



### **Ms Andrea Saks**

*Andrea Saks is a known advocate for ICTs for persons with disabilities.*

Her father, Andrew Saks, together with James C. Marsters and Robert Weitbrecht were pioneers of deaf telecommunications using surplus teletypewriters and modems – the precursors of textphones and today's real-time text messaging. She grew in a family of two deaf parents and assisted them from an early age as their interface with the hearing world: getting doctors' appointments, arranging guests' visits, etc.

She took that role to the next level when she relocated from the US to the UK in 1972 to promote the use of textphones internationally. She was able to successfully lobby the British Government Post Office (the then-regulator of telecommunications) to allow the first transatlantic textphone conversation (1975) and to grant a license for connection of text telephones on the regular telephone network.

Her first involvement with ITU standardization activity started in 1991 and has ever since increased in scope. Self-funded, she currently attends many ITU-T study group and focus group meetings promoting the inclusion of accessibility functionality in systems being standardized by ITU, such as multimedia conferencing, cable, IPTV and NGN. After the recent creation of ITU-D Q20/1 on accessibility matters by WTDC-06, she also started attending that group and now performs as a bridge between the two sectors on the issue.

She has been a key person in the creation of all accessibility events in ITU, and currently is the convener of the recently formed joint coordination activity on accessibility and human factors, as well as the coordinator of the Internet Governance Forum's Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability.