



# 2021 AT Scholar Report

## ANTONY RUCK

Antony Ruck is Co-President at Digital Assistive Technology Industry Association for Europe (DATEurope) and Vice-Chair at the British Assistive Technology Association (BATA).

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## ATIA 2021

It was ATIA, but not as we know it.

Over the last 10 years I have been fortunate to attend ATIA as a delegate, a speaker, and an exhibitor. In whichever capacity I’m always stunned by the sheer scope of the event and the positivity of the delegates. I’ve never failed to learn something new, make a new connection, and return feeling reinvigorated and reenergised. The Florida sun in January has nothing to do with it. Honestly.

But then 2020 delivered an international pandemic, the likes of which we could never have predicted or planned for. Some events went ahead, some decided to postpone until the situation was more certain, and others like ATIA decided to go online. Online events may solve some challenges, but there are a many other (new) challenges that must be addressed. In my opinion, ATIA did this with eyes wide open, and delivered a truly fantastic event.

ATIA embraced the flexibility of online delivery, whilst retaining the spirit and character that is so easily lost through an impersonal online medium. The flexibility enabled speakers, presenters and delegates to attend “live” and share from all over the world, easily and cost-effectively. David Dikter, as always, projected his passion and enthusiasm, which was felt throughout the proceedings, and was mirrored and amplified by the smorgasbord of seminars and workshop hosts. The usual barriers of travel, hotels, expenses sign-off, and just time away from our usual place of work were simplified or removed for many delegates. We also had the joy of “catch-up” via recorded sessions, meaning the schedule could fit around us as delegates. The volume of resources and access to insights from cross-sector experts was mind boggling!

There are aspects of an online event that are nigh impossible to fully duplicate, and I did miss the opportunity to explore the Exhibition Hall. Listening to reviews, recommendations and insights from peers, and also making new introductions is a key driver for me when attending any event, and for this ATIA is second to none. So, for me, I am very much looking forward to ATIA 2022, and seeing how the lessons learned and additional capabilities of an online event can be adopted and embraced. Maybe we’ll see a blended delivery that captures the benefits of both online and physical. David and Caroline – you’ve set the bar high!