

PERS Proposal for Research Travel
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Project title: The Bioethics of Access
Location: Vienna and Hartheim, Austria
Dates: May 22 to June 6, 2017
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This **collaborative digital humanities research project** extends the work of three senior researchers in the interdisciplinary field of disability studies. This innovative **public scholarship** project brings together our shared inquiries into the meaning making function of **aesthetic representations of disability, the ethics of access, and the history of eugenics**. All three of us have previously researched both disability content and access in museum environments, aesthetics, and narratives.

Research plan:

WHERE:

Our **research site** is two museums in Austria where we will explicate the representation of disability in aesthetic and material objects in the displayed collections. First is the Belvedere Palace Museum, the most prestigious cultural and aesthetic archive in Austria. Second is Hartheim Castle Museum, an archive near Vienna of material objects and aesthetic representations of the eugenic euthanasia incarceration and mass gassing of people with disabilities under Nazi occupation. We will contrast and compare the representation of disability and accessible environment in these two aesthetic archives.

WHAT:

We will enter these archives as humanities researchers and as a team of expert users of both aesthetic spaces and accessible technology to engage with these cultural sites of representation. As researchers with disabilities-- one of us is blind, one Deaf, and one mobility impaired—we will **inhabit these museums to explicate the disability content and user experience by describing, assessing, and interacting with the total meaning-making environment**. Our scholarly product will be a **podcast in multiple communication formats** of our experience of the complete museum environment. This product will highlight the complementary and conflicting engagements produced by our access needs and technology solutions.

WHY:

This is the first phase of a **humanities bioethics project** that considers how 20th-century eugenic practices extend into 21st-century medical technology. The eugenic euthanasia project called T4 carried out in medical facilities in Germany and Austria at Hartheim Castle justified the mass extermination of people with disabilities considered unassimilable and “unworthy of life.” A **post-Holocaust disability bioethics** assumes that people with disabilities can assimilate into culture through accessible technology and accommodations. Our user experience as people with disabilities in these cultural archives tests this premise of assimilation.

NEXT STEPS:

This initial humanities bioethics project brings together a major European museum and what we are calling a shadow museum established at one of the T4 extermination centers, all of which are outside major German culture centers. We will be seeking future funding from ACLS, NEH, Ford, or Greenwall for continued projects of this kind in Berlin and Frankfurt.

TRAVEL EXPENSES:

Airfare: \$1200.

Ground transportation: \$300 (train to Hartheim and busses in Vienna and Linz)

Lodging: \$1400. (14 nights @ \$100. per night)

Per Diem: \$975. (\$65. per day for 15 days)

TOTAL: \$3875.