



# IFHOH JOURNAL

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V6

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*The International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) is an international non-governmental organisation representing the interests of more than 300 million hard of people worldwide.*

*IFHOH is registered as a charitable organisation at Vereinsregister Amtsgericht, Hamburg, Germany  
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*IFHOH Journal includes information about IFHOH activities, world news related to hearing loss, articles written by IFHOH members, and much more. It is published four times a year and posted on IFHOH's website, [www.ifhoh.org](http://www.ifhoh.org). The Editor can be reached at [journal@ifhoh.org](mailto:journal@ifhoh.org).*

*All the views expressed in IFHOH Journal are those of the individual writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of IFHOH.*

# From the Editor's Desk

## From the Editor's Desk



**Carole Willans, Editor**

Dear IFHOH friends,

First, let's get one thing clear. I am continuing to serve you as IFHOH Journal Editor. I have enjoyed this role for many years already, and I plan to continue to do so for many more. Why am I saying this? Because very soon I am retiring from my day job as a lawyer in the Department of Justice Canada after many years as a public servant. In fact, when you read these lines, I will already have moved back to being a full-time private citizen as a retiree.

I am really looking forward to this new chapter in my life, however what does retirement mean when one has a profound bilateral hearing loss, as I do? I started thinking about this today. Here are some of my thoughts.

For one thing, I am glad I remembered to consider hearing health care costs in my retirement budget. The government subsidy in the jurisdiction where I live covers two hearing aids while I am working, but only one when I am no longer working... That's strange... Does insurance cover only one lens for my glasses?? Anyway, I can expect my out-of-pocket hearing health costs to rise.

Tax planning with hearing aids can also be a consideration in retirement. Depending on the tax laws of your country, you may qualify for a deduction for hearing aids or other medical equipment.

Apart from the financial considerations, I feel it is most important to adopt a healthy lifestyle. It's never too late! Of course, you can dramatically reduce the amount of your overall health care costs you incur in retirement by adopting healthy habits right now. But **the best news of all** is that if you lose excess weight, stop smoking, exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet, it benefits your hearing health too! That's because the hair cells of your inner ear depend on a good supply of oxygen and blood flow to do their job. Before you retire, take action! Just do it!! You will be thankful you did.

*- Carole*

# IFHOH President's Message



**Dr. Ruth P. Warick, IFHOH President**

Role models are persons who set an example by their actions, inspiring others by their exemplary practices. In mid-March I had the opportunity to spend time in Nepal at a meeting on Inclusive Education organized by the International Disability Alliance (IDA) of which IFHOH is a member. Leaders of the disability community were invited to participate and Neeta Keshary Bhattarai attended, representing the Nepalese hard of hearing community.



**Access to Inclusive Education meeting in Nepal was provided by sound system and typists Pallavi Thapa (left) and Sneha Pokharel (right) flanking Ruth Warick, with Neeta Keshary on the far right**

Over the course of a few days I became aware of the challenges that Neeta faces and of her steely determination in meeting them. I was awed by her work as a tireless and selfless volunteer for hard of hearing persons in her country. She is the founder and president of SHRUTI, which stands for sound/hearing in Nepalese language. In the face of little external funding, she and other volunteers are filling an important gap in her country, raising awareness about the distinct needs of hard of hearing persons, conducting educational and rehabilitation programs, and advocating for improvements.



Meeting at the Shruti offices in Kathmandu, Nepal / Selfie of Ruth and Neeta at the Inclusive Education meeting

I am also pleased that Neeta, along with Patrick Gift Egessa of Uganda, are working with me to undertake a needs assessment of the requirements for inclusive education for hard of hearing children in Nepal and Uganda. The data will feed into IFHOH's position paper on inclusive education and contribute to an advocacy plan for promoting the right to education and educational access for hard of hearing children. Our findings will also contribute to the work of the Inclusive Education Task Team of IDA. This Task Team is working towards framing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the perspective of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on inclusive education. This is IFHOH's first development project and I am thrilled that we are undertaking it.



In this issue you will find a joint statement from IFHOH and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) regarding automatic speech recognition not yet being ready to be adopted for captioning services and for telephone relay services. The full text of the statement is included in this issue. The position is consistent with findings from the captioning survey that we conducted with WFD a few years ago; the promise of automatic speech recognition to revolutionize the world of captioning has yet to be realized. We are open to future developments, but recognize that at the present time we require trained providers for captioning services.



I am pleased that plans are coming along for our tenth Congress, since the first one was held in 1984 in Stockholm. The 2020 Congress will be held in Budapest, Hungary May 25 to 30, 2020. The theme is *World Without Barriers*. SINOSZ (Siketek es Nagyothallók Országos Szövetsége), an organization for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons in Hungary



and an IFHOH member, is hard at work planning the Congress. IFHOH, EFHOH and IFHOHYP are planning to hold their BGM/AGMs during the Congress. Please save the date.



Thank you to all of you who celebrated World Hearing Day on March 3; this year's theme was *Check Your Hearing*. It is thrilling to see this day gain momentum around the world since it was first celebrated in 2013. We count on your efforts and support to make this a recognized official day by the UN.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your advocacy and educational efforts for hard of hearing and deafened persons. I also want to thank my colleagues on the IFHOH Board for their continued hard work and support and to Carole Willans for continuing as editor of the IFHOH Journal despite her retirement.



If you have any issues or concerns please contact me at [president@ihoh.org](mailto:president@ihoh.org).

With warmest regards,  
Dr. Ruth Warick  
IFHOH President



Neeta Keshary and Ruth Warick



# World Hearing Day

**March 3, 2019 – Check Your Hearing**

IFHOH members and friends celebrated the annual World Hearing Day on March 3, 2019. This has become a worldwide day to raise awareness about ear and hearing care and IFHOH is very pleased that the momentum for this day is increasing every year.

The theme of World Hearing Day 2019 was *Check Your Hearing*. Its key message focused on encouraging people to have their hearing checked at regular intervals. This should be considered an important part of your health care. Regular hearing exams can contribute to timely interventions for living a successful life with hearing loss.



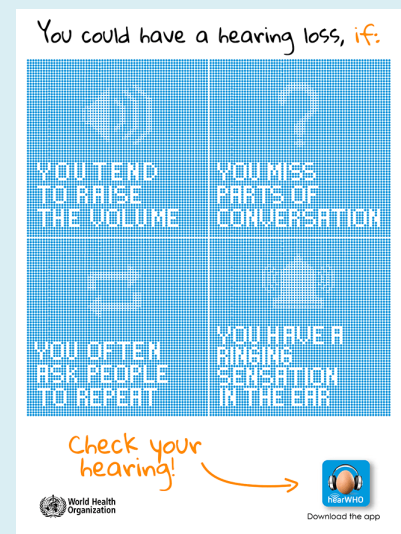
Audiology and health care units around the world held hearing clinics on this special day. The World Health Organization (WHO) launched a new app called "hearWHO". This is a free application for mobile devices; it allows people to check their hearing regularly and also to intervene early in case of hearing loss. The app is targeted at those who are at risk of hearing loss or who already experience some hearing loss. The app is especially recommended for those who commonly listen to loud music over personal audio devices. It can also be used by health workers to screen people in the community for

hearing loss and refer them for diagnostic testing if they fail the screening. Go to: <https://www.who.int/deafness/hearWHO/en/>.

The app is presently available in English only. Language versions will be made available in late 2019. WHO has been guided in the development of the app by an advisory group consisting of Dr Jackie Clark, Dr Deborah Ferrari, Dr Cas Smits and Dr De Wet Swanepoel.

On the left is one of the attractive posters developed to encourage people to get hearing tests.

When hearing loss is discovered, there is a great deal that can be done to maintain and improve a person's quality of life. There are resources, technology, and many self-help strategies that can make a huge difference. Most importantly, there are many organizations of hard of hearing people around the world, including all of IFHOH's member organizations, which are ready to provide support and fellowship.



Please share what you or your group did to celebrate World Hearing Day 2019 by sending an email to [journal@ifhoh.org](mailto:journal@ifhoh.org).



## **WFD and IFHOH Joint Statement: Automatic Speech Recognition in Telephone Relay Services and in Captioning Services**

"The field of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) has progressed significantly with the advancement of artificial intelligence technology. As a result, more applications that utilize ASR, and AI technologies are developed and have shown a promising impact on communication and accessibility. However, this field is emerging and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and International Federation of Hard of Hearing (IFHOH) are documenting a small number of user experiences and cases using ASR technology. There needs to be continuing effort in research and development with deaf and hard of hearing participation to improve the uses and applications of ASR technology.

This joint statement is to inform that ASR should not replace current communication methods, such as Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS) and Captioning services."

TRS and Captions, allows deaf and hard of hearing people, who cannot understand voices on the telephone, to access telephone services, which is part of the important social infrastructure supporting people's daily life. TRS is important for enhancing employment potential and social integration of deaf and hard of hearing people. The same applies to access to information via captioning.

ASR application to TRS and to Captions, should be carefully considered at the present time for the following reasons:

1. ASR for a telephone service has difficulty in providing consistently good recognition accuracy, due to poor sound quality of telephony in certain areas as well as to poor environmental conditions such as noise and an unspecified number of speakers.
2. In addition, some words, such as proper nouns and technical terms that are unknown to the ASR system, are hard to learn beforehand, and it is still difficult to always ensure reliable recognition.

Professional captioning services allow deaf and hard of hearing persons to enjoy equal access to meeting conversations. It also provides vital and accurate information supporting broadcasting live news.

When ASR services are used without human operator, deaf and hard of hearing people are excluded from full participation in society.

Considering the importance of TRS, especially its use in emergency situations, sufficient reliability and quality of service of TRS is essential.

[Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) clearly stipulates that "States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on



an *equal basis* with others, to information and communications, including *information and communications technologies and systems*".

It is necessary for the parties concerned with the deaf and hard of hearing to appropriately participate in the discussion on the application of ASR technology with full involvement of deaf and hard of hearing stakeholders.

Although WFD and IFHOH welcome and encourage research and development on ASR to support deaf and hard of hearing persons, we believe that at the current stage, ASR technologies, are still premature for replacing human operators and more research and development needs to be done before it becomes truly useable. It is advised therefore that a TRS and captioning by human should be given a priority.

Governments of countries where public institutionalisation of telephone relay services is not yet implemented, should not use the development and introduction of ASR as an excuse to postpone the introduction of public TRS.

Although ASR in the future may improve to the point that it can replace human relay operators and captioners, this would perhaps take many years and would require verifiable evidence that ASR accuracy and service quality attains high success rate as well as significant user community support.

TRS should promptly be implemented with an operator-based telephone relay service as a public service.

Further information:

WFD and IFHOH are working with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to consider guidelines on ASR as well as metrics for the Key Performance Indicators for the range of relay services which includes Text Relay, Video Relay and Captioned Telephone Relay. The result of this collaboration is expected to clarify the requirements on the Quality of Service of TRS, which any ASR technology to be used for TRS is required to meet.

Until such clear requirements are set and the ASR technology is mature enough to meet these requirements, the use of ASR technology in real TRS and in public events and services, as a replacement for humans, should not be considered a possibility.

Such a proposal was reported by Japan, *ITU-D contribution document "Access to telecommunication / ICT services by persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs" (SG1RGQ / 78-E, issued on September 3, 2018)* - <http://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/sg/rgqlist.asp?lg=1&sp=2018&rgq=D18-SG01-RGQ07.1&stg=1>

Similar moves have been noticed in Australia, Switzerland, the USA, and some European countries.

From the viewpoint of protecting the lives and rights of deaf and hard of hearing people, WFD and IFHOH jointly express concern about any uncritical and hasty application of AI technology, in particular ASR technology, to TRS. For a Deaf person whose first language is a sign language, it is to be understood that video relay service is indispensable and automatic speech recognition cannot provide an alternative means.

Moreover, as for the use of automatic recognition and generation of sign language, there does not currently exist any practical system or service at all, and it is unrealistic to expect it can replace a human sign language operator in a foreseeable future, as it is pointed out in the Joint Statement of WFD and World Association of Sign Language Interpreters *Statement on Use of Signing Avatars*: <http://wfdeaf.org/news/resources/wfd-wasli-statement-use-signing-avatars/>



## EFHOH News



By Marcel Bobeldijk, EFHOH President

EFHOH recently released the *EFHOH Impact Report 2018*, which outlines the organization's key achievements for the year, including a lunch debate in the European Parliament on World Hearing Day 2018, the successful launch of EFHOH's new website, the publication of separate reports on hearing aids reimbursement and on the experiences of late deafened people, collaboration with IFHOH on a workshop dealing with the United Nations' CRDP accessibility goals, European Platform Work (in the context of the European Disability Forum), and presentations on hearing loss across the life span at the HeAL2018 Conference in Lake Como. You can read the full report and get more details about these achievements and more at: <https://www.efhoh.org/available-now-efhoh-impact-report-2018/>.

A lunch debate in the European Parliament was held this year again to celebrate World Hearing Day 2019. The host was MEP Igor Soltes (Slovenia, Greens/EFA) and the discussions looked at a number of issues, including: early identification at all ages, the economic reasons to have your hearing checked, and how to make sure that hearing protection is safe.

The Live Text Access (LTA) European Project has been a major focus of EFHOH's efforts lately.



EFHOH is a partner in the LTA European Project, an emerging project involving the training of "real-time intralingual responders and velotypists". LTA is a European Union (EU) co-funded project that aims to set up education and training for subtitlers and speech to text interpreters in Europe, as well as to raise the standards for these services. It focuses on three European priorities:

- Development of curricula to meet labour market and societal needs
- Open education in the digital era
- Social inclusion.



Person respaking in a live television setting



Person typing with the Velotype keyboard

Real-time subtitles enable live access to audio-visual content as well as in situations where support for communication is required. The need for real-time subtitles has been made very clear since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the European Accessibility Act and the Audio-visual Media Service Directive. These documents strongly encourage service providers to ensure access for people with a hearing or visual disability.

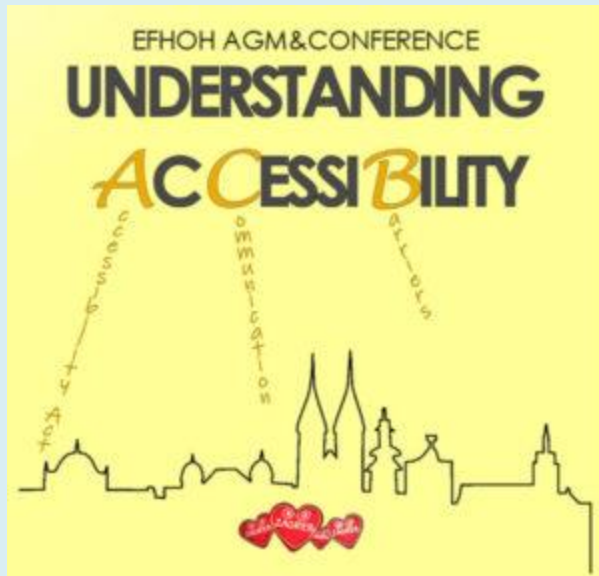
At present, subtitlers lack specific training, and the profession has no clear or recognised status. LTA aims to design an effective and certified curriculum for real-time intralingual respakers and velotypists. The training materials will be open source and suitable for in-house, vocational and higher-education training.

It is expected that real-time subtitlers trained by LTA will develop the skills to provide high-quality subtitles in different contexts, such as cultural events, parliamentary assemblies, broadcasts, workplace and educational settings. The training will prepare for three different kinds of work environments: face-to-face, online, and by relay.



LTA poster presentation at the ILSA event in Vienna

Also, please remember... EFHOH invites everyone to its Annual General Meeting which will be taking place April 5-7, 2019 in Zagreb, Croatia. See the next page for more details!



## EFHOH AGM and Conference 2019

*"Understanding Accessibility"*

04-06 April 2019

Zagreb, Croatia



The **Croatian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HSGN)** would like to welcome you to Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, for three interesting days of workshops, social activities, and a conference titled "Understanding Accessibility"!

To register and/or view the programme, please visit our hosts  
@ <http://www.hsgn.hr/efhoh-conferenceagm-2019/>

The registration form is also available @ <http://www.hsgn.hr/registration-form/>

Afternoon Workshops (Thursday, 4 April)

Speech to Text

Late-Deafened

Tinnitus

If you have any questions, please send an email to [info@hsgn.hr](mailto:info@hsgn.hr).



# European Disability Forum



The [European Disability Forum](#) (EDF) is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe. It is run by persons with disabilities and their families. EDF is a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.

The following is the text of a press release published by the EDF on March 13, 2019.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Brussels, 13 March 2019 - IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## European Accessibility Act: A Big Step Forward on a Long Journey

*European Parliament's approval of the Act is positive - but more legislation is essential.*



Demonstration for a strong Accessibility Act outside the European Parliament in Brussels, in 2017  
(Photo credit: David Hay/European Union of the Deaf)

The European Accessibility Act is a landmark agreement. However, while it will ensure that many products and services are more accessible for persons with disabilities, it will not make the EU (institutions and single market) fully accessible. It still excludes many essential areas such as transport, built environment and household appliances.

The new accessibility Directive is an important step, but the EU's work is far from being complete: we need legislation that ensures equal access in all areas of life.

### ***Improvement in some areas***

The Directive will improve the accessibility of a set of products and services for persons with disabilities, such as computers, smartphones, tablets, TV sets, banking ATM and services, payment terminals, e-books and e-readers, e-commerce websites and mobile apps and ticketing machines. It will also ensure that national market surveillance authorities have the competence to hold private entities accountable.

The European Accessibility Act also fulfilled two important demands from the disability movement: electronic telecommunications and the 112-emergency number will become accessible to everyone throughout the EU.

The requirements of the Act will also support the public procurement rules for accessible products and services, so public authorities do not anymore use taxpayers' money in products, services and facilities that are discriminatory of persons with disabilities.

### ***Built environment and transport - a flaw in the Act***

However, the Act still does not satisfy our key demands. It is misleading to say that the Act will ensure full accessibility of buildings and means of transport, which were at the heart of our campaign. This means that millions of persons living in the EU will still face daily struggles to leave their homes.

The Act does not include household appliances (such as washing machines or microwaves). This means that millions of persons with disabilities will still face daily difficulties to use these appliances and live in their own homes.

Finally, we regret that microenterprises providing services are exempt from complying with the requirements of the Act. This exemption will significantly reduce the Act's impact.

### ***Our campaign continues***

The European Disability Forum thanks its members and allies for their commitment to making the Act become a reality, and it not being ignored and shelved, as it happened to other equality initiatives.

**Yannis Vardakastanis**, President of the European Disability Forum stated "It is shameful how Member States managed to reduce the scope of the Act. Governments now must redeem themselves and be very ambitious when incorporating the Act in national legislation."

After today's approval, two steps remain to be made: the Council of the EU needs to give its formal approval and the Act has to be published in the EU's Official Journal. Member States will then have 3 years to transpose the Directive (translate the Directive into national legislation). We will continue fighting to ensure that the EU becomes a worldwide example of full accessibility for persons with disabilities. [READ MORE.](#)

# Joint Declaration on Loops in Germany

**JOINT DECLARATION CONCERNING HEARING LOOPS / INDUCTION LOOPS IN GERMANY** (Editor's Note: This Declaration is re-printed in full here as it may serve as a model to others.)

**German Hearing Loss Association / Deutscher Schwerhörigenbund e.V. (DSB)  
German Federal Guild of Hearing Acousticians / Bundesinnung der Hörakustiker KdÖR (biha)**

The German Hearing Loss Association and the German Federal Guild of Hearing Acousticians unequivocally declare their support for the use of Inductions Loops or comparable technologies in public venues.

The same should apply to medical agencies like doctors' offices, hospitals and specialist shops which hard of hearing people must frequent regularly.

Despite a widespread opinion, hearing systems and cochlear implants (CI) are not yet able to fully compensate for an existing hearing loss. Therefore, to ensure adequate communication for higher degrees of hearing loss a direct broadcasting of speech signals to the hearing systems or to the CI is of prime importance. Hearing loops / Induction loops can be of special benefit in public venues.

Whereas today Bluetooth and Wi-Fi are being vigorously marketed and promoted, the classic Induction Loop seems to no longer command attention. With the presently available technologies, however, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi are not suitable for large public venues, or, should they be developed in this direction, are proprietary. They are mainly suitable for use in the private realm or in specific technical laboratory situations. Development is heading in the wrong direction.

Everyone with hearing loss should be able to participate fully in society. In order to facilitate participation in public venues, standardized and easily available technologies are needed that broadcast speech and acoustic signals wirelessly directly to hearing systems. At present, there is still no universal standard for publicly installed broadcasting systems which can connect to hearing aids and to which acoustic signals can be delivered. The same is true for broadcasting systems utilizing smart phones.

Wireless broadcasting using the telecoil / induction coil of the hearing system / CI fulfills the necessary requirements of standardization and common availability. Users of hearing systems with integrated induction coils, also called telecoils / T-Coils, can use Audio Frequency Induction Loop Systems / Hearing Loops without additional receivers, independent of the manufacturer of their hearing systems, and without much preparation or additional installation. Inductive transmission with neck loop and T-Coil is at present a commonly available technical solution for coupling the hearing systems to FM- and Infrared broadcasting systems.

Together we advocate for the full participation of people with disabilities in public life. Therefore, in accord with today's state of the art technology, the technical prerequisites must be created that enable people with disabilities to participate in public life. For hard of hearing people this is especially true with respect to communication and broadcasting of information in public buildings. To this end Inductive transmission via T-Coil is still the technology of choice.

Mainz/Berlin, April 2018 (translated from the German original by Siegfried Karg)

# Asia Pacific Federation of the Hard of Hearing and Deafened



The Asia Pacific Federation of the Hard of Hearing and Deafened (APFHD) is a regional member of IFHOH. The APFHD - and its member organizations - have been hard at work, carrying out various activities aimed at improving the lives of hard of hearing people in this area of the world.

For example, on February 19, 2019, Ms. April Rose Escaros, President of Hard of Hearing Group Philippines, attended as a resource speaker at a seminar on *Caring for Customers with Special Needs* organized by SM Cherry Congressional, a popular grocery chain, as training for its employees in properly serving customers with disabilities.



*April Rose Escaros is on the right*



For World Hearing Day 2019, among other activities, the APFHD launched a survey which will be used by the APFHD in making a report on awareness on hearing loss, ear and hearing care for all people in the Asia Pacific region. The results of the survey will be shared with the World Health Organization (WHO) for their WHD 2019 report. This will also become a basis in collecting data related to Hard of Hearing and Deafened persons.



Also for World Hearing Day 2019, the Center for Research and Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CED) hosted the hearing test for students with visual disabilities in the form of two sessions held March 6 and 7, 2019 at a primary school for the blind in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The photos below are all from this event. Ms. Hanh Duong Phuong, President of the APFHD can be seen in the second photo (below right), watching the ongoing hearing test of a young visually impaired student.



**The APFHD's Vision:** An inclusive society where rights and interests of persons who are hard of hearing and deafened in Asia and the Pacific are ensured.

**The APFHD's Mission:** To serve as the independent network for issues relating to hard of hearing and deafened in the Asia-Pacific region.

Countries represented by the APFHD include Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and Vietnam.



# Book Review

## *A Smart Compendium of Hearing Loss*

By Siegfried Karg



Katherine Bouton, *Smart Hearing. Strategies, Skills and Resources for Living Better with Hearing Loss*, River West Press New York 2018, 291 pages, e-book \$ 6.99, ISBN 978-0-692-16556-0, Paperback \$ 14.99, ISBN 978-0-692-16498-3.



With "*Smart Hearing*" (fall 2018) Katherine Bouton (her photo is on the left) presents her most extensive, most helpful, most personal und most current work on hearing loss. "*Smart Hearing*" is an authentic and thoroughly honest book, which refreshingly distinguishes itself from the sometimes-exaggerated promises of the industry. Bouton lives with this technology and is happy with it, but she is still very aware of the acoustical and physical boundaries.

Whereas in her first book, "*Shouting Won't Help*" (2013), Bouton primarily describes her personal career after having suffered a hearing loss at the age of 30, in her second book "*Living Better with Hearing Loss*" (2015), she already covers the whole range of problems with which one is confronted and the possible personal and technical solutions that exist. In the meantime, the former New York Times editor has turned into an international expert in this field. Her knowledge has broadened, and she describes the current state of research on the subject of hearing systems technology.

This is always done from the perspective of a person who herself suffers from a severe hearing loss, and who, despite a hearing aid in one ear und a cochlear implant in the other, still openly admits to how, in difficult acoustical situations, her ability to hear is limited despite the best hearing technology and the use of additional "assistive listening devices". In addition, she still continues to struggle with the question of what may have caused her hearing loss.

That many problems (including cost) are specifically related to the situation in the USA does not diminish the significance of her book for the European reader. The hearing systems industry worldwide is dominated by six companies (soon after a planned merger there will be only five). Of these companies all except one US-company are located in Europe.

The author specifically mentions the work of the Hearing Loss Association of America. Bouton first participated in the 2011 Annual Convention, and she has since been elected to its Board of Trustees. She dedicates this newest book to the many friends of this self-help organization.

Bouton presents current studies which postulate a connection between hearing loss and dementia. She urges treating this research with caution so as not to see a causal relationship which none of the researchers claims exists. Whether hearing systems can actually slow down cognitive decline has not been proven conclusively in any study to date. Only one French study with cochlear implant patients reaches this conclusion, although experts have doubts whether the improvement was thanks to the cochlear implant or to the aural rehabilitation these patients received twice weekly for a whole year (see "*Spektrum Hören*" 3/2016, pp. 47-49).

In comparison to her first book, Bouton's knowledgeability, especially in the field of Audio Frequency Induction Loop Systems ("hearing loops"), has increased enormously. This may have to do with the fact that her audiologist fitted her first hearing aid without a telecoil. In the meantime, she has experienced inductive hearing and uses it successfully.

Bouton joins in the US discussion about the pros and cons of so called "Personal Sound Amplification Products (PSAPs)", which can be purchased freely on the market, and so-called "Over-The-Counter-(OTC) Hearing Systems", which are not yet available. These have been officially approved, but the FDA has been given three years to define their exact parameters.

This book is filled with valuable tips concerning very practical problems. For instance, Bouton mentions "ototoxic" drugs which can be purchased without a prescription, and which can lead to permanent hearing impairment.

Despite the prevalent fascination with constantly developing hearing technology, Bouton continues to emphasize the significance of lip reading ("speech reading") and hearing rehabilitation.

If you have hearing loss yourself or have someone in the family who is faced with the problem you will benefit from this book, as will hearing care providers / audiologists and ENT doctors who want to inform themselves about the state of the art research.

In my opinion, there is no other book at present which is simultaneously as personal and well-researched in the English speaking or in the German speaking realm as Katherine Bouton's "Smart Hearing".

Siegfried Karg  
Former Vice president of the  
European Federation of Hard of Hearing People,  
Winterthur/Switzerland

A German version of this book review appeared in "*Spektrum Hören*" No. 6 November/December 2018, p. 60.



The **International Federation of Hard of Hearing Young People (IFHOHYP)** held its 2018 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Istanbul, Turkey from October 31 to November 4. It was hosted by one of its member organizations, the IED (Association of Hard of Hearing People and their Families). This event was funded by the European Union's "BİRLİKTE" (TOGETHER) programme, and the main corporate sponsor was Cochlear Turkey.

IED hosted 31 young hard of hearing participants from 14 different countries, three valuable guest speakers, two speech-to-text-reporters, one technician for the induction loop system, and two sign language interpreters who translated from English to Swedish Sign Language for the Swedish participant.



**IFHOHYP AGM 2018**

The event's theme was: *Combine our Powers for a Stronger HoH Bridge*. The goal of workshops was to help young individuals who are hard of hearing to understand the issues around hard of hearing rights and accessibility in their respective countries. Participants were able to make comparisons between countries regarding the rights of hard of hearing persons, and to better understand the importance of United Nations of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).

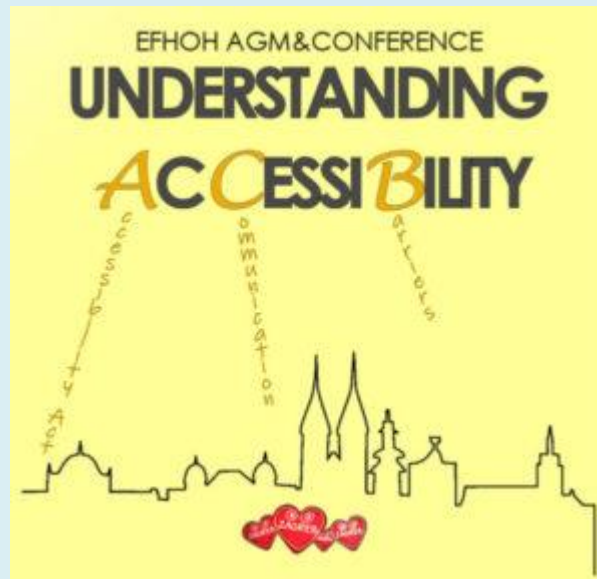
IFHOHYP hosted its 12<sup>th</sup> Study Session March 11 to 16, 2019 in Strasbourg, France, under the theme: *Keeping the World Accessible & Inclusive through a Policy-making Perspective*. This event was made possible by a partnership with the Council of Europe Youth Department.

IFHOHYP is currently looking for a new nomination committee member. Paulina, who leads this committee, would be pleased to receive applications by email to [nomination@ifhohyp.org](mailto:nomination@ifhohyp.org). Visit IFHOHYP's updated website at <http://ifhohyp.org/> for more information on its activities.

# Calendar of Events

## Calendar of Events

April 5-7, 2019 - EFHOH AGM 2019



Zagreb  
CROATIA



\*\*\*\*\*

**June 20-23, 2019 - HLAA 2019 Convention**



**Location: Rochester, NY, U.S.A.**

The Hearing Loss Association of America is holding its HLAA 2019 Convention in Rochester, New York. Registration is open and is made by clicking [this link](#) to register online.



The keynote speaker is Rebecca Alexander, a psychotherapist, disability rights advocate, group fitness instructor and extreme athlete. Born with a rare genetic disorder called Usher syndrome type III, Rebecca has been simultaneously losing both her sight and her hearing since she was a teenager. Despite these difficulties, she refuses to lose her zest for life and has risen above every challenge she has faced. In addition, the conference offers a Research Symposium (The Latest on Genetics and Hearing Loss) and other special events, including a variety of workshops.

For more information visit the [Convention page](#) on the HLAA website.

\* \* \* \* \*

**September 10-14, 2020 - IVSS Churchear**

*Living Out Christian Values - Making Pastoral Care Among Hard of Hearing So Important*



**Location: Eisenach, Germany**

**Information:** <http://www.churchear.org/event/family-days/> (link not active yet)

**Contact:** Katharina Nitschke - [rk.nitschke@t-online.de](mailto:rk.nitschke@t-online.de)

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# IFHOH CONGRESS AND BGM

May 25-30, 2020

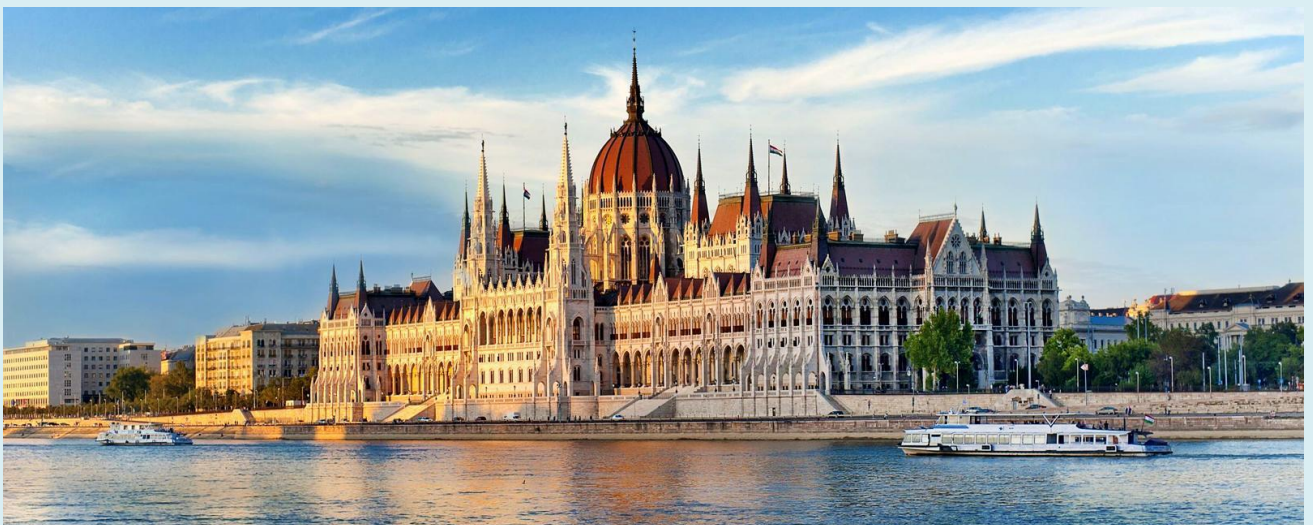


The **2020 IFHOH Congress** will be held in Budapest, Hungary, May 25 to 30, 2020. The theme is *World Without Barriers*.

SINOSZ (Siketek es Nagyothallók Országos Szövetsége), an organization for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons in Hungary and an IFHOH member, is hard at work planning the Congress.

IFHOH, EFHOH and IFHOHYP are planning to hold their BGM/AGMs during the Congress.

**PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!!**



# News Bytes News Bytes

## WIDEX-SIVANTOS MERGER

On March 11, 2019, European Union regulators approved a proposed merger between Widex and Sivantos, two of the world's biggest hearing aid manufacturing companies. Their combined revenues will reach more than 1.6 billion Euros (\$1.9 billion USD), making the new emerging company the third largest hearing aid company in the world, behind Sonova and William Demant. At first glance, consumers may be concerned that less competition might lead to higher prices, less effort devoted to innovation, and a decline in customer service. However the rise of numerous smaller competitors who are consistently offering low prices for entry-level hearing aids may push the larger manufacturers to continue to innovate and to move towards lower prices. Only the future will tell... [READ MORE.](#)

## CROATIAN ASSOCIATION WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT

The Croatian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HRVATSKI SAVEZ GLUHIH I NAGLUHIH) was recently pleased to inform IFHOH that, at its last General Assembly held in Zagreb, Jadranka Krstić was elected as the first female President of this Association in its almost 100 years of history. She has been elected for a four year period.



## WHO SETS STANDARD FOR HEADPHONES



The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) have recently published recommended specifications for hi-fi headsets intended to ensure that the wearer's hearing is not damaged while listening to music. The two organizations explain that all new smartphones and audio players with in-ear or over-the-ear amplification should come with an array of new technologies. The *Safe Listening Devices and Systems*

*Standard* recommends that personal audio devices include: sound allowance function, personalized profile, volume limiting options, and information to users on safe listening practices. [READ MORE.](#)

## GOOGLE AND SMARTPHONE ACCESSIBILITY

Google has improved smartphone accessibility for hard of hearing people. Its new Sound Amplifier app enables Android phones to provide hearing-enhancement features that compete with those built into Apple's iPhones. Another attractive Google feature is the Live Transcribe voice-to-text translation (still in beta testing); it promises to provide real-time voice-to-text transcriptions of conversations in up to 70 languages and dialects (available on Android 5.0 phones and later).





## AUTO-CAPTIONING



CCAC is pleased to offer a new resource - a listing of auto-captioning systems (machine captioning systems). They are called by various names (ASR for automatic speech recognition, dictation, speech-to-text) and even captioning. They are probably called machine subtitling systems in many countries too. Go to:

<https://ccacblog.wordpress.com/2018/08/23/auto-captioning-time-to-learn-more/>

Source: Lauren Storck, CCAC

## RESEARCH ON MEDICATIONS FOR IMPROVING HEARING AND BALANCE



Decibel Therapeutics (DT), a biotechnology startup located in Boston (U.S.A.) is researching the development of precision medications for hearing and balance. Its chief scientific officer, Michael Su, Ph.D. (pictured here), along with his colleagues, presented their latest research at the Association for Research in Otolaryngology (ARO) conference in Baltimore from February 9-13, 2019. DT's presentations stressed the importance of a precision approach to address age-related and noise-related hearing loss disorders in particular. DT also explained

its advances in gene therapy and other modalities. [READ MORE.](#)

## SCIENCE FICTION? BIO-TRACKING USING HEARING AIDS

The advent of biosensors in hearing aids might be a harbinger of how the manufacturers of medical devices, including hearing aids, and consumer electronic companies can have some long-term goals in common. Both are beginning to address the changing demands of the aging population by adding bio-tracking to their devices. Not only are hearing aid manufacturers, like Starkey, getting in on the act by placing bio-monitoring in their high-end models, but it was announced recently that Apple has been in talks with at least three private Medicare plans about subsidizing their Apple Watch for people over 65 to use as a health tracker.

According to a January 16, 2019 [CNBC Tech Report](#), several U.S. Medicare Advantage insurers are exploring ways to subsidize the cost of the device for those who can't afford the \$279 US price tag, the cost of the most basic Apple Watch. The latest version of the Apple device, however, which includes the most extensive health features including fall detection and an electrocardiogram to measure the heart's rhythm, retails for a minimum of \$399, which many seniors could benefit from but can't afford.



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*This issue features Amplifon!*



**Amplifon** is the world's leading dedicated hearing aid specialist – With 60 years' experience and more than 5,700 specialist centres in 20 countries, we're the world's leading dedicated hearing aid specialist.

All our hearing care is tailored to each person's hearing and lifestyle needs and is delivered by professionally qualified hearing aid audiologists.

From our comprehensive hearing assessment to your programme of Free Lifetime Aftercare, we are committed to help you get the very best from your hearing.

## ***IFHOH JOURNAL***

The deadline for submissions for the next issue is April 30, 2019. **Contributions are welcome!**

The preferred length for articles is one page (400 to 500 words). Short and long articles, from 25 to 1,500 words, may also be accepted. News bytes and announcements of coming events are appreciated, including photographs and illustrations. Please send pictures in jpeg format and files as rich text or word documents. Many thanks!

Carole Willans, Editor, *IFHOH Journal*, email: [journal@ifhoh.org](mailto:journal@ifhoh.org)



**MISSED AN ISSUE OF *IFHOH JOURNAL*?  
LOOKING FOR AN ARTICLE THAT YOU  
REMEMBER CONTAINED USEFUL INFORMATION  
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<https://www.ifhoh.org/journal>

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**The International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH)** is an international non-governmental organisation representing the interests of more than 300 million hard of hearing people worldwide. IFHOH is registered as a charitable organisation at Vereinsregister Amtsgericht Hamburg, Germany (Nr. 69 VR 10 527) and is also an International Non-Governmental Organisation having special consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). IFHOH is a member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and works closely with the UN system using the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a tool for change.



## IFHOH Board

President, Dr. Ruth Warick (Canada)

Vice-President, Avi Blau (Israel)

Treasurer, Heikki Niemi (Finland)

General Secretary, Hanh Duong Phuong (Vietnam)

EFHOH Representative, Marcel Bobeldijk (The Netherlands)

Member at Large, Patrick Gift Egessa (Uganda)



IFHOH Board (from left to right): Heikki Niemi, Avi Blau, Ruth Warick, Patrick Gift Egessa, Marcel Bobeldijk and Hanh Duong Phuong (Hanh is photo-shopped in)