

## **2016: A Milestone Year, and a Call to Action**

By Annie Donnellon

It is hard to believe that this is the 25th year of Women Writing for (a) Change, and that I have been a proud member for the past two years! From the moment I walked into the WWf(a)C building in August 2013, I felt welcomed, accepted and loved unconditionally. As a blind woman who loves public singing and speaking, I have been known to be reserved and private about my inner feelings. The sharing of personal stories is a refreshing and humbling experience for me, as a listener and as a reader. I enjoy hearing the talents of all the writers and musicians I have met at Women Writing, and consider it an honor to share mine with the community.

Did you know that 2016 also marks the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act? Long before my time, equal access to public spaces by those of us who are differently-abled was not deemed a legal requirement. I was delighted to learn that our Silverton building was chosen with wheelchair accessibility in mind. As a blind computer user who has very basic computer skills and little patience with numerous websites, I am happy to report that the WWF(a)C website is also a walk in the park to navigate with my talking screenreader! This is not the case with many websites. (Next time you order tickets to the opera, just try doing it with your eyes closed and tell me about your experience).

A few months ago, an article in The Braille Forum, by Kim Charleson referenced Stevie Wonder's appearance on the Grammys this year. Braille became a hot topic after he made the following statement: *"Everything should be made accessible to every person"*, he stated, including but not limited to books, magazines, restaurant menus, etc.

Many published authors of books and blogs are not aware that their work can be made available to the blind. I am looking for ways to make my own written works accessible to any person who wishes to read or listen, and I would love to be part of a movement to make more writing available to the blind/print disabled community and beyond.

If you are looking for ways to make your published works available to the visually impaired, I have listed a number of cost-effective resources below. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions regarding accessibility, my personal experience, or you just want to have a GC (general conversation).

[annedonnellon@gmail.com](mailto:annedonnellon@gmail.com) – (you can also find me on Facebook)

### **Resources for Braille/Audio Production**

1. National Braille Press: [www.nbp.org](http://www.nbp.org) 1-800-272-4553 (Braille)
2. BookShare [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org) (Requires a hard copy of the book by mail, they will do the rest)
3. Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

7000 Hamilton Ave./ Cincinnati, OH 45231

Contact: Charlotte Begley: 513-728-6244 Or Samuel Folkz: 513-728-6243

4. American Printing House for the Blind: [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org) 502-895-4205
5. Braillesmith: Jasper, AL: <http://www.braillesmith.net>
6. Radio Reading Service, Cincinnati Association for the Blind and Visually impaired: 487-4245