference of 4%). If the *Disability and Access* documents are considered separately from the other documents in this search, there is a slightly higher percentage of materials that weren't found digitally (a difference of 9%), and a slightly lower percentage of materials found using university sources (a

difference of 7%). This leads to the idea that the difficulties in finding any materials are just a bit more difficult when looking for *Disability and Access* documents, reinforcing the difficulties already inherent to the Disability experiences on campus.

Summary

This search demonstrated some general results. First, I have identified the existence of a digital wall, which is a barrier in terms of materials being available in a digital format that could be found and downloaded. This digital wall was observed roughly around 2000 to 2005 (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2 for more detail) for each school; only The Ohio State University had any materials (the *Academic Graduate* and *Undergraduate Catalogs*) available throughout the entire time frame in question. Second, the majority of materials were not in a format that is easy to parse; many materials available only through a series of archived web pages, as opposed to a singular document. This second finding overlaps with the lack of institutional oversight and guidance in preserving and curating university materials, as the grand majority of materials were found only through the use of the web archive.

Additionally, while looking for these documents, I felt an overall sense of befuddlement—I made an assumption at the beginning of this study that universities collected and preserved the materials related to their own function, as such documents were created in-house. This was decidedly not the case, either for documents that covered the campus communities as a whole *or* when specifically related to accessibility. When available, the findable institutional materials,

where specifically collected and digitally housed, predominantly focused on the academic handbook/catalogs available to students. University-level, numbered governance policies were the easiest to define and recognize during the search—these were also the ones most likely to follow a specific format (such as using a template and a numbering system).

The difficulties encountered during this search process yet again moved me from my original goal and led me to desire a better process. The considerations for developing, organizing, and finding such policy and procedure documents that are from public institutions could be more *generally applicable* (universal) as opposed to policies that are public, but navigated by individuals based on their own relationship to the campus.

These difficulties, as well as recommendations to move past them, are the focus of Chapter 5. I outline my overall search process, originally detailed in Chapter 3, and make suggestions to not only ease the path of future **SEEKERS** (those who might look for similar documents), but for **WRITERS** (those creating the documents themselves) and **KEEPERS** (those who organize the materials for others) as well.

Chapter 5: Lessons Learned from Institutional Counter-Surveillance: Best Practices for Seekers, Writers, and Keepers of Institutional Policy Documents

Well, that could have been easier.

Chapter 4's results, and lack thereof, might make it appear that the search process was slapdash, that the search was interrupted or left incomplete. These gaps leave "black marks" in each document collection matrix that are a call to action—institutions of higher education need to document their policies and procedures in modes that are *findable*, *cohesive*, *consistent*, and *transparent*.

Findable documents would allow people to find, identify, and use documents. *Cohesive* documents would be all in a single file, instead of multiple pieces. *Consistent* files would have the same names (with version numbers or revision dates) and be located in the same places year after year. *Transparent* documents would provide searchable text that could be read aloud without significant remediations. Different stakeholders need policy and procedure documents

to adhere to these modes to make them more usable. Such documents are accessed, created, and preserved by stakeholders embodying the range of three roles that came to the forefront of how I understand documents are made and used at a university: **SEEKER**, **WRITER**, and **KEEPER**.

The examples mentioned of people who could be in such a role are a non-exhaustive list in each case.

Initially, I put myself, through my research process, in the role of a **SEEKER**—someone looking for a given document, for whatever reason. My personal experiences within this role motivated this study in general, launching me to further develop skill sets to outline the **WRITER** and **KEEPER** roles.

Different types of **SEEKERS** will want a given document for different reasons:

- Other researchers interested in questions similar to the ones I raise with this project might want to find the documents, possibly to verify or expand on my analyses;
- Those new to a particular institution of higher education (students, faculty, and staff) might be trying to decide if an institution will fit them, or if the institution would be willing to make room to ensure a fit;
- People already at an institution (such as instructors or staff) might seek historical documents in order to understand how to provide access or put policies into practice; and

- Campus activists might use the documents to make changes to existing policies or how they are enacted.

The second role that emerges from the document lifecycle is that of the **WRITER**. These are the people involved in creating and revising these documents. These are likely to be people who have strong pre-existing institutional ties and are involved in university governance, instruction, or providing service; I myself was part of a working group that conducted the latest revision of the *IT/EIT Policy* document for Virginia Tech in 2018. **WRITERS** include:

- Upper administration at the vice-president or vice-provost level, who are listed as the authoring offices for particular policies;
- People serving on committees, commissions, task forces, and working groups at a given institution, who draft different resolutions or policies that get discussed and approved; and
- People within support offices (e.g., parking, student services) who develop materials for "in-house" guidance that ends up affecting the university community at large.

The third and final role in this lifecycle is the **KEEPER** - those who collect and organize documents for future use. My proof of concept in Chapter 6 provided me experience within this role. **KEEPERS** include:

- Librarians and archivists that are part of the institution itself;
- People in university governance who need to ensure that everyone knows what the official policies are on campus; and

- People in offices across campus who want to maintain their institutional knowledge for job training and transition purposes.

This chapter will use these three roles to outline my recommendations for how to increase *findability*, *cohesion*, *consistency*, and *transparency* of institutional documents. The idea that there not only could, but *will*, be Disabled **SEEKERS**, **WRITERS**, and **KEEPERS** also necessitates discussion of the considerations of accessibility and universal design within each role.

I utilize a specific framework for my recommendations, based on answering questions that incorporate the efforts of "six honest servants" (Kipling, 1902):

> I KEEP six honest serving-men
>
> (They taught me all I knew);
>
> Their names are What and Why and When
>
> And How and Where and Who.

I follow the order of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* to describe how *findability*, *cohesion*, *consistency*, and *transparency* can be embedded into the practices of each role. I start by focusing on **SEEKERS,** moving to **WRITERS,** before finishing with **KEEPERS**. I then summarize recommendations that impact all three roles, highlighting injections of universal design throughout the document lifecycle. These recommendations will also touch on the potential impact of the suggested changes.

SEEKERS

> Frankly, the older versions of the website made me want to weep. Though I do not use a screen reader, trying to navigate them using links I could compare visually across a page while seeing how they were nested was awful. I did not spend a lot of time considering lines of the documents, but rather the process of finding those documents. Which, again, was awful. If these are the policies that governed how students were supposed to interact on campus in the past, you would believe, on some level, that they would be easier to find and reference in case of conflicts or to promote general awareness. (Svyantek, 2019d, p. 7)

The work of the **SEEKER** is to identify, find, confirm, and collect documents for their use. This work can be further divided into the actual *practice* of the search and the *reflection* on how the search is progressing; **SEEKERS** can enhance the quality of their search methods by building reflection into their practices. The research methods outlined in Chapter 3 provide the initial outline of the methods I myself followed, and from this experience I offer the following recommendations serving to refine specific points and expand on those ideas.

While I inhabited the role of **SEEKER**, my process continued to return to foundational questions of *who, what, where, when*, *why*, and *how*. As I learned in studying civil engineering, strong foundations are vital to support larger structures; you need to start at the foundation to get things right with buildings as well as research. Addressing these questions allows for the **SEEKERS** to conduct a consistent, methodical search while being transparent about their work, making space for the **SEEKER** to share everything learned.

This begins with the types of documents that are under surveillance (*what*); again, this term is used to reinforce the notion that we are flipping the stare back onto the institutions. Then, defining time frames, both for the overall search and what constitutes a year (I used the academic year of July 1st to June 30th), answers the *when* for the study. Indicating the locations being used as a case, the institutes of higher education in question, is part of the answer to *where*, which is further answered by describing what search engines and other resources are being used. The use of an incognito browser window throughout the entire digital search process allows for the **SEEKERS** to act as a novice starting from scratch each day (*who*), without cookies and browsing history affecting the search (Google Chrome Help, 2021) .

By following these boundaries, a **SEEKER** intentionally creates a replicable process, a relatively rare research consideration (Camerer et al., 2018; Porte, 2013). Replication studies are important in academia "as they are an indispensable ingredient needed to develop convincing, robust, and reliable structured literature reviews and quantitative meta-analyses" (J. Block & Kuckertz, 2018). By providing this framework, as well as the results of my own memoing practice and search results, I am generating a foundation for similar studies to follow the path my dissertation treads through the digital archives.

All of these factors should also be considered via the reflective memoing I recommend **SEEKERS** incorporate into their daily practice. This daily log of the search process and data collection was a crucial component of this project. In this section, I will detail the *practices* that I recommend for other **SEEKERS** as well as my suggestions for incorporating *reflection* into those practices.

Practices

This section will describe specific practices, such as an audit trail (Creswell & Miller, 2000) that **SEEKERS** should use during their search process if they intend to document their research in replicable ways. The naming of these practices reinforces the *transparency* of the search process, using them reinforces *consistency*; and having the practices in a single location is one way to model *cohesion*. Writing about these practices using a consistent format and style is also an example of incorporating universal design principles (Burgstahler, 2012; McGuire, et al., 2006); the information I share is laid out in an intuitive fashion using plain language (Plain Language Action and Information Network, 2011).

Who

This project started with my role as **SEEKER**; I created and refined the search methods (originally described in Chapter 3), and the research questions, based on initial findings. Future **SEEKERS** who replicate my search or expand upon it could be Disabled in different ways than myself; with this in mind, I do not outline specific tools (such as the use of a particular browser), but considerations around tool use; e.g., using an "incognito browser window" during each search session to mimic the "new" search experience, thereby not keeping any traces of previously visited sites or the history of previous searches or downloads (Flowers et al., 2016).

What

A key point for this type of project is a clear understanding of the documents that "fit" the collection criteria and those that are tangential to the project. In determining this fit, the search

should begin with any known document titles as the search terms; later, using multiple variations of the initial terms can expand the search boundaries (Svyantek, 2016). Noting the version number and dates within the memoing practice can also simplify the overall search, as some documents might not change over time. The collection decisions should be noted in the memos generated. For example, if there are multiple versions of a document during a given search year, the one closest to the start of the year (July 1) should be used to reflect what is occurring at the "start" of the year; this creates consistency in the document selection.

I urge **SEEKERS** to create a tangent folder to store interesting things that are outside the scope of the search boundaries and memo about these results without getting too bogged down in the details. The search itself, and the document collection, focuses on the choice to capture, not the tangent itself. These tangential findings create places for further work to explore, as I will discuss in Chapter 6 and as detailed in memos, usually prefaced by a statement of "Holy crap did I find something weird" (Svyantek, 2019d, p. 11).

When

Using a consistent time frame to define a year for collection and reporting purposes reinforces the search boundaries and scope. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I used July 1–June 30 (for a XXX0–XXX1 or XXX5–XXX6 year) as the calendar dates to measure an academic year. There are benefits to this consistency for **WRITERS** and **KEEPERS** in terms of having a set "year" for organizing documents versions.

Where

I recommend that **SEEKERS** begin by building off of whatever previous experience they might have with institutions of higher education and use their familiarity to lead their own searches. I searched digitally at three different sites, becoming better with familiarizing myself with a given site throughout the search. My first search site, Virginia Tech, took eleven days (eight for the digital search and three in the physical archives); Auburn and OSU only took four days apiece.

In the digital realm, *where* also refers to different online search locations. I confirmed the "thingness" of any given document or identified gap by searching multiple locations for each document; **SEEKERS** can't simply call off the search when the first attempt yields no results or a 404 error. These sources (listed in the Svyantek_VT_SingleSourceDocuments.tab file (Svyantek, 2019e)) include:

- University websites and search engines,
- Internet Archive/WayBack Machine, and
- Archives and special collections listings in university libraries.

It should be noted that additional sources *could* be added by future **SEEKERS** who are familiar with other archive sources or who take the step to search through physical archival sources. Doing so would require notation in the memos regarding the reasons and extent of search.

I personally was able to go to the physical Special Collections Archive in Newman Library on the Virginia Tech campus, but have bracketed those results in my memoing practice as well as my

collection results; I specifically noted the time in the physical archives, June 11–19 (Svyantek, 2019d) and set these results apart from my digital sources as I was unable to make similar trips to archives at Auburn or The Ohio State University (Ahern, 1999; Chan et al., 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012). From June 11th to end of my search time at Virginia Tech, I conducted this type of "in-person, physical search"; prior to this, any and all of my results reflect digital findings, and this is true for all of my findings at Auburn and OSU. I recognize my own privilege in doing this work, as physical spaces have physical limitations—which I memoed about for transparency. There are also additional considerations in requesting access in such physical spaces that bring considerations of "crip time" (Samuels, 2017) to the forefront: archival materials might not be financially blocked from public access, but the overall availability of such sources might be impacted by on/offsite storage, hours, organization, and physical accessibility considerations, thereby creating additional work and time constraints for a researcher in person that are not as pertinent to the digital search.

Why

There are two major parts to the *why* that I will address: why are people doing this work and why should people use these practices in particular. First, this searching work may be undertaken for a variety of reasons, which should be clearly stated. My own motivations were research-focused, but others may want to use the documents for other purposes (such as changing how policies are written or enacted). **SEEKER** positionality *must* be stated clearly throughout the project (as I have done) because it is an integral component to this work. The concern is not in trying to remove the researcher themselves from the work to make it

objective, but in recognizing and even celebrating the connection between the **SEEKER** and the search (Secules et al., 2021).

The consideration of why *this* process should be used is that, in the first place, it now exists. I have outlined these steps to provide a foundation, one that can now be accepted or rejected, cited and critiqued. The process, as outlined, is transparent and can be cited; it provides a consistent pattern to follow; and it strives to provide cohesive results in the form of both memoing and document collection.

How

The practices that result in document identification, collection, and management should be conducted in a consistent manner to make results readily available and usable to others; I will demonstrate how this can be achieved via my QDR proof of concept in Chapter 6. Throughout the search, it is important to keep in mind that there are people involved (who are not necessarily named or noted) throughout the document lifecycle, therefore the documents and their organization have the inherent potential to be flawed—difficult to find, inconsistently labeled, or simply "missing." **SEEKERS** should therefore work to become comfortable with ambiguity during this process instead of expecting things to line up neatly; as Hawking (2010) noted, "One of the basic rules of the universe is that nothing is perfect. Perfection simply doesn't exist."

One of the methods that I used to become comfortable with ambiguity, along with my process, was by starting the search by familiarizing myself with the current source materials at each site while memoing about all of this material. This made me feel a bit like a digital Indiana Jones—I moved from the "now" into the past at each site as one would at an archeological dig. Instead of starting with the equivalent of high powered construction equipment in the middle of nowhere, I conserved resources (time, energy, potential funding) by "excavating" after narrowing down potential locations (Binford, 1964; Carver, 1989; Redman, 1987). This was done by embedding myself (within an incognito browser window) at each of my sites digitally to explore the layout of university resources in general; this included noting things about naming conventions, language use, the organizational structure of the university, the organizational structure of university website, and where university archive resources were located.

The practice of the search should also be allowed to evolve over time. Adapting the foundational search process can push the scope and research questions in new and different directions while still providing an evidentiary trail. Individual changes regarding how information is found and described all point to a universal design approach; for example, I used color coding to indicate different sections of my document collection matrices for purely aesthetic reasons—it shares no meaningful information (or else I would be double-coding for accessibility reasons). Others may take slightly different turns; these differences (such as using a different browser, a different archival source for websites, or the use of text-to-speech softwares) inform the search process and need to be noted to maintain transparency in the

process. **SEEKERS** can therefore use their experiences from the search to inform their continued process, updating practices and noting these revisions in memos.

Reflections

While the practices outlined above led to my document collection, the reflective memos I generated are equally important. They served as a touchstone during each day of data collection, keeping me on track, motivated, and embedded in my search. Reflective memoing has been shown to be a beneficial practice that helps researchers and writers track their biases and evolution (Groenewald, 2010; Ortlipp, 2008; Pacheco-Vega, 2015). By using the foundational questions as a guide to reflective practice, a **SEEKER** can intentionally create a transparent, replicable process; such a choice is reflective of being intentional about utilizing Critical Access Methods, as most studies do not reveal these "inner workings…[instead covering up] awkwardly collected and poorly documented fieldwork" (Anfara et al., 2002, p. 30).

Who

SEEKERS initially memo to and for themselves—consistency in creating the memos is key to making them a useful resource during analysis and writing. I was very intentional in my own memoing work, knowing that I would make these notes public (QDR). These memos lay a path for others to follow a train of insight, providing transparency about my process.

What

I created daily reflective memos using a series of prompts (Svyantek, 2019d) to track the search process over time. This creates a reproducible trail of the search and results. Daily memoing

during the search is a great method to become familiar with the documents and tangential findings, and also a way to be kind to self and others. These have been a place of research trials and triumphs; I was more honest with myself in these memos than ever before, but it was work to incorporate into practice as I have never been a natural long-term chronicler of my own experiences.

When

These memos should be generated each day during the search. Some of the prompts can be completed before beginning, to reorient and list the search plans for the day. Responses to others could be written during the search itself. Finally, there are some prompts that make sense to write after the search session has been completed.

Where

I personally preferred making digital notes (using typing or speech-to-text), but others could do memo in a handwritten format, or via voice notes (i.e., audio files). I recommend the use of "born digital" notes for a cohesive set of memos that do not require scanning, as well as having all of the memos for a given site in a single file for cohesion purposes. I have provided a template following universal design principles for completing similar memos with accessibility considerations (headings, sans-serif fonts) as default. This template, along with my own memos, is part of the document collection as a means to make my research methods transparent and achievable for others.

Why

Memoing is a practice that can help people accumulate ideas, and can be quite personal creations that contribute to the research process and credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Groenewald, 2010; Pacheco-Vega, 2015; Sheldon, 2017). Memos reinforce the outlined practices, in turn providing evidence that the **SEEKER** followed a replicable process. Beyond the recognized "good" that memoing can serve for external research purposes, leaving detailed notes during the search is a kindness that **SEEKERS** can do for themselves; they can serve as a refresher to start the next dive into data collection, and can help later on while writing. Generating my own reflective memos allowed me to remember my frame of being during the search process, re-motivating me to finish collecting in order to move forward with my project.

How

This type of project, along with any other research, is never completed in a perfectly neutral and objective void. Such places do not exist, and if they did, they would likely be rather boring; as Judge Gen in the television program *The Good Place* points out , "All Janet Voids are nothing. But Neutral Janet Voids are like...the *most* nothing..." (Asher, 2020). Memoing is a way to describe the "void" where the work is being conducted during a project. **SEEKERS'** (and by extension, **WRITERS'** and **KEEPERS'**) lives and work are not excluded somehow from existing in the "real world"—pretending otherwise does a disservice to everyone in the document lifecycle.

Therefore, the priority in the memoing should not be in trying to separate the person from the project; rather, the focus should be in honestly answering the prompts without censoring yourself. These memos are a place to recognize wins (i.e., documents collected) and weirdness (i.e., the things that end up in the tangent folder not further discussed in this dissertation because things would get too off topic).

With the use of reflective memoing, **SEEKERS** begin to take on aspects of **WRITERS**. They develop documentation that, in theory, can be put to use later on by themselves as well as others. There is more to the role of **WRITER**, which will be discussed in the next section.

WRITERS

> But the danger for a junior scholar is that we inflate our work with theory and with difficult language in an effort to sound as smart as possible. For disability studies researchers, this can mean that our work actually excludes members of our own community.
>
> I would suggest... that the process of making academic writing more and more academic can be a process of ableism and it can reproduce ableism, creating steep steps. (Dolmage, 2017, pp. 32–33)

The work of the **WRITER** is to develop and disseminate policy documents and materials in a manner that they can be understood and used. Using the same foundational questions, I outline recommendations for this role to ensure *cohesion*, and *consistency*, and *transparency* that model common policy writing elements such as identifying authors and including dates (Pennock, 2011). These recommendations would benefit the offices that create the "final version" of any policy and procedure documents, as they provide an outline of the work needed

to move beyond academic jargon and incorporate practices to benefit the entire document lifecycle.

Who

WRITERS are those who create the policy and procedure documents (which could be governance policies, manuals, or snippets on web pages) at the university. They are typically in paid positions within specific offices, but they might also be faculty or students involved in committee work.

The **WRITERS** should identify themselves within the document. This meta-data provides information that is usable by both **SEEKERS** and **KEEPERS**. For keepers, this is another piece of metadata to use in their organization and collection of documents. For **SEEKERS**, this provides initial contact information to guide further questions or concerns, an idea of who to consider the institutional authority on a topic, as well as who are the direct policy makers. This information gives activists and users a sense of who to start a conversation with if the policy needs to undergo revisions or updates. For **WRITERS**, this provides a direct history of the last person or group that came together to write such a policy document; this can give them a sense of the subject matter experts, both within and outside of the university, to direct questions to when seeking clarity or revision ideas. For everyone, noting this information is important because people leave universities all the time, though their impact might linger. Policy and procedural documents are one such place where this lingering can occur through inertia.

Sometimes they shift positions but are still available for future conversations about *why* a policy might have been written in the way it was.

What

WRITERS develop institutional policy and procedure documents like those that were the heart of Chapters 3 and 4. The documents are vital to the institution, especially when they are the governance-level policies that affect large numbers of faculty, staff, students, and external groups: "university numbered policies are statements of management philosophy and direction, established to provide direction and assistance to the university community in the conduct of university affairs" (*Policies & Standards*, n.d.). These documents should therefore be easily understood by a wide audience; part of this relies on a common understanding of words. Therefore, **WRITERS** should include information such as a glossary or definitions of terms (Svyantek, 2019d, p. 8) to enhance the transparency of the policies and consistent language use.

My own lack of definition of Disability follows my position that I am trying to understand what other people are doing [around disability and Disability], and I am not making rules about how people should be Disabled. There's a big difference. Word choice indicates representation, recognition, and value. It is an explicit way to demonstrate what is or isn't covered by a particular document (by title, glossary, etc). In these documents, **WRITERS** should follow Disability language guidelines and define the terminology being used; this adds a consistent understanding of terms, and provides yet another way for such documents to communicate a

cohesive and transparent message about how Disability and access are valued and enacted at a particular institution.

One such guide that can be incorporated into institutional documents is the Disability Language Style Guide from the National Center on Disability and Journalism (NCDJ). This digital guide broadens the scope of disability-related language beyond what the Associated Press covers and can be added as a layer with other university-approved style guides for use in all institutional materials. The use of such a guide provides a common language framework so that people understand clearly what is being discussed within policy documents as well as university media; one example of the need for disambiguation is the use of “special needs” parking vs “ADA” parking vs “temporary disability” parking within Virginia Tech parking manuals (Svyantek, 2019a, 2019c, 2019b).

Language evolves over time, and having a common style guide helps parts of the institution to change, or at minimum a framework to highlight the question of *how* and *why* they aren’t changing. The use of language can be a marker of the time period, as well as the institution’s perception of Disability during document writing; the language used and its evolution could be considered as a corollary to the evolution of racially-focused word choices (Martin, 1991; T. Smith, 1992).

Defining terms makes university values more transparent. The NCDJ guide begins with basic principles that specifically state to avoid using made-up euphemistic terms such as

"diversability" and "handicapable." The Disability community's #SayTheWord campaign (Carter-Long, 2015) focuses on reducing the stigma around Disability-centric language. Following the style guide is one way the institution can recognize the Disability community as part of the institutional organization, not just an afterthought.

WRITERS defining these terms also benefits the other roles in turn. For **KEEPERS**, the language used in a document could provide an additional piece of metadata, such as by indicating if a document is written using person-first or identity-first language. For **SEEKERS**, the use of clear language provides a confirmation that the document is indeed discussing the same material considerations across institutions and times. It is explicit, citable confirmation that Disability is part of the institutional conversation without relying on the assumption of common terms and familiarity with euphemisms that might be particular to a given place or time.

WRITERS should also follow a consistent naming convention for the documents themselves, an important consideration to keeping everything straight for later users. Numbering and naming conventions make it easier to track the existence of documents across the passage of time and use, providing continuity across all three audiences (**WRITERS**, **KEEPERS**, and **SEEKERS**) and allowing for a common understanding of what document is being discussed, as well as serving as a basis for a cohesive collection of policy and procedure documents.

Having a naming structure leads to fewer "gaps" in tracing a document that occur when something goes by a euphemism that requires familiarity to find it. An example of this situation

would be office staff referring to a particular document as “the yellow brochure”—a name that is essentially meaningless to any office outsider (or someone who can’t perceive the color yellow). This is especially true when the document has an official name that is rarely used, and the document is no longer yellow in its saved (digital) format. Using a name such as “the yellow brochure” relies on physical, insider knowledge while “SSD Documentation Guidelines” is something that can be consistently sought.

Where

As previously discussed, **WRITERS** create and update documents that are important to a wide audience. These documents should be shared widely with the university community; new policies and updates might not make the front of the student newspaper, but revisions of numbered policies should be publicly available via university governance sources. “Smaller” documents, such as parking and transportation manuals, should be available via the authoring offices. All documents should be shared in partnership with **KEEPERS** in order to ensure longevity.

The **WRITERS** should create a single file to present their content. This might additionally be presented over nested pages or multiple links, but a single file serves as a cohesive single source for “printing”(and more importantly to this work, archiving) if desired. This single-source file would help to confirm content completeness, the “thingness” of the document. By additionally putting these materials together in the same places, it aids the consistency of their overall location.

It makes the work of **WRITERS** easier when creating new policies or revising older policies when a foundational document and access to older versions exist. It is also easier for **KEEPERS** to organize materials when the documents have the same name over time. It is easier to search for such documents, as a **SEEKER** can conclusively say, "I found the thing" when the document title matches the search.

When

All documents should have version information and history as part of the template. Header information can include the current version number and effective date, while an appendix or footnote can contain information about what changes occured (e.g., updating word choices or office contact information). Including these dates confirms revision history, providing a consistent and transparent means to confirm that documents in fact "do not exist" during a given time frame.

WRITERS have a duty to include this revision history within documents. The collected documents in this study occasionally included a "revision history" at the end; these were most likely to be university-level policy documents. However, these documents still often fell short of being explicit about the cause of the revision—vagaries of "updates" often did not allow for a clear sense of what information was being updated, or where, in the documents—which is anathema to transparency. Future "revisions" could include greater details regarding the changes, providing future writers, keepers, and seekers a sense of which changes were

cosmetic in nature and which were material. Noting dates and revision history promotes consistency in the overall document collection as well, further providing both **SEEKERS** and **KEEPERS** time frames to use in their search and archival practices, respectively.

One example of information to include in revision history is the movement of policy "ownership" and authorship between offices. When universities undergo reorganization, sometimes offices stay in the same part of the overall organizational chart, but under a new name; sometimes new names come with moves in the organizational structure. This shifting can be observed at Virginia Tech, where the ADA office has changed names and moved reporting lines multiple times during the study's time frame.

Revision history is also important to track for everyone because it can highlight times of change and stagnation. A policy left unchanged for 10 years, or a policy changed three times over 5 years—both are indications for researchers and users (**SEEKERS**) to observe the changes; a sign for archivists and librarians (**KEEPERS**) to maintain their records accurately; and a sign to policy developers and authors (**WRITERS**) that some of the changes might have been very hasty or long overdue.

Why

WRITERS create these documents to be used. Thus, these documents serve as a means for universities to be transparent about their goals and values, as they serve an important role within the university, outlining the

written plan or general course of action, having broad application

throughout the University, intended to govern the actions of ... employees, faculty, students, visitors, and others who come in contact with[the institution]. A University Policy helps to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations, promotes one or more of the University's missions, contains guidelines for governance, and sets limits within which people are expected to operate. (*Policy on Policies*, 2016, p. 1)

How

WRITERS should create and use document templates that incorporate universal design principles. Creating a consistent template where the focus is on changing the content, not the form, mitigates many of the formatting issues that make documents difficult for screen readers and overall comprehension. The template could also include institutional branding, page numbers, and other important header and footer information (including version number, authorship, and contact details). The template would include considerations such as: font choices (family, such as sans serif), font sizes, color (to meet color contrast needs), and the use of heading structure that all work together to make digital documents easier to "read" and navigate.

Branding via logos would also have alt-text built directly into the template. Incorporating the practice of running any new documents through an accessibility checker before releasing a final version would provide reminders to include alt-text for any additional images or tables.

As **WRITERS** are creating these documents for an audience (typically defined by who the policy or procedure will ultimately affect), they should seek feedback from stakeholders within the document creation (and later revision) process. Including Disabled people in the design and testing of policy documents follows best practices in many fields, such as having beta testers for new software and technology project; as Kelly et al. point out (2007, p. 138), this type of approach "embeds best practices through the development of achievable policies and processes …[including] all stakeholders in the process of maximising accessibility."

This feedback could touch on points of document consistency around word choice to avoid language alienating to the audience, or the organization of the content for usability and comprehension. With policies affecting people across the entire scope of what a university does, complexity does not make things more important, just more difficult to follow.

KEEPERS

> As a disabled historian (though not precisely a historian of disability), I understand disability as an archival condition, a condition that shapes access to the archive. As will become clear, too, I understand social media platforms to be no less archival than a library's manuscript collections, and just as replete with the production of silences. (Pal, 2019)

The work of a **KEEPER** needs to be adaptable to reflect their collections, their communities, and their own bodyminds. To do so is to stake a claim on the "inherent power in the creation of records, the formation of archives, and the ways in which archival material is described and processed" (Brilmyer, 2018a, p. 112). My recommendations create a solid foundation for

KEEPER work that is further exhibited in Chapter 6's proof of concept, which demonstrates how the role of the **KEEPER** is very intertwined with the other two roles, allowing for what was learned to be spread throughout the entire document lifecycle.

Who

With respect to the **KEEPER** role, the question of *who* branches—who are **KEEPERS**, who do they keep for, and who are they including in their collections. As previously mentioned, **KEEPERS** are those who work to preserve information to make it possible to obtain later (*What's an Archivist?*, 2016). Who information is preserved for depends on a variety of factors such as the source material or project sponsors; for the types of records in this project, the intended audience is the general public. This is why I suggest that **KEEPERS** create a system for public contributions to similar collections, either by providing an address to send physical records or an online form for digital record keeping. This provides ample opportunity for the public to contribute as much shared knowledge as possible, including metadata for source materials, to create a truly cohesive collection. This allows **KEEPERS** to focus on cleaning and organizing the collection instead of sourcing the materials.

KEEPERS can intentionally include representation of under-recognized minorities on campuses. **KEEPERS** have already started this work based on other identity categories that people might be part of (e.g., gender, race, LGBTQ, and veteran status), though there are not necessarily common practices across any of these categories or this work. At each university, there is *something, maybe* in their records; what that something is is vastly different at each location.

Intentionally archiving policy and procedure documents is, however, only a first step to creating a collection that would represent the Disability community at a university. I will once again echo the refrain of "Nothing about us, without us" to note that policies are *about* Disabled bodyminds, but that few who develop or preserve them are explicit about their own relationships to Disability. Policies inscribe the boundaries and permissions assigned to those claiming disability status on a campus, but those policies do not grapple with lived experiences. Keepers can go beyond institutional boundaries to campus activists (i.e., the likely seekers of such documents) to develop a more richly nuanced campus Disability record. This might include digital copies of statements, art works, ners articles, meeting minutes—things that state not only were these people *here* somewhere as individuals in orbit around the institution, but that they had the opportunity to come together as a *community*. These records could demonstrate how Disabled people did not have to be alone, focusing on how they were together, instead of only having information about how they were documented and separated from nonDisabled folks.

What

Archival work appears to those unfamiliar with it as very passive. Things sit and collect dust (literal and figurative), sometimes moving to make room for more dust collectors. **KEEPERS** make decisions regarding what to include in a collection, as well as what to do with the collections themselves. **KEEPERS** can actively and visibly seek contributions to build collections. **KEEPERS** can make their work transparent to people within and outside of their own

organizations by publicizing their efforts. They can go even further by openly creating a means to “deposit” materials, having public depositors include meta-data.

KEEPERS can digitize physical records to enhance the transparency of their collections. One of the great things about technological advancements is that the means to digitize physical documents have become more efficient and less expensive over time; the equipment that represented tens of thousands of budgetary dollars in previous decades (Krus & Kodimer, 1987) can now be purchased for a fraction of those costs. This means that the work of preserving older physical records can more easily include the task of digitizing them. Using software that automatically includes OCR (optical character recognition) can introduce errors, but it provides more information than the nothingness of <alt=””>. Digitizing documents benefits **KEEPERS** in the situation where physical records are misplaced or destroyed via fire, flood, war, and pestilence (Eden & Matthews, 1996; Kahn, 2012; W. Miller, 2006) .

While this also creates more work related to digital maintenance, this also allows for digital use of the materials. Digital use is important because there are instances where people simply *can’t* be there in person to go through physical documents. **KEEPERS** might be away from the collection due to working remotely, or the collection might not be available as it is located in off-site storage. **SEEKERS** might not be able to come to the collection due to their own physical or financial limitations; if you are a wheelchair user and the collection is located in a basement without elevator access, you can’t get to the documents. If you have a job and you are attempting to work with university archives across town, the state, the country, or the world, it

might not be feasible to go there yourself. In both cases, it might be similarly difficult to source and direct a representative to search on your behalf.

WRITERS, once again, would benefit by having access to older versions of materials that provide the history of a given document that can show those updating how things have changed since version 1 was developed; they then could avoid making updates that reverse previous changes unknowingly. Digital collections showcase institutional history to a wider audience; while the universities in this study have offices with at least one and a half (the half being a graduate student) people, sometimes accessibility considerations are only part of someone's job at a university. Transitions of people into and out of such offices might not always go smoothly with the sharing of documents as well as institutional knowledge; such is the case of the ADA Executive Council mentioned in various VT materials—a body that existed, then fizzled out. The intentional preservation of materials, in whatever format, is important because "outside" archiving is inconsistent, with gaps in capture timing. **KEEPERS** within an organization are best positioned to be institutionally supported to do this work.

KEEPERS can create metadata spreadsheets and ReadMe files. The metadata spreadsheet provides a means to organize the characteristics of individual documents in a collection. This helps everyone to ascertain what is held within a collection as well as a way to sort the documents. This information is the difference between "there's a box in Uncle Al's attic from back in the day" and "there are 10 documents from 2005 in this collection"—the existence of the box is separate from the existence of anything contained within it.

These items help **SEEKERS** by providing a better understanding of what's available from the beginning of their search. They will be able to more finely tune their search, asking different questions instead of confirming that Uncle Al's box really was in the attic all along that was *supposed* to have documents in it, but that they might need to look for a different box altogether. These items help **KEEPERS** by providing an organizational framework for maintaining a collection. Here, inertia works in favor of the **KEEPER** because there is a set process of what to do when adding a new document to the collection beyond "stuff it in the box and put the box back in the attic." If a given document doesn't fit with the collection using the existing metadata, it's possible that someone can later fill in those characteristic gaps.

The ReadMe file outlines the organization and defines the characteristics of the collection.It is important to note that the ReadMe file is a *living* document, as is the metadata sheet. If a new way to describe the collection is needed, this characteristic can be defined and included in the ReadMe file and then assessed across the collection within the metadata. These items help **WRITERS** by providing a location for the documents to go, providing a least one audience for their work. The collection also provides a foundation for later revisions and updates, as there is a source of previous versions. Such a collection would provide a "backup" if the **WRITERS** leave or move across the university in such a manner that the step of exchanging institutional knowledge is difficult or forgotten.

Where

KEEPERS can showcase document collections to provide transparency about the materials held as well as demonstrating a cohesion between the items. Creating the initial document collection [as I have done in my proof of concept] takes work, and as work should be recognized and valued. Additionally, such showcases lead to public preservation of public documents—these documents are made by the university to affect those that interact with it in some capacity (student, faculty, staff, visitors, etc); therefore they should be freely available, not to mention accessible, to the broader community. Such work strengthens arguments for open access, pushing it beyond scholarly research and into broader consideration of what "access" truly means—not just affordability, but the behind-the-scenes issues of content accessibility (Open Access Academy, 2016; PLOS, n.d.).

There are many ways a Disability-centric collection could be showcased both within and outside the university. The Special Collections unit could highlight the collection during Disability-related calendar events, such as Autism Acceptance month in April (Autistic Self Advocacy Network, 2020; Leary, 2018), Global Accessibility Awareness Day in May (Devon, 2011), Disability Pride month in July coinciding with the anniversary of the signing of the ADA (Ramey, 2015; *What Is Disability Pride... And How to Display It*, 2019), and National Disability Employment Awareness month in October (Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2020). This could take the form of editing their online presence or creating a social media campaign, such as through already existing Twitter accounts including @VT_SCUA (VT Special Collections and University Archives), OSU Archives (@BuckeyeHistory), and Auburn University Libraries

(@aulibraries), that showcases pieces of the collection to make the public more aware of its existence.

Such publicity would allow **KEEPERS** to take pride in their work while reminding everyone that the collection exists. These pieces of publicity might also give **KEEPERS** an event pushing for more documents. People would be encouraged not only to peruse such a collection, but asked to actively contribute to it.

WRITERS would benefit from the reminder that the policy and procedure documents matter, that they directly affect lives and the capacity of Disabled bodyminds to exist on campus. **SEEKERS** would benefit from these announcements because they might be unfamiliar with the document collection, or unaware of how such policies and procedures might affect them. The everchanging reality of life means that there are people who will likely be affected by COVID-19 and other diseases, accidents, and life events that result in becoming disabled in their lifetimes; notices about this collection might serve as an inspiration for them to join their campus Disability community by using those words without shame or stigma.

When

The best time to start preserving these materials was years ago, when they were available in their original form; the next best time is *now*. Incorporating a practice of intentionally reaching out to ask for these materials on a regular basis, asking for **WRITERS** to send them updates when they occur, would benefit the **KEEPERS** as it shares the burden of sharing information.

KEEPERS should collect materials at specific intervals to avoid gaps and inconsistencies in institutional record keeping. This creates a consistent pattern that can be followed and tracked by all three roles. The date information also lends itself to metadata that helps **SEEKERS** by providing a means to confirm results of a search. By highlighting any gaps in available materials, **KEEPERS** draw attention to spaces that a community focused on searching for and preserving documents might assist in filling.

Why

KEEPERS create a space for institutional memory and knowledge. They collect and organize data in a wide range of formats to ensure that it is not lost and forgotten. This is an important role for this project because, as Chapter 4's gaps demonstrate, so much information has already fallen by the wayside. **KEEPERS** additionally provide a haven for tangential information in their collection; in many cases, collected materials are not just about policy documents, but a wider repository of institutional recordkeeping.

Naming Disability in the archives is an important way to acknowledge the presence of Disabled people on campus. These collections—not just the policy documents, but the tangents—could provide an entryway into the Disability community that people on campus might not otherwise have. "Elders" in the Disability community are different from those tied to ancestry, heritage, and lineage; it's not as much about age or direct family ties, it's about lived experiences being Disabled. These collections can thus serve as a place of refusal "to forget about each other" (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 150).

How

In chapter 6, I describe my proof of concept for the recommendations I have made for **KEEPERS**: a Qualitative Data Repository (QDR) project entitled: *Access in Higher Education: A document collection*. This project demonstrates how **KEEPERS** can create and maintain an organized collection of university documents that would be available online. A key component of this organization that benefits Disabled **SEEKERS** is including document metadata that indicates if a given document has searchable text—this is an initial attempt to assess the accessibility of the document for someone using text-to-speech software, as well as if the document is currently in a format that is compatible with qualitative analysis software. The proof of concept for this work will focus on the collected single-source digital documents related to Virginia Tech.

Weaving Threads Together

Having outlined recommendations for all three roles, the next product of this dissertation is the proof of concept that demonstrates how these suggestions can be enacted in an online QDR resource, incorporating universal design principles through the design. I have referenced items from my Qualitative Data Repository (QDR) project throughout this chapter. Chapter 6 will detail how **SEEKERS** can provide the *reflective* memos generated during the *practice* of seeking; how **WRITERS** can develop a memo template, with embedded accessibility, that others can use for their own work; and how **KEEPERS** can create a similar QDR collection as a resource, organizing documentation for both **SEEKERS** and **WRITERS**. The recommendations outlined in

this chapter serve as the foundation for creating a document collection of *cohesive* (i.e., singular) files that are located *consistently* (in the same collection) while being *transparent* (having searchable text).

Recommended Best Practices

The following are a "quick list" for best practices recommended for each role, based on the content previously discussed in Chapter 5.

SEEKERS

- Create a replicable process through reflective memoing; template provided in Svyantek (2019d)
    - Be aware of audience(s)
    - Memo every day during collection
    - Memo before, during, and after beginning collection
    - Digital collection is recommended, or at least digitizing the collection afterward
- Use incognito browser window during search sessions
- Begin searches with known document titles; expand searches using variations
    - Note version number and dates in memoing practice; note collection decisions in memoing practice
- Keep a "tangent" folder
- Use consistent timeframe for search
- Begin search and collection with familiar institutions
- Use multiple search locations (e.g., institutional sites, but also Internet Archive)
    - University websites and search engines,
    - Internet Archive/WayBack Machine, and
    - Archives and special collections listings in university libraries.
- Begin with current source materials, then move "back in time"
- Allow search to evolve over time; document every decision in memos

WRITERS

- Identify themselves within their documents.
- Include glossaries of terms
    - Follow Disability language guidelines (e.g., Disability Language Style Guide)
    - Avoid euphemisms like "diversability" and "handicapable"

- Follow clear, explicit naming conventions for documents, e.g., no “yellow brochure” names
- Share documents widely with the university community
    - Especially with keepers
- Share file in single document
- Include version information and history
- Incorporate universal design principles, including alt-text for logos, images, and tables
- Seek feedback from stakeholders, especially Disabled stakeholders

KEEPERS

- Create a system for public contributions to collections (e.g., address for physical records or form for digital submissions)
- Focus on intentional inclusion of under-recognized campus minorities
- Include policy and procedure documents, but also include documents from campus activists
- Actively and visibly seek contributions through publicity (e.g., social media campaigns)
- Digitize collections
- Create metadata spreadsheets and ReadMe files for collections
- Showcase document collections publicly
- Begin adapting these practices now, and collect documents at specific intervals

Chapter 6: The Proof in the Pudding

Where do we go from here?

In the previous chapter, I outlined recommendations for each role (**SEEKER**, **WRITER**, and **KEEPER**) that would intentionally and systematically make this type of document collection project more straightforward and accessible. Chapter 6 engages across all three roles while enacting the recommendations, showcasing the specific efforts and steps that a data collection project could use, specifically within the Qualitative Data Repository from Syracuse University. As a proof of concept, I created a data collection project using the *cohesive*, *consistent*, and *transparent* criteria to curate materials collected from Virginia Tech from non-password protected, publicly available resources. I also propose future work, using this collection as a foundation, that aligns with the three roles from Chapter 5.

Intentional Data Management and Sharing

Collecting a physical piece of history and tucking it inside of shelved file folders in off-site storage has never made for the most accessible information storage. COVID-19 hasn't changed that fact, but it has forced more people to deal with lack of access, making an inequitable terrain that Disabled people have always navigated abruptly clear to a larger set of stakeholders. The shuttering of physical locations means that more people have been confronted with locked doors and travel bans that preclude access to archival collection spaces

(u/alypeter, 2020), building awareness among everyone interacting with libraries and archives regarding the need to digitize physical collections and repair existing digital protocols. Referring back to the tables presented in Chapter 4, many gaps were identified when a graduate student set out as a **SEEKER** of institutional history; such awareness that might (but did not) develop due to financial constraints, accessibility needs, or territorial boundaries was finally prompted by a global pandemic.

These needs for accessible documents—again, that feature not just financial, but temporal and Disability-centered accessibility—however, are *nothing* new. In 2001, the president of the Society of American Archivists outlined ten challenges facing the profession; included in the list were managing electronic documents, developing new methods for user access, making holdings accessible, and broadening the archival skill sets of those outside the field (Hickerson, 2001). These are all challenges that have existed for the better part of the study's time frame and, despite heightened salience during a year when we were all facing lack of access, are challenges that persist.

Data management isn't easy. Researchers tend to have little training in data management; they also tend to have numerous claims on their time (such as the demands of publishing) that supersede the long-term planning that data management requires (Jahnke & Asher, 2012; Peyronnin, 2015). While what I am about to propose is, again, nothing new, this dissertation is innovative in its call to return to basic, foundational questions and principles of historical documentation; this method worked for me, and I hope describing the steps taken to

accomplish publishing my data project will inspire others to make a similar leap of openness with their own research.

Building a Data Project

I did not write or develop any of the documents that I collected; I *did* collect them all from publicly available, no-password-required sources. The principles of Fair Use, as summarized by the Fair Use Evaluator (Brewer & ALA Office for Information Technology Policy, 2008), take into account the purpose of the use, the nature of the copyrighted work, the amount of the work used, and the effect on the "market value" of the work. As part of the initial READ_ME file in my Qualitative Data Repository (QDR) Project, which doubles as a summary of the data collection materials, I have enumerated how the creation and publication of my collection does not violate these principles.

One of the driving factors in creating such a collection is the fact that it currently does not exist; as I have complained many times in this work, the *documents* might have existed, but they were not presented in a *findable* and therefore useful fashion. Intentionally creating the QDR project is therefore in alignment with the digital archival practices and can take into account further ethical considerations, universal design principles, and the global context of the COVID-19 pandemic whose lasting impacts are unknown.

These considerations are a further call to action: we should all frame our own work within (at least) one stakeholder role; taking on this responsibility could result in further recognition of

the interconnectedness of this work, along with more accurate and equitable documentation practices.

QDR as Proof of Concept

My choice to utilize the Qualitative Data Repository to curate my project materials was made based on their focus on qualitative data management, the fact that Virginia Tech has an institutional affiliation with QDR (thus I was not obligated to pay any fees), and QDR's "goals of encouraging, facilitating, and regularizing the archiving and sharing of data" (Repository, 2012, para. 6). As I have emphatically stated before, one of the goals of this study was to be as open as possible, and having a QDR project that contains my collected documentation achieves this by creating a data set that can be used and cited by other researchers in their own work.

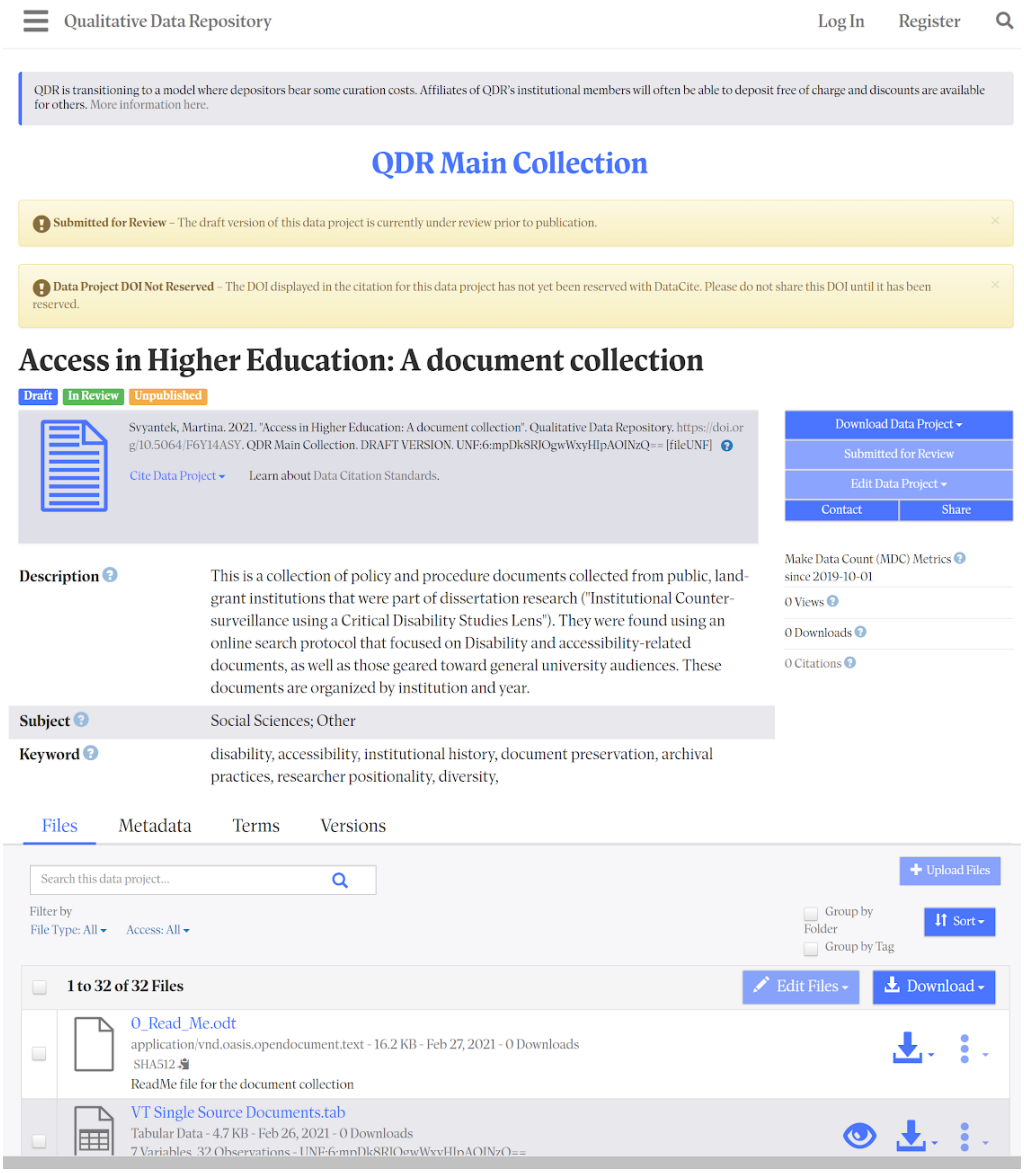
Within the Qualitative Data Repository, I have uploaded many different materials, beyond the 29 downloaded, single-source documents from Virginia Tech. Within my project, *Access in Higher Education: A document collection*, I have also included a spreadsheet that contains a listing of all the VT documents, including metadata regarding the document sources; my VT search memos (demonstrating the practices I exhort **SEEKERS** to follow in Chapter 5); and the ReadMe file that contains a list of the materials in the project as well as a detailed accounting of why including VT documents in this data project (as well as the AU and OSU documents) falls under the principles of Fair Use.

I followed the process outlined by QDR (Repository, 2013) to submit my project; it was relatively straightforward, and made even easier due to using the search process and document collection procedures outlined in this dissertation. I already had a solid listing of which documents fit the inclusion criteria for this data set (single-source documents from VT), as demonstrated throughout Chapter 4. The metadata related to these documents includes the following details:

1. Document Source Year,
2. Collection Date,
3. Document descriptor,
4. Digital File Name, and
5. Download URL.

The final project is moving through the submission review process before becoming publicly published. Its current appearance is revealed in Figure 6.1 below:

Figure 6.1 Screenshot of my QDR project



Even through the submission process itself, I still discovered unexpected things from using the QDR for data sharing:

1. When uploading documents, if the same material is contained in all files, the QDR project will warn you; such a warning of “duplicate files” popped up when uploading the 2005, 2010, and 2015 IT Policy documents (2019f, 2019g, 2019h) into the QDR project.

2. The QDR staff will send you personal emails regarding the status of your submission! After the arduous work of putting together this project, it was very heartening to receive the message from an archival professional that I've "clearly thought very carefully about this, so there isn't that much to do" (S. Karcher, personal communication, March 4, 2021) regarding the final steps for curating and publishing my QDR project.

The decisions of what to include in the archives are still being made on a regular basis, without being readily apparent to outside observers. I have provided my rationale for what to include or exclude from my current QDR project, along with files that I have worked to ensure were, at a bare minimum, readable when using assistive technology.

Future Works

In summation, this research work created the following products:

- This dissertation document, which outlines:
    - A Critical Access methodology for others to incorporate into their own work,
    - Best practices for **SEEKERS**, **WRITERS**, and **KEEPERS**, and
    - A proof of concept on how those practices can be woven together.
- A Qualitative Data Repository project, with multiple documents for further use.

The immediate next step would be to expand the QDR project to include all of the single-source documents from Auburn University and The Ohio State University. These would be situated

within the current QDR project within an AU and an OSU folder, respectively. It would require additional ReadMe files, metadata spreadsheets, and the 48 single-source documents from those two institutions of higher education (18 from Auburn, 30 from OSU).

Once the currently available materials have been included, there would be multiple ways to continue with this work. Other **SEEKERS** could utilize my search methods and expand the project to include other institutions of higher education, or continue to add more materials to the current three at the suggested five year intervals; this would be especially timely, as we are currently in the 2020–2021 academic year. **KEEPERS** could build upon my QDR proof of concept, adding more metadata; this could include naming the file author, original file type (e.g., a Word doc or camera image), the file source (e.g., explicitly naming if the source was an institution of higher education or an alternative archive), and the population impacted by the document (e.g., students, faculty, staff, campus visitors, etc.), and if the text met accessibility standards such as WCAG (W3C, 2018). Or they could build, maintain, and grow similar structures within an institution of higher education; they could not only digitize, but ensure the accessibility of materials currently in physical formats. **WRITERS** could include institutional knowledge within documents, such as revision history and authorship, while intentionally creating single-source documents.

There is also the path of what to do *with* the QDR project documents, now that they have been collected. My initial research questions included a focus on content analysis before I got derailed by identifying document gaps. Now that a document collection is publicly available and

citable, *anyone* could take the necessary steps to dig into this data set to peel back layers and draw out more information, to discern an answer to my original queries of, "*Has the language used in official documents changed over time? Is there consistency across different institutions in a given time period? Do these documents use person-first language? Identity-first language? Euphemisms?"* Other potential analysis could focus on the authorship issue (which offices and individuals wrote what?), leading to a whole host of layers of institutional knowledge, power, and authority that I could not touch with my work.

A further path could include finding alternative sources of information (while producing reflective memos) to include as ephemera within the greater QDR dataset. This might take the focus on digitizing physical archival materials, such as student newspapers clippings, to expand on the context of any particular campus. These popular sources, when combined with the institutional documents, might provide the means to create timelines of Disability history at each institution, going beyond the inspirational supercrip stories and puff pieces on service projects to the ways in which the institutions had to grapple with the changing campus community.

Final Thoughts

Putting things together in a way that made sense not only in my own mind but in writing—including directions that describe the metadata, labeling the files in a way that others could use them in the future or that I could use them in a few months when the work was not as fresh in

my own mind—reinforced the essence of what Critical Access is all about. Critical Access is about recognizing that there is room and opportunity for all of us if we put certain thoughts into actions and especially at the beginning of a project. The difficulties I faced doing my own research work highlighted different ways that this work could be roadblocked based on my own experiences, while my work within accessible technologies ensured that I was aware of specific considerations to provide a universally-designed framework for collecting and discussing and organizing and displaying research findings. After all, at its core, this dissertation is about *methods.* Disabled people have often had to use creative methods of finding or creating paths through what non-Disabled people assume is normal; I developed my Critical Access Methods to be clear and accessible to everyone.

It would have been much easier to do this work and then mentally shelve it as a complete *product*, without thinking about larger impacts or how this work of *process* could ripple out. Working to consider how my own work could be used by others—at different institutions now or later in time—reinforced the fact that we are all dependent on those around us, no matter how much we might believe otherwise.

This dissertation project didn't end up being what I thought it would be—it morphed around and away from my original expectations. And that is the epitome of the Disability experience within higher education—you can find the top of a staircase, but you aren't always quite sure how to get there. Furthermore, completing this dissertation during the pandemic and political upheaval of 2020 and 2021 threw a Jeremy Bearimy into my perspective—time spent on this

work seemed completely meaningless, too difficult to comprehend, and passing too soon, all at once.

Epilogue

At the conclusion of my dissertation defense, I was inundated with questions about how to keep the momentum of this project moving, specifically to avoid an ironic fate of my work sitting, untouched and unknown, within Virginia Tech's dissertation database. Throughout this work, I returned over and over again to foundational questions of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where, why*, and *how*. I learned in civil engineering that strong foundations are vital to support larger structures: you need to start at the foundation to get things right with buildings, as well as with research. Addressing these basic questions, keeping it simple by returning to the same questions over and over, allows this work to be completed in a consistent, methodical way, while being transparent about both the process and findings. The QDR proof of concept of how to pull all these threads together and actually create such a document collection, as I believe I was originally searching for, is but a first step in ensuring that my dissertation is relevant to others as we continue this work.

Natural next steps for my own work on this topic would be to present the search process and outcomes at national conferences and via paper publications in academic journals, as well as potentially seeking out collaborations with other interested academics so that the QDR project can expand to additional institutions. In my own capacity as a member of a disability services office, I can push this work forward by building relationships at the library at my new institution

to present this work, with tangible takeaways such as handouts with bulleted lists of recommendations; I could go further and make a handbook available for a general audience based on Chapters 5 and 6 that reinforces the roles of the **SEEKER, WRITER,** and **KEEPER**.

Others can work to pick up different threads—they could further **KEEPER** work by expanding the existing QDR project or starting a dedicated collection at their own institution or archive. They could also perform content analysis on these (and other) collected documents, asking further questions of the materials that go beyond "Do you exist?"

We can't build inclusive structures on foundations of dubious histories. Critical Access is about ensuring that there is room and opportunity for all of us to contribute to this work. The difficulties I faced in finding these materials and doing this research highlighted different ways that such a project could be roadblocked, while my work within accessible technologies ensured that I was aware of specific considerations to provide a universally designed framework for collecting *and* discussing *and* organizing *and* displaying research findings.

In terms of archival practices, my work is important because it makes visible the assumptions we make about how people access materials, and how they're going to use them; it can help SEEKERS, WRITERS, and KEEPERS avoid Pal's (2019) "production of silences." The physical things of a library are in constant flux to reflect the changing needs of its patrons and ideas about how people use information and spaces. There's a lot going on behind the scenes, especially in this past year, that people are not aware of because they're literally not there to see it happening.

Materials that were once available on shelves might now be located in off-site storage. They might be marked now as *findable*, but they're not readily available. And when libraries and archives do the work to digitize materials so that they aren't lost in physical shifts, we need to make sure at a bare minimum that the text is readable, so that the text can be accessed.

In terms of critical access and institutional counter-surveillance, my work is important because it points attention to structures of power and responsibility. Even after a quarter century of well-known and recognized legislation in the ADA, even after the existence of previous curb cuts in highly visible locations, organizations like the Disability Alliance and Caucus have to continue to maintain surveillance on our institutional contexts in order to maintain access to physical spaces (Svyantek, 2018). The results of this counter-surveillance, the results of paying attention to what our institution was and was not doing, are both improvements and counters to recidivism. In an example that inspired my investigations, a previously existing and then "missing" curb cut was replaced. It now *re-exists* in the physical world. And not only that, it's been made better—the crosswalk has been repainted, and there's a tactile marker at the curb cut itself. Counter-surveillance has made this part of the physical infrastructure *better*—it's no longer just a dip in the concrete. What will happen if we maintain similar counter-surveillance in our digital realms?

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