

Disability

A Toolkit for Museums Working Towards Inclusion

An updated version of this
Toolkit will soon be
available

Compiled by Michèle Taylor
with contributions from colleagues in
the Western Balkans



Disability Toolkit for Museums

Compiled by Michèle Taylor
with contributions from
colleagues in the western Balkans

for
Cultural Heritage Without Borders
Funded by the
Stavros Niarchos Foundation

Introduction

The Foundation Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) is an independent Swedish non-governmental organisation dedicated to rescuing and preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage affected by conflict, neglect or human and natural disasters. We see our work as a vital contribution to building democracy and supporting human rights. CHwB is neutral when it comes to conflicting parties, but not to the rights of all people to cultural heritage - now and in the future.

CHwB works with cultural heritage as an active force in reconciliation, peace building and social and economic development by creating capacity, awareness and opportunities in preserving and rescuing cultural heritage in societies affected by conflict, neglect or human and natural disasters.

CHwB is committed to equality, non-discrimination, participation, accountability and transparency.

This toolkit has been designed to support ongoing work to make museums in the western Balkans more accessible and welcoming to disabled people. Much of the information has been included in projects and workshops run through the Western Balkans Regional Museum Network, generously supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. The toolkit was produced by Michèle Taylor, project manager. There are contributions, too, from colleagues in the western Balkans, individuals who are part of the emerging Western Balkans Access Group.

The toolkit is designed to be used by anyone who wishes to develop inclusive practice. Please use it and let us know if you have anything you would like to add to it!

For more information about the work of CHwB, please see www.chwb.org

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10 Things You Could Do that Won't Cost Very Much

1. Publicise an e-mail address and mobile phone number for people to contact you (€0)
2. Give front-line staff a pen and a piece of paper (€1)
3. Replace signs that are old or difficult to read with new ones created on a computer and laminated. Make sure the laminating plastic does not reflect light too much or the sign will be difficult for some people to read. (€0.50 per sign plus staff time).

This is a useful thing to do until you can replace the signs with more permanent ones

In the UK, the RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) has guidelines on their website for making sure the print you produce is clear. Take a look at http://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/accessibleinformation/text/Pages/clear_print.aspx

4. Provide drinking straws wherever you sell or serve drinks (€1 / month).
5. Ensure all outside steps have front edges which are marked in some way to contrast with the main part of the step, and that the ground surface at the top and bottom of any set of steps has some visual contrast to warn people that there are steps (€25)
6. Move furniture to make sure that there are clear, wide pathways around your museum (€0)
7. Provide a water bowl for guide dogs or hearing dogs for deaf people (€3)
8. Produce a visitors' leaflet with access information, including barriers (€0)
9. Use the computer to produce clear print and large print versions of programme notes, labels or other information (€cost of paper and ink plus staff time)
10. Ask your deaf and disabled visitors for feedback (€0).



Make sure you maintain parking spaces for disabled people

Access To Museums And Heritage Sites For Blind And Partially Sighted People

Barriers faced by blind and partially sighted people

People who are blind or partially sighted can face many barriers when visiting museums and heritage sites. In some venues visitor information is not accessible, buildings are difficult to get to or to move around in, and display text is in tiny print. Sometimes staff are not confident enough to speak to blind and partially sighted people and they don't know how to offer help. Interactive displays often rely on good vision and there may be no chance to touch objects or to get information by listening.

Removing barriers

There are many ways in which a museum can improve access to blind and partially sighted people including:


- audio guides that are accessible to blind and partially sighted people;
- guided tours in which the building, collections and context are described;
- tactile images that represent works of art, objects, buildings and their layouts etc;
- touching the real thing through touch tours or handling sessions *or* providing models which can be touched;
- making sure that all print information in the venue is available in a range of formats (for example large print, cd, braille);
- allowing people to get as close as possible to objects without risking any damage to the object;
- making sure that all labelling and interpretation is in clear print;
- producing exhibition notes and information on objects and collections on a sheet which visitors can carry around with them;
- providing magnifying sheets.

Audio description

Audio description is a spoken commentary which can improve access to museums and heritage sites. It is not just an audio guide, which might be provided for any visitor. Audio description gives a very detailed description of objects and pictures so that the blind or partially sighted person can get a better sense of the object.



Even if your interpretation means that text is handwritten, you can still make it clear and legible for many people



Producing audio description like this is a specific skill and should be done by someone with experience. They will probably need help from museum staff to write the script so that they include all the important information.

Audio description can also be delivered live as part of an event. It can be done through headphones or it can be delivered to everyone, from the front, if the event has been targeted at blind and visually impaired people.

Producing tactile diagrams and representations

Some blind and partially sighted people like to use tactile maps and diagrams and some also like to have tactile representations of paintings and other pictures.

Simple maps and diagrams can be made tactile by clever use of string, glue and other tactile materials.

In the UK, The National Centre for Tactile Diagrams website gives a good summary of different ways to produce tactile images.

Accessing collections on the web

The growth of the internet means that many blind and partially sighted people now have the chance to enjoy lots of information and services. As you design and develop your website, make sure that pages are visually clear.

In the UK, the RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) has guidelines on making your website accessible for blind and partially sighted people.

Take a look at

http://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/webaccessibility/designbuild/Pages/design_build.aspx

Also on the web, look at www.accessify.com/tools-and-wizards/accessibility-tools/ where there are some tools to help you create accessible web pages and documents. There is even a tool here which you can run to tell you about any accessibility problems your web pages might have.

Museum 4 All

Tatjana Mijatović, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo

The cooperation of CHwB and The Stavros Niarchos Foundation with The National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina helped to make the first steps towards improving the accessibility of one of the oldest institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We worked on two projects:

- “Audio guide for blind and partially sighted people“ and
- “Museum in the Suitcase“

“Audio guide for blind and partially sighted people“

The first step was to research technical solutions available for blind and partially sighted people, searching the internet and reviewing other museums accessibility projects. After gathering a large amount of information, one conclusion was inevitable: “I don't have any criteria for choosing the best solution“! So, I educated myself about the needs of blind and partially sighted people from experts who are working in that area at the library and a school. I found:

- one of the most important facts that I've learned is that Braille can be read only by people who were born blind or who lost their sight at a young age. That had a crucial influence on the best solution.
- it is important to gather information from institutions that support blind and partially sighted people at a professional level
- it is important to compare different sources
- it is vital to include blind and partially sighted people in every step of the project as a best source of information and best critics of the process.

The aim of this project is to enable partially sighted and blind people to visit the museum's existing collections independently, as well as to understand what is exhibited.

In order to really make our museum *museum4all*, it was important to include all ages and groups of blind and partially sighted visitors. Accordingly we can say that we have “general” type of exhibition or “intro”.

Understanding access needs made me aware of how big the intervention in the museum needed to be: the museum was made “not to be touched“! At the same time I've become aware that it is not possible to do it all. Plans have to be made, this project should be a *good basis for further improvements* which, I presume, will be much easier to do than this first step.

The technology

Finally, an “I.D.Mate“ barcode reader was chosen as the best and simplest solution and what is most important, a solution that will work for everybody.

It is a portable “all-in-one” talking bar code scanner that helps people identify items via the product’s bar code or UPC. Using text-to-speech and digital voice recording technologies, it allows users to access an on-board database of product descriptions, along with a tailored set of recorded voice messages.

Since all information is held on small memory card, this little gadget could be used in various situations, the audio guide could be in different languages or used for various purposes. All it takes is to change memory card.

Now we have three barcode readers, because we have three departments in our museum and in case that we have larger visit, we can divide visitors into three groups in order to make their experience better.

Possible problem could be that, after all, this is the gadget, no one wants to be held responsible for it or wants to learn “new and complicated stuff” (even though it is not complicated). Our answer to this problem is to tag the bar code to the reader with detailed instructions for the gadget.

Making the first museums tactile exhibition for blind and partially sighted people real.

Together with curators and conservator we have made a selection of museum items which will form our tactile collection.

- In the Archaeological department we have used exhibited items from existing collections.
- Ethnological department used originals from the stores and some new items were bought and made for this purpose.
- The biggest problem was the Natural History department, because all the exhibitions are behind glass, so we made all new items suitable to be made into tactile models and exhibited them beside the originals.

Some of my new knowledge needed to be passed on to curators, because they had to make a descriptive story about the tactile items to make sure that everybody has the possibility to fully understand what is exhibited. If you educate or inform all your colleagues (from curators to craftsmen) about your work, it will make it easier to accomplish your goals. Maybe, as in my case, an official letter from director of museum will be helpful because it will make people understand the importance of your work.

One of the most important things that will connect all the parts into one whole is to make tactile maps and to make an accessibility guide. It is a crucial piece of information for the visitor:

- making a detailed tactile map of the museum with the positions of tactile exhibits and
- making an accessibility guide that can be read on our web page.

I attended tactile image training at the Royal National Institute of Blind People in Birmingham, UK, provided by Cultural Heritage without Borders. This was important in helping me to realise this project.

Only after this training I began to understand what makes a good tactile image and immediately I could recognise all the mistakes that I have made in making my map pretty and technically correct!

CHWB provided equipment for making tactile images and four of my colleagues and I gave tactile image training to professionals from 11 different museums from Balkan Museum Network.

One target group – One promotion

Promotion of both projects was done through media (radio, journals and internet portals), through presentation of the project in the “Centre for blind and partially sighted people” and by informing schools about educational workshops. A major promotion was held in the National Museum of BH.

It is very important is to understand that workshops held in schools are educating future independent museum visitors.

Basic Advice on Making your Website Accessible


Make sure that whoever is designing your website understands access issues, and that the site is designed with access in mind right from the beginning. This will be much more efficient than going back and making corrections and alterations later.

Remember

1. if you have a button for people to click to take them to a page about access, make sure it is at the top left of the Home page, otherwise they might have difficulty finding it.
2. provide a version of your site which only has text, and no pictures;
3. use the "alt" text to provide meaningful descriptions of images/graphics;
4. provide any downloadable documents in RTF, PDF and Word format;
5. make sure that information is clearly laid out, and that links are clearly identified;
6. provide captions or a transcript of any audio or audio-visual material;
7. make sure that it is easy to navigate around the site and between pages, and especially that it is always easy to get back to the Home page;
8. provide a site map;
9. keep visual contrast between text and background high;
10. do not use buttons or links that are small, or that need very accurate mouse movements;
11. follow general clear print guidelines for screen-based text (for example, don't put text over an image);
12. do not use blinking text, pulsing or flashing graphics or buttons.



Unlocking the web for disabled people is an important step towards giving them access to your museum



Checking your website

You should refer to the Web Accessibility Initiatives guidelines for accessible information. There is a short 'at a glance' summary here:

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/glance/>

All sites should at least meet minimum standards.



Commissioning and Producing Models

Ivan Kručićan, National Museum of Serbia, Belgrade

The Background

During 2009, we were given a donation from CHwB to produce six tactile models of medieval monuments, for use in the Gallery of Frescoes in the National Museum of Serbia, Belgrade. This was going to be a new part of our inclusive offer. These six models were part of the plan to produce around 20 models of monuments from different periods, that would be very valuable in our inclusive educational work with school groups, special schools and adults.

What we Did

For this job we employed a young model-maker, who was then still a senior year student at Belgrade art academy, but who had already received several awards, including awards for two models he produced for the National Museum in Belgrade in 2008.

The price that was agreed and put in the contract was very low, but he has accepted to do as some sort of favor to our museum. The work was very delicate and he was very late in delivering models. With confirmation from CHwB, he was allowed to take another 4 months for the job, but even after that period he couldn't finish it. By March 2010, only two models were fully finished and one more was set up. We had to choose either to stop the project and return the money or ask for another delay. CHwB approved another delay and we went ahead with the remaining four models.

Finally, four tactile models were finished, and the funding covered the cost of materials, the model-maker's fee and our consultant from the Association of the Blind of Serbia, but we had a problem because of this delay.

What we Learned

It did not all go as we had hoped or expected, but the exhibition that we organised was well accepted by all of our blind and partially sighted visitors. It was followed by the catalogue in Braille and this cooperation has opened up new ideas and projects for the future.

The problem that we have faced was that at this price we couldn't push the model-maker to work faster, but finally we got four models at the price of one or even less. The quality of the models is excellent and they will be in use for both exhibitions and educational programmes over the next several decades.

With limited resources we had to improvise a lot, but it has taught us a lesson. From our mistakes we have learned how to plan better and either make short term plans (like one model at a time) or to set up wider cooperation with our Ministry and different institutions and organisations and work on something that is not limited with strict deadlines.



Installing a Touch Screen Display

Danica Ivančević, Novi Sad City Museum, Serbia

Background

Our museum is situated on the fortress on the hill and has 249 steps! We have no accessible toilets, or many other facilities that makes it easier for disabled people to visit the museum. For example, there are no legends in the exhibitions which are suitable for partially sighted people, and there is no good infrastructure: if disabled people want to come to the museum, they have to work hard, and without any means of transport, it is impossible for them.

It is impossible to overcome these obstacles to disabled people; it is an impossible mission.

What we Did

We had an event to promote our touch screen display last year. Organisations of disabled people actively participated in that event. Their suggestions were our very helpful: we learned about how high and exactly where to install the screen and how to make sure it is accessible.

People from the Rotary Club helped us a lot, because we provided some of the funding to make this happen.

The touch screen includes an audio-visual presentation of both exhibitions and underground military galleries, which are completely inaccessible to people with mobility impairments.

What we Learned

The touch screen is very good and useful thing, and disabled people are very happy that they are part of the cultural events of our city. It was very useful to work with disabled people and to listen to their advice.

However, there is still a lot to do to make our cultural life more accessible.

We have a ramp, touch screen, two guides in Braille and the good will to accommodate disabled people and work with them whenever possible.

Sensory Museum

Simonida Miljković, National Museum of Macedonia

The *Sensory Museum* Project was made possible by Cultural Heritage without Borders and supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

For years now, the NI Museum of Macedonia, Department for Museum Management and Education, has delivered programmes for disabled people, as a part of the educational program. The continued cooperation with blind and partially sighted people has resulted in many projects.

We have objects in the museum that are popular with visitors but which, in order to be protected, cannot be touched and are placed in glass showcases.

One of them is the water vessel, the Hydria. It is an old, interesting, for some people unusual object due to its form, but especially because of the story depicted by the painted elements.

Educators in the museum were inspired to think more broadly about the “sensory museum”: human beings experience the world around them by using the basic senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.

So, we planned and realised the Project “Sensory Museum” on the subject:

Target Group

P We aimed our project at students from the State Rehabilitation School for Visually Impaired Children and Youth, “Dimitar Vlahov”, in Skopje, with their teachers and families.

The groups were divided into smaller groups of five students, and we scheduled visits of to the Museum.

Goals of the Project

We wanted to

- introduce the students to the Museum as a place to enrich their knowledge and to socialise with others;
- educate the visually impaired and blind students about our rich cultural heritage;
- determine the methodology for successful realising museum education and organising another form of presentation;
- provide opportunities to encourage an equal participation and inclusion of visually impaired and blind people (as well as the other disabled people) in society;
- realise and promote of basic civil and human rights of disabled people.

Activities

The project activities are divided into three phases.

May to October, 2011, preparation

Forming a team of experts from the Museum and defining the general frame where the project is to be realised

Establishing contact with the management team and the team of experts from the School. Their visit to the museum and the visit of the museum educators to the school.

Preparing the professional text, adjusted to the target group.

Defining the list of material needed for to realise the program.

Making relief drawings on the *swell* machine.

Typing the text in Braille alphabet and text in larger format

Installing the *speech program* on a computer

Recording the story of the hydria and the myth of the God Dionysus on a CD.

December, 2011 (The Month of Disabled People), student visits and activities.

Every student was accompanied by an educator or a professor.

After explaining the layout of the education premises, the students have the opportunity to open the drawers and touch the things inside, smell them, see them, hear them and taste them, as well as to find and assemble the story of the museum object. Then they have the opportunity to get to know the story of the myth of the God Dionysus by touching the relief drawings. They have the opportunity to hear all this by using the computer.

The students were encouraged to think creatively and logically and to include themselves actively in the museum workshop, to transfer their inspirations on a drawing which is processed on a “swell” machine. The results from the museum workshops, represented by the relief drawings, will be presented in an exhibition at the Museum of Macedonia and the school.

The visits ended with refreshments for every student and with a gift: a folder with text in the Braille alphabet and a recorded CD with the story of the hydria and the myth of the God Dionysus.

December 2011, review

We wanted to

- achieve continuous cooperation with the institutions for the disabled;
- achieve social integration of disabled people in modern society;

- raise the consciousness with disabled people about promoting and safeguarding cultural heritage;
- determine the methodology for realisation of the museum education, realising different method tools.

Sustainability of the project

The prepared contents and the exhibition of the sensory museum will be applied in the future education at the museum of Macedonia, including for other disabled people through their Associations, the members of the Children's Museum Club, and the visitors in general.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for the financial and material assistance which we received from the Swedish Organization Cultural Heritage without Borders, and supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. We would especially like to thank Dr. Diana Walters, Regional Museum Coordinator who initiated this cooperation for the *Sensory Museum* project.

The exchange of experiences in the work with the professors and the experts has given the students, but also us, the museum's educators, great satisfaction and greater self confidence.



Producing Accessible Written Information

We recommend that

1. the font in a leaflet or brochure is 12 point or larger
2. the font on posters is larger still (at least 18 point) so that it can be easily read from a distance
3. the font is of a sans serif style

This is a sans serif font. It is plain and much easier to read than

this, which is a serif font, with confusing extra lines making up the letters

4. there is no text printed over a picture or diagram
5. the font is black or dark blue on white or yellow, or white or yellow on black or dark blue. This gives the best visual contrast

this is black on white

this is white on black

6. the text uses a mixture of capital letters and lower case, as you would usually write, rather than writing all in capital letters.

This is ordinary mixed case. It uses capitals and lower case letters where you would expect to find them, unlike

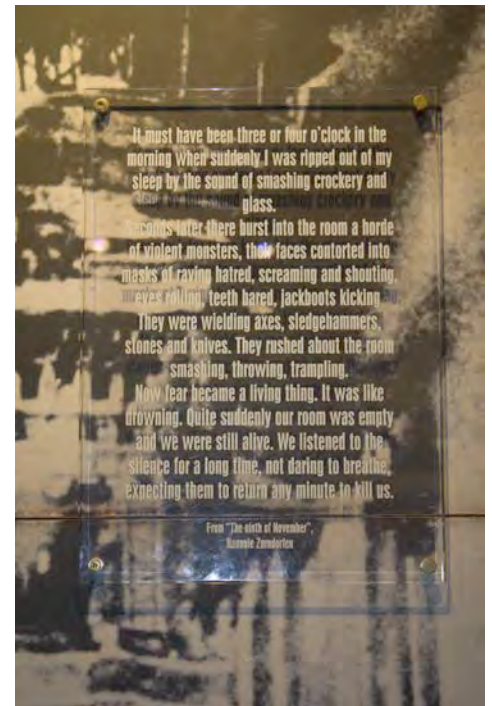
THIS, WHICH IS ALL IN CAPITALS AND IS DIFFICULT TO READ

7. the text does not use italics, which are difficult to read
8. the text itself is all in one column, since more columns make it difficult to access
9. the text is left-aligned rather than, for example, being centred or aligned to the right.

This text is aligned to the left

This is centred

This is aligned to the right



This piece of interpretation text is written over the top of a picture and so it is almost impossible to read

-
10. you use a paper which is not glossy and which is at least 90gsm (this reduces the chance of seeing text coming through from the other side)
 11. material is available on different coloured paper (some people may prefer paper which is not white for example some people with dyslexia)
 12. you always avoid green, pink and red (unless specifically asked for these colours) since these may be difficult for people with colour blindness

This section is written in large print and was produced using an ordinary word processing package.

Using the same principles as above, ensure that your font-size is between 16 and 22 point (this is 18 point).

You can edit your documents by selecting the whole document and then increasing the point size.

Braille

This is a system of writing using raised dots on a page. It is produced using a machine specifically designed for the task, and it can be expensive if you want to translate a large document.

Audio tape or CD

Remember that this format can be useful for all sorts of people who prefer to listen rather than to read.

It is acceptable to record a single copy of a tape yourself. Make sure you speak slowly and clearly and describe any tables or diagrams that are in the document.

Electronic information

Many blind people have software and/or hardware themselves which means that they can receive information on disc or cd or by e-mail and use it in the best way for them This may mean using software which 'reads' the information to them, or using machinery to translate the document into Braille, or simply produce it in large print.

Accessible websites

Increasingly, people with all kinds of impairments will access the internet for their information. A website that has been designed and built with access in mind from the beginning will be easy to navigate and use.

Commissioning an audio guide

Introduction

This is a shortened version of a document produced by Talking Images, which is a project set up by the Royal National Institute for the Blind, VocalEyes (an organisation committed to supporting high quality audio description), aimed at improving access to museums and galleries for blind and partially sighted people.

If you are interested, you can find out more about Talking Images

rnib.org.uk/professionals/solutionsforbusiness/leisure/museumsgalleries/Pages/talking_images.aspx

You can find out more about VocalEyes at www.vocaleyeyes.co.uk/

Things to think about before commissioning

Before you even begin to commission an audio guide it is important to think about some issues and their impact on blind and partially sighted visitors.

Why do you want to have an audio guide?

For blind and partially sighted people, at its best an audio guide can offer:

- an independent visit where they don't have to rely on members of staff or other sighted assistance
- a service that does not need to be booked in advance and is available all the time
- a consistently high level of information about the objects and exhibitions in your museum.

An audio guide alone however will not solve all access issues for blind and partially sighted people and you should see it as just one aspect of your provision.

Is an audio guide right for your museum?

There may be times when an audio guide is not the best access solution for your museum. For example, if your exhibitions change often and you know that you will not be able to update the guide regularly, or your venue has a complicated layout (it might be better to try and find easier ways for blind and partially sighted people to find their way around the museum before considering an audio guide). You might want to think about taking other action like training your staff in visual awareness and descriptive skills or offering one to one tours in addition to or instead of a recorded guide.



The Hands On programme at the British Museum allows people to handle objects and trained staff can give them audio descriptions

Who is the audio guide aimed at?

A guide written for blind and partially sighted people is likely to have more detailed descriptions than a general guide and also to include information about the physical spaces that people are in when they are listening to it.

This extra information can also be in a general guide. Audio guides can allow 'layering' of information so that a user can choose to listen to additional tracks or not. This means that one 'inclusive' guide may help lots of different groups of visitors.

Will you charge blind and partially sighted people to use an audio guide?

Even if you decide to charge most visitors for an audio guide, you must not charge blind and partially sighted visitors to use the guide. Blind and partially sighted people are often denied access to information and it is unlikely that all information in your museum or heritage site is accessible to them. An inclusive approach, and the preferred option, is to offer the guide free or charge to anyone who says they have a visual impairment or that they are blind or partially sighted.

Where will the audio guide be picked up and handed back?

We recommend that an audio guide must be stored and distributed in a logical and easily accessible place. All members of staff in the venue should know about it, where it is stored and how to use it. This is especially important if a guide is not used very often. It is also essential that you tell visitors about the guide using clear, large signage around the museum.

How will the audio guide link to other services and interpretation in the museum?

An audio guide should not stand alone. It should clearly highlight any chances to handle objects in the museum and it should link to other facilities such as tactile images, models and further information or maps in accessible formats.

Many blind and partially sighted people can access audio information. An audio guide is therefore an excellent chance to let visitors know about your other services such the shop, café and toilets and where they are.

How will you promote it to blind and partially sighted people?

There is no point in producing an accessible audio guide if no one gets to know about it. Before producing an audio guide it is important to think about how and where you will tell people about it. This will take time and resources. The more contact you have with groups of local people who are blind or partially sighted, the more you can use them to tell people locally about what your museum provides. You should also promote the guide in all your general publicity material.

Issues to consider if you are commissioning an audio guide

Consultation with blind and partially sighted people

You must ask an audio guide producer to consult with blind and partially sighted people throughout the development of the guide. This should not just be a 'check' when the guide is already written but must also take place during the guide's development to make sure that it is relevant and valuable to the people who will use it.

Feedback from the consultation process may mean you have to make changes to the audio guide that take time and money.



Scripts

You should ensure that a describer who is experienced in describing for blind and partially sighted people helps develop the script, especially if an audio guide is going to be produced specifically for people who are blind or partially sighted.

Way-finding information

Any information that is given in the guide which helps people find their way around the museum must be developed with blind and partially sighted people. It is a good idea to ask some people with different experiences of sight loss to try it out, to make sure that it is accurate, helpful and safe.

This information does not replace helpful staff, good signage and large print and tactile maps.



Tactile Replicas of Archeological and Historical Exhibits

Lejla Mahmić, City Museum of Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina

In our permanent exhibitions there are only a few small changes that have been made so that the museum is accessible for disabled persons. For example, there is a lot of space for moving around, but objects in cases are not displayed at the right level, and they are all surrounded with a lot of glass, with a lot of reflection.

In finding a way how can we make that the museum more accessible mainly for blind and partially sighted people, we got the idea to take some representative displayed objects in our archeological and historical permanent exhibition, and to turn them into tactile replicas. This would be useful for blind and partially sighted people as well as for other disabled people, but it can also be useful and interesting for children and other visitors because they can put their hands on objects and manipulate them. This is not possible with the original objects in exhibitions.

We found a sculptor who was able to work, either using the drawings of the object (because some exhibits were just 2D pictures of an object, put in permanent exhibition), or by looking at the real object, to make good and realistic replicas.

We contacted with the local association for the blind and partially sighted people, and asked them what to look for in making these replicas. As a result, we knew we had to make sure that

- replicas are in the same proportion as the original, and even the same size where possible;
- replicas are made in same material or nearly the same material as the original, to maintain the feeling of the original material of the object (for example, the feeling of touching steel if the original is made of steel or the feeling of touching bone if original is made from bone);
- the replica has all the important relief marks the original has;
- the replica is safe for handling;
- if the original was found in pieces and then restored, the replica should also be broken into pieces and “restored”, repaired to have the same feeling as touching the original.

So, for example, we made these replicas:



1. Antique lamp from our archeological permanent exhibition.



2. Ottomans pipes from our permanent historical exhibition.



3. Pottery (antique bowls) from our permanent archeological exhibition.



4. Small rifle from our permanent historical exhibition.



5. Medieval sword (this is made from a 2D picture that is part of our permanent archeological exhibition).



6. Ottomans sword (called jatagan) part of permanent historical exhibition. The handle was made out of cow's bone, covered with steel parts and stone decorations, so we've made this part from PVC and steel, because when you touch it would feel like touching a bone.



And here it is in use...

After presenting these replicas to blind and partially sighted people in our community they told us that they are good and that they can really feel the different kind of materials, that it is full of detail, and for them it is first time that they actually can “see” something in the Museum.

But, we did learn some lessons, most importantly, that some of replicas are really heavy (because we've used materials as close to the original feel as possible) and therefore not appropriate for handling: they have to be kept on open pedestals - which almost contradicts the reasons for making them in the first place.

Museum in a Suitcase

Sotirulla Hoxha and Etleva Demollari, National History Museum of Albania

In the framework of the Museum's aim for developing new audiences, with the support of CHwB Development Fund for Disability Access, the National History Museum in Tirana, Albania, realised the project: "Sensory Museum – The Museum in a suitcase".

In collaboration with the teachers of the Institute for Blind people, we decided to create two suitcases, one about the Albanian Epic Songs, and the other about the Albanian leaders of Antiquity.



We decided to begin with the Albanian Epic Songs because they are closer to the children's world and also because these songs may soon be part of the World Heritage protected by UNESCO.



Traditional **Albanian epic poetry** includes folk Albanian poetry and songs that are part of Albanian culture.

Some research expeditions were organised by the working group of the NHM. We found objects that are related to the two themes: items such as the lahuta (lute), the tirq (traditional trousers), vest, xhubletë (embroidered gown), a horn, a cradle, medieval war cannons made of wood, ships and many other antique and ethnographic objects that testify to our rich cultural heritage.

All materials were accompanied by a label with the Braille alphabet. Writing Braille alphabet was implemented in cooperation with the teachers of the school "Ramazan Kabashi".

We managed to find the original ethnographic objects - or copies of them - by going to different collectors. We were able also to produce a documentary film about the work.

The project was the result of much communication with the principal, the teachers and pupils of the school, the museum's director (M. Luan Malltezi), the Institute for the Blind persons' director (M. Hajri Mandria); the CHwB program coordinator (Leila Hadzic) also participated in it.



In the activity we told the pupils about the Albanian Songs of the Frontier Warriors, illustrating our speech with the objects that we had collected associated and playing the sounds of the lahuta. They were able to touch the objects. The braille labels meant that the children who are completely blind could touch and read.

With printed photos of "kulla-s" (typical Albanian dwellings) and using the device Zy-Fuse Heater, we made tactile images for them.

The project was reported in the Albanian media.



Although some of them had heard these instruments, and knew about the ethnographic objects, it was the first time they were able to touch them.

At the end of the event we offered them a drink. For them it was a joyful day. The children were not just spectators but they became protagonists, they tried on traditional costumes and played with the objects.

We promised to come back in a month with another suitcase and with other heroes from Antiquity. We want to tell the history of Albania from Antiquity through objects, through legends and stories about famous historic persons and events which have been significant in the history of our people.

We learned that we should work more with disabled persons and not only with the school of blind children. We plan to go with these suitcases in the Center of the Association of Blind people in Tirana too.

Making PowerPoint Presentations Accessible for Blind and Partially Sighted People

Your audience

It's important to remember that, whoever you are speaking to, they are ordinary people like you and that some of them might be disabled. So you need to make sure that your presentation does not put any barriers in their way. Remember, for example, that according to the World Health Organisation there are 314 million visually impaired people in the world today. 37 million are blind, 124 million have low vision even with glasses and 153 million have problems with distance vision. It is also generally accepted that up to 4% of the population have significant dyslexia. Your audience may include people from all of these categories.

These guidelines help you make sure that your presentation, and your delivery technique, is as accessible as possible to all your audience members.

Practical solutions

Use a high-contrast colour scheme which is easily visible from the back of a large room. We recommend either dark text on an off white background or a white text on a dark background. A pure white background can create uncomfortable glare for your audience.

It is not possible to define a particular best colour combination for everyone to read as everyone's preferences are different. Keep your background to one colour only and don't use background images behind text.

Recommended font size and amount of text on each slide

It is good to have only a few lines of text, or bullet points, on a slide, ideally no more than five to seven lines, and only about five or six words per line, aligned to the left, in other words, not centred. There must be enough space between the lines to prevent 'crowding' effects during reading.

We recommend no more than six lines of text with a line spacing of 1.5 on the slide, with a margin of 2.5cm on all four sides for headers, footers etc. This is usually possible with a font-size of 48pt, and we recommend never using less than 32pt.

It is helpful to use mixed upper and lower case letters rather than all capitals.



If you present information in a way that is clear for partially sighted people, it will be easier to read for many others. This sign, from the Eden Project, in Cornwall, England, uses pictures very well - but the glare and reflections from the perspex makes it almost impossible to read, for anyone.

*Adapted from a document by the
World Blind
Union (www.worldblindunion.org)*



Recommended font type

Use a sans serif font type like Helvetica, Arial or Verdana rather than font types like Times New Roman. These are generally easier to read.

Don't use italic font style because this style is also difficult to read.

Keep the same font for your whole presentation. If you want some text to pop out, use a larger font size, or use bold style, for that text, to attract attention.

If information on the slide is only important for you as presenter, such as a header with the title of the presentation and the page number, keep this as small as possible to save space for the information that is important for the audience.

Color and Brightness Contrast

Try to apply dark background colours and use bright colours for the text. A white font on a deep blue background is a good combination, for example. Do not use a combination of red and green.

Figures and graphs

If you have figures and graphs, keep them as simple as possible. Use contrasting colours in the same way as with text, as above.

Use sans serif font types for the text in the figures; never use more than one font type per slide and do not use an italic font style.

Animation

Please keep animation to a minimum as this can be very confusing.

Speaking during a PowerPoint presentation

When you introduce yourself, explain the format of the session, and make it clear if the audience can interrupt to ask a question to ask you to explain something.


It is helpful if you read aloud all the text on slides. This means that nobody in the audience has to be able to read the text to have the same information as everyone else. Figures and graphs should be explained for the same reason. Make sure you explain the picture or graph fully, for example, 'on this slide the results are summarised in a bar graph. The bars on the left hand side display the data of the experimental condition; the bars on the right hand side ...'

If a long piece of text is very important, include a carefully designed handout for later re-reading.

Handouts

If you give out handouts at the beginning of the session, it can be useful and will tell the audience if they need to take notes.

If you make a copy of your slides in black and white, and the contrast is not very clear, this probably means that the contrast in the original, colour version probably is not very clear either.



Make sure that you have full page copies of your slides in case anyone wants to follow the presentation and is not able to see the slides on the screen.

Have your material in accessible formats such as Braille, CD's, or available on a memory stick for blind audience members to download on to their laptops. This will mean that, at least if a blind person cannot see the PowerPoint presentation, or read the handouts, they will end up with access to the same information as their fellow attendees at the presentation.

If you display it, say it. Imagine that you were hearing your own presentation on the radio, would it make sense and would you fully understand all the information that was being put across?

Opening up arts and museums to deaf people

Deafness is often invisible and so we often don't notice it. It is important to understand that deaf people differ in the following ways:

- the amount they can hear
 - the way they hear
 - how long they have been deaf
 - the age at which they became deaf
 - the cause of their deafness
 - how they communicate
 - the amount of support they have
 - how they view themselves and their deafness
- For issues of basic communication, it is vital to be aware of these differences.
 - The main different groups of deaf people are as follows:

Deaf

Deaf people are those (generally) who have been Deaf from a very early age or from birth. Often they use some form of Sign Language, which may be their first language. Many therefore view themselves as being part of a cultural and linguistic minority and not disabled. It is important to remember that their skills in the spoken languages of your country may be quite limited.

Deafened or oral deaf

Deafened and oral deaf people usually do not use any Sign Language, and their first language will generally be one of your country's spoken languages. They may not feel much connection with the Deaf people who see themselves as part of a cultural and linguistic minority. Hearing aids may not be much help. Speech-to-text is generally more valued by this group, so transcripts (written versions of what is being said) may be useful.

Hard of Hearing/Hearing aid users

There are many people in this group. Those in adulthood tend to be losing their hearing as a result of ageing (or through specific exposure to noise), and they need hearing aids so that they can use hearing and speech to communicate with others.



Everybody likes to be able to touch, play, try things on but this sort of physical experience can be really important for deaf people.

*Based on an article by
Deafworks
(www.deafworks.co.uk) and
used with permission*

deafworks

Museum Staff

The staff at your museum are really important in making sure that deaf people are included in everything you offer. Staff need support to make sure that their

- attitude towards deafness and hearing loss *and*
- knowledge of equipment and resources and how confident they are in using them
- are appropriate for deaf people.

Staff sometimes respond negatively to deaf people: or they are nervous and do not understand them, instead of being calm and ordinary. Some deaf awareness training for the staff who deal directly with the public can be really helpful. It can help staff understand how they can communicate effectively with a deaf visitor. For example, they will learn that it is important to

- keep still when talking
- be brief in what they say and how they say it
- stick to one point at a time
- make sure that their face is well lit
- maintain eye contact
- don't stand too far from the deaf person
- speak clearly without shouting
- make sure that their mouth is not hidden, so that lip-reading is possible.

There are a few things to say about lip-reading itself:

- your facial expression is important
- speaking too fast or too slow is unhelpful
- unfamiliar accents can be difficult
- using gesture can be helpful.

Some of these are about things you can't change but it can be helpful if you know that you may be quite difficult to lip-read because, for example, you have an accent which is not common in your museum, or because you have a beard.

Accessibility

Making the venue physically accessible is also important. This may be about

- systems which amplify the speaker's voice, making it easier for people who use hearing aids. These can be useful in lecture theatres or galleries (often as a fixed induction loop round the room). Portable systems are also available, which allow the deaf person to move around, for example during a gallery talk;
- phones with visual text displays (textphones/minicoms) - these allow deaf people to make bookings and enquiries without using an ordinary phone;
- fax machines can also be very useful to deaf people;
- e-mail;
- telephone with enhanced volume;
- check whether your public phone has an amplifier;
- fire alarm with flashing lights, which are essential for the main public area;

-
- as well as staff who are trained to use this equipment.

Adjustments can also be made to the museum or gallery building to make it more deaf user-friendly:

- good lighting to enable easy lip-reading - a good, even lighting without shadows is best;
- blinds at windows to cut out dazzling sunlight without making the room dark, giving good lighting conditions for lip-reading;
- clear labels, with clear signs and arrows;
- colour schemes: this is because good backgrounds are important to lip readers;
- acoustics need to be considered since echoey spaces can make life difficult for a deaf person.

Permanent and Temporary Displays

It is important to think about the following when designing your permanent and temporary displays:

- ensuring the exhibits are interactive and visual;
- making the sound systems audible for hard of hearing people;
- subtitles for a picture or video show;
- making transcripts available for spoken events;
- making details available of any sound effects and sound tracks used to “bring to life” certain rooms or displays (this could take the form of a handout): these should be clearly advertised.

As well as improving some of the more permanent features of museum life like staff, building and equipment, many museums have found that introducing deaf events has helped to develop this new audience. If you do this, you will need to think about:

- organising a sign language interpreter;
- providing a “welcomer” who can communicate comfortably with all types of people;
- providing a lipspeaker or a speech-to-text screen, if the event is aimed to include deafened and hard of hearing people;
- making sure you have suitable lighting to be able to see the guide or the interpreter, whilst not damaging the exhibits;
- making sure that the Deaf group have clear, uninterrupted sight-lines to enable them to see the Guide or speaker;
- making sure you have a synopsis or script available for talks or lectures;

Publicity for the Event

For specifically deaf events, you might need to think about new ways of reaching potential deaf visitors:

- advertising in any specialist newsletters;
- developing a mailing list of regular deaf visitors;
- creating a network of deaf people who can pass on the word;
- setting up consultations with Deaf and hard of hearing people, to make sure that you spend your time and money usefully.

A basic checklist for access to your museum

Getting to your museum

Consider	Yes	No	Action required
Is your museum near public transport?			
Can visitors be dropped off from a vehicle near the main entrance?			
Is your main entrance reached via a clear, level pathway?			
Is there anywhere to park near your main entrance?			
Is your main entrance level or ramped?			
If you have a ramp, is it at least 1200mm wide (800mm if it is portable), does it have a handrail on at least 1 side (2 if it is more than 2m long) and does it have a gradient of no more than 1:12 (up to 2m length), 1:15 (up to 5m length) or 1:20 (up to 10m length)?			
If you have steps, is there a continuous handrail on both sides of the flight, with a handrail down the middle if the flight is more than 1800mm wide and does the handrail have a top edge of no more than 900mm from the step level??			
If not, do you have an entrance that is level or ramped and if so, is it signposted?			
Is the front door easy to open (for example, is it kept open, or is it automatic)?			
If not, do you have a doorbell, or can staff see if someone is waiting to get in?			
Is the front door at least 800mm wide?			
Is there level or ramped access to your main reception area?			
Is your reception area welcoming to disabled people (for example, does your counter have a low section)?			

Getting around your museum

Consider	Yes	No	Action required
Are all areas accessible by level or ramped routes, or by a lift?			
If there are ramps in the museum, are they at least 1200mm wide (800mm if they are portable), do they have a handrail on at least 1 side (2 if they are more than 2m long) and do they have a gradient of no more than 1:12 (up to 2m length), 1:15 (up to 5m length) or 1:20 (up to 10m length)?			
If you have steps, is there a continuous handrail on both sides, with a handrail down the middle if the stairs are more than 1800mm wide and does the handrail have a top edge of no more than 900mm from the step level?			
If you have a lift, does it have buttons inside and out that are between 900mm and 1100mm from the floor? Is the car at least 1100mm x 1400mm? Does it have a mirror on the back wall? Does it have audio announcements?			
Are all routes at least 1100mm wide?			
Are all routes free of hazards?			
Is there seating in your public areas (preferably a mix of seats with and without arms, and all with seats no more than 900mm from the floor)?			
Are all glass areas clearly marked?			
Are all doors at least 800mm wide?			
Is lighting even and at good levels throughout the museum?			
Do you have clear signage around the museum, using pictures as well as words?			
Is emergency evacuation simple, straightforward and safe for disabled people? Are staff trained in how to support disabled people in the case of an emergency?			



Facilities at your museum

Consider	Yes	No	Action required
Do you have toilets designed for disabled people?			
Is the cubicle at least 1400mm x 2200mm?			
Are the toilets clearly signposted?			
If you have refreshment facilities, are they easy to use for disabled people (for example, do you provide drinking straws, can people move chairs around, do you have any cushions)?			
Do you have an induction loop in your museum?			
Do you have magnifying glasses or sheets available for visitors?			
Are your portable seats readily available?			
Do you allow assistance dogs into your museum?			

Marketing your museum

Consider	Yes	No	Action required
Do you publicise your museum in written materials?			
If so, do you follow clear print guidelines?			
Do you publicise your museum on a website?			
If so, have you followed guidelines for accessible websites?			
Does your publicity information contain access information?			
Is there a choice as to how people can contact the museum (for example, 'phone, e-mail, texting)?			

A basic access checklist when designing exhibitions

Use this checklist to guide your own creative thinking when you are designing or re-designing an exhibition. Photocopy this list and use it for every display or exhibition.

The exhibition spaces

Consider	Yes	No	Action needed
Is there level, ramped or lift access to the exhibition?			
Is there enough room between cases and furniture for people using wheelchairs or sticks (pathways should be 1100mm wide)?			
If there are any hazardous objects overhead or jutting into pathways, are they clearly marked?			
Are noise levels kept to a minimum?			
If you have to have loud noises as part of an exhibition, do you warn visitors of this?			
Do you avoid overlapping sound from one exhibit or space to another?			
Are lighting levels kept bright enough to allow people to see objects clearly?			
Is lighting consistent throughout the spaces?			
If you have to keep lighting levels low, do you warn people of this?			
Do you provide seating in exhibition rooms (preferably mixed - some with arms, some without - and all with seats at least 500mm from the floor)?			
Is there portable seating readily available?			

The displays

Consider	Yes	No	Action needed
Are objects in cases displayed at a height that means wheelchair users can see them (no more than 900mm from the floor)?			
Are objects on walls displayed at a height that means wheelchair users can see them (between 1220 and 1600mm from the floor)?			
If objects are on pedestals, are pedestals 1000mm from the floor or less?			
Do display cases have a recess for knees so that wheelchair users can get close to them (750mm high, 900mm wide and 400mm deep)?			
Do you use non-reflective glass in display cases?			
Do objects contrast visually with the background material in display cases?			
Are there enlarged models or photographs of small objects?			
Is there an alternative way of seeing the exhibition, for people who can't, or don't want to, reach the displays (for example, high quality photographs on a computer, or a virtual tour on the internet)?			
If you have interactives, are instructions clear and easy to understand?			
Can all interactives be operated with one hand in a closed fist?			
If there is audio information in the displays, are there induction loops?			
If there is audio information in the displays, is it also available visually (for example, subtitles on videos, transcripts of recorded narrative)?			
Is there a range of ways of seeing your collections (for example, high quality photographs on a computer, or a virtual tour on the internet)?			

Labelling and catalogues

Consider	Yes	No	Action needed
Is all text in main panels and introductions at least 24pt?			
Is all text in labels at least 18pt?			
Is all text a sans serif font, with no shadows?			
Is all text left justified (not fully justified)?			
Does all text contrast well with its background?			
Have you avoided printing text over images?			
Is there an audio version of text available?			
Do you provide Braille labels?			
Can visitors get close to text?			
Is there enough light to read the text?			
Is positioning and design of labels consistent throughout the exhibition?			
Are labels and text positioned between 1200mm and 1600mm from the floor?			
Do you have labels and text available in sheet form for visitors to carry with them?			
Are catalogues available in a range of formats?			
Do your printed catalogues meet basic guidelines for clear print?			

Exhibition content and events

Consider	Yes	No	Action needed
If disabled people are mentioned in your text, are they referred to appropriately and respectfully?			
Where appropriate, is the experience of disabled people represented in the exhibition?			
Where appropriate, have you consulted with disabled people when curating the exhibition?			
If you are programming workshops, talks or other events, are disabled people involved as speakers, contributors, artists?			
Do you provide Sign Language interpretation for talks, workshops and other events?			
Do you have an induction loop for people who wear hearing aids?			
Are there multi-sensory experiences in your exhibitions?			

The Niarchos Disability Projects

Examples of Good Practice

© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Although this lettering on glass is not very clear, the information (“37 steps down to the gallery”) is very useful



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Seats are really helpful



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

It is good to give people the chance to handle the objects in your museum



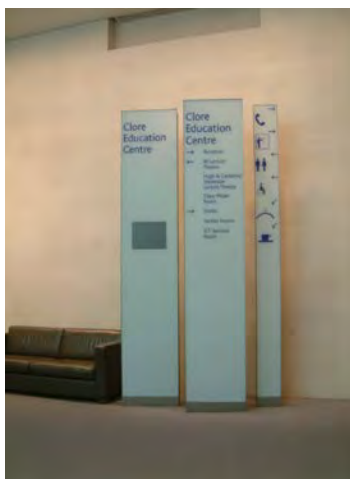
© CHwB Disability Toolkit

This display cabinet is accessible because it is low and has plenty of space for a wheelchair user to approach it



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

These are clear signs that use pictures as well as words



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Some people might need to borrow a wheelchair



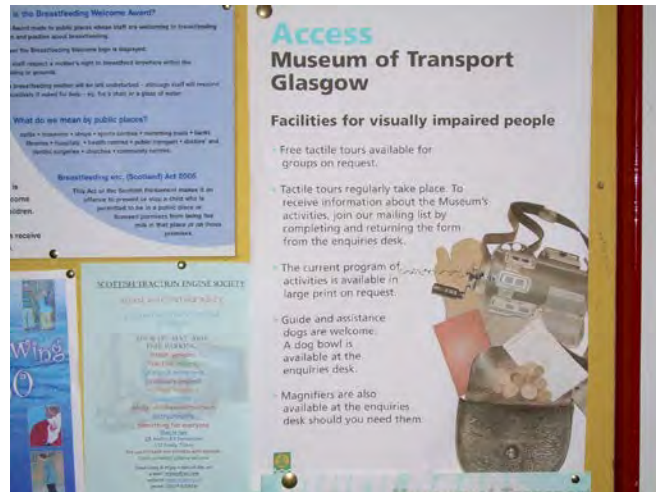
© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Lots of seating and information at a low level and convenient angle



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Clear and practical information



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Include information to listen to, as well as to see, to touch, to smell...



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

A very clear welcome with a seat to rest on



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

A wheelchair is part of a display on technology, not disability



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Things to do set at a low height



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Using all the senses is a useful way of including lots of people



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Give people lots of different ways to get involved and give feedback



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

This display uses an appropriate object as part of the interpretation



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Using the work of a disabled artist to show different perspectives on the human body



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Everyone likes to be able to pick things up and play with them



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Supplying a magnifying glass means that everyone gets more out of their visit



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Touch tours with audio description are popular with many blind and partially sighted people



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Making a tactile map can be simple



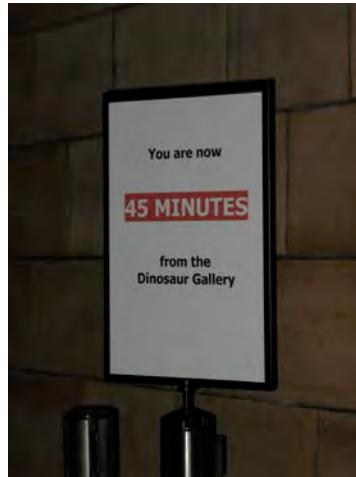
© CHwB Disability Toolkit

This map is accessible to lots of people



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Information about waiting times can be very useful for disabled people - and others



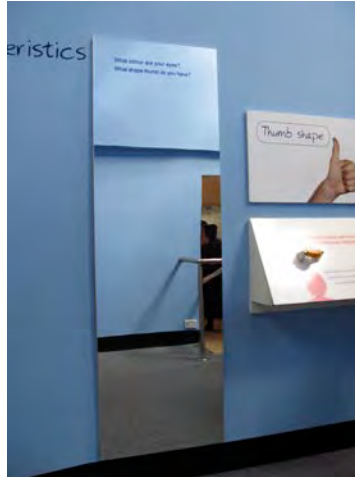
© CHwB Disability Toolkit

This sign is very clear



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Using a full length mirror means that everyone can use it



© CHwB Disability Toolkit

Why look at Disability?

Disabled people experience discrimination and prejudice. This affects our education and training, our social lives and the chances that we will get a job. Many disabled people live daily with the problems created by other people having low expectations of us; our dreams and aspirations are squashed and our hopes for getting training, jobs and careers are quietly ignored or openly mocked.

Yet disabled people are a resource for society, necessary to any society that wants to work well. The idea of inclusion for disabled people, that barriers to access should be brought down is not merely one of civil rights, although it *is* about justice and rights, it is also an issue of quality. Any museum which seeks to experience quality and deliver quality needs to make sure that disabled people have genuine access to buildings, collections, objects and services at every level. In this way, the museum makes sure that it is tapping into a wider pool of skills, talents, experience and information than if it sticks with safe and familiar groups of people.

Museums and heritage sites have an important part to play in society: reflecting what society is like and having an impact on what society is like. Everyone, young people especially, receive our role models partly through museums, heritage and the stories that are told about our world. We learn about the kind of people who are acceptable, respected and valued in our society. It is vital, therefore, that disabled people are visible in our museums.

Disabled people are part of the potential audience for museums. If we exclude disabled people from any area of heritage or the arts, we risk losing a marketing opportunity.

It is vital that disabled people have access to making art and using arts and heritage organisations to tell their stories. If we don't let disabled people do that, then our heritage will not be a true or full reflection of our culture. Communities are made richer when everyone is encouraged to tell their stories and have them heard.



Your museum can tell disabled people's stories. This can be in specific displays about disabled people, or as part of other displays which are about other subjects.

The Social Model of Disability

Introduction

During the second half of the twentieth century, the Disabled People's Movement began. Thinkers and activists within the Movement put forward a way of thinking about disability, which focuses on the barriers which disabled people, rather than on disability as being about medical conditions. They called it the social model, and called the old way of thinking the individual or medical model.

The social model of disability contrasts with the individual model of disability that has mostly defined thinking, policy and practice for the last two hundred years, if not longer.

Individualni model

The Individual Model

Within the individual model of disability, disabled people's difficulties are seen as a direct result of having impairment (their medical condition).

When people like policy makers and managers think about disability in this way they concentrate their efforts on 'compensating' people with impairments for what is 'wrong' with their bodies and on 'helping' disabled people to manage.

The individual model of disability also affects the way disabled people think about themselves. Many disabled people believe the negative message that all disabled people's problems stem from not having 'normal' bodies. Disabled people too can be led to believe that their medical conditions automatically stop them from taking part in social activities. .

The individual model is a *deficit* model; it mostly describes what is wrong, how this person is different from a 'normal' healthy person, the ways in which they fall short.

It will describe

- what they can and can't do;
- what they will continue to be able and unable to do;
- what they need;
- the sort of life they will lead.

The Social Model

The social model of disability makes the important distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'.



I am disabled by stairs, not by my medical condition. If you install a lift, it may mean that this flight of stairs does not disable me

The social model has been put forward by disabled people, who think that the individual model does not provide a proper explanation for the way in which disabled people are excluded from society. Their experiences have shown them that most of their problems are not caused by their impairments, but by the way society is organised.

So, in a social model of disability the key definitions are:

Impairment

An injury, illness, or condition that causes a long-term effect on physical appearance and / or functional problem in the individual. The effect is different from what most people experience.

Disability

The limitation on disabled people's opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others, because of social and environmental barriers.

Disability is shown as being caused by 'barriers' which take no or little account of people who have impairments.

Society disables people who have impairments because the way it has been set up prevents disabled people from taking part in every day life. It follows that if disabled people are to be able to join in mainstream society, the way society is organised must be changed. Removing the barriers which exclude people who have impairments can bring about this change.


"There are two fundamental points that need to be made about the individual model of disability. Firstly, it locates the 'problem' of disability within the individual and secondly it sees the causes of this problem as stemming from the functional limitations or psychological losses, which are assumed to arise from disability.

The genesis, development and articulation of the social model of disability by disabled people themselves is a rejection of all of these fundamentals (Oliver 1990). It does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society. It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation. Further, the consequences of this failure does not simply and randomly fall on individuals but systematically upon disabled people as a group who experience this failure as discrimination institutionalised throughout society."

Mike Oliver -Paper presented at Joint Workshop of the Living Options Group and the Research Unit of the Royal College of Physicians 1990.

The social model of disability has been the most liberating model for people with impairments and it has clearly located the problem not within us but within society.

It is important, as well, to look at how society disables people with impairments through using disabling imagery and representation, for example pictures of disabled people, or the language we use about disabled people. People with impairments are disabled,



excluded and treated with negatively by those who do not think their own bodies as impaired.

Disabling barriers operate at all levels, in job recruitment , in training and education, in funding systems, in access to exhibitions, communication, assumptions, media portrayal in artistic development, in employment opportunities, in the work environment and the social circles associated with this.

Social Model of Disability

The social model is about

Stairs (the physical environment)

and

Stares (the attitudinal environment)

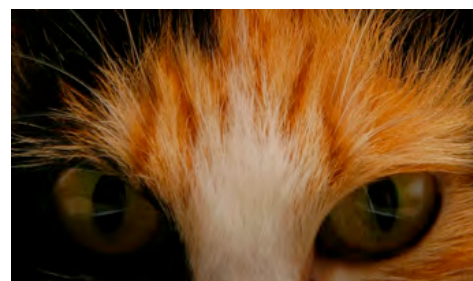
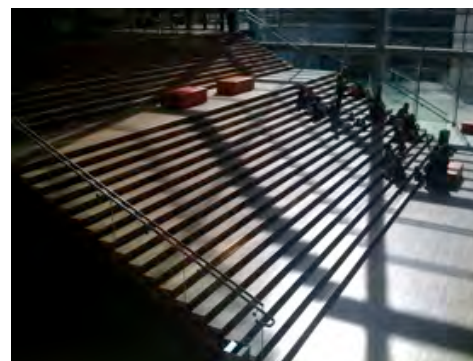
either or both of which can disable someone who has impairments.

Remember:

	Medical Model	Social Model
Focuses on	Individual	Environment
Asks	What's wrong with you?	Where are the obstacles here?
Seeks	Personal Information	Practical Information

The Social Model

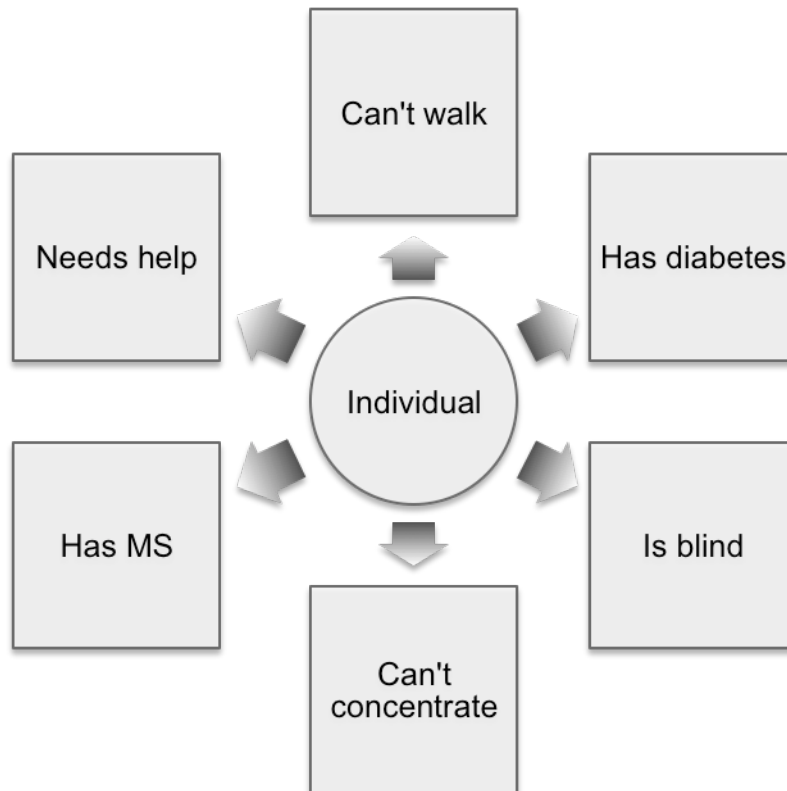
- is based on your existing expertise; in other words, it relies on your knowledge of the environment you work in, not on medical information or skills;
- focuses on your existing circles of influence
- will benefit lots of people other than those who identify as disabled;
- is practically-based and therefore straightforward to implement;
- takes disability equality into the realms of common sense and of customer care, and management.



The social model is about
“stairs” and “stares”

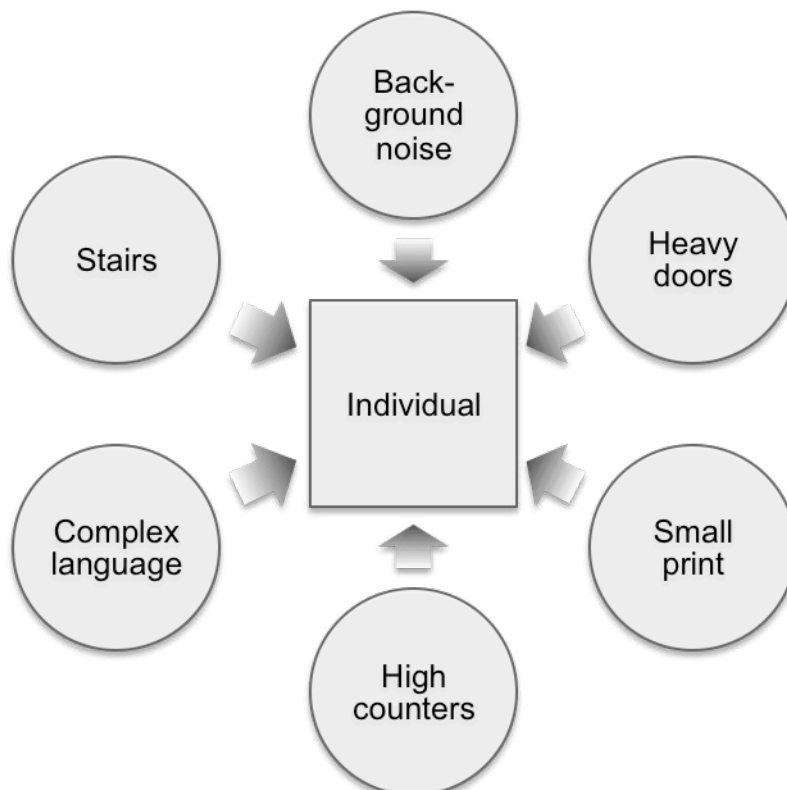
Medical model


Says that the individual has the problem, for example:



The Social model

Says that the environment has the problem, for example:





The social model works – we know how to do this and we can create inclusion and equality.

The medical model doesn't work – at best it may 'cure' or adapt some individual impairments but it will never cure all impairments.

There will always be people with impairments

We *could* stop disabling people

Media Stereotypes of Disabled People

Professor Colin Barnes has done research into society's discrimination of disabled people. He says that the discrimination is made worse by the way the media (newspapers, television, radio) show disabled people. Here is a list of the ways in which disabled people are shown, according to Barnes:

- the disabled person as pitiable and pathetic;
- the disabled person as an object of violence;
- the disabled person as sinister and evil;
- the disabled person provides atmosphere or horror;
- the disabled person as super cripple;
- the disabled person as an object of ridicule;
- the disabled person as their own worst and only enemy;
- the disabled person as burden;
- the disabled person as sexually abnormal;
- the disabled person as incapable of participating fully in community life.

And here are his guidelines for positive portrayals.

Accurate Portrayals

Disabled people and discrimination

When portraying disabled people in the media it is important to remember that the general public have little insight into the environmental and social barriers that prevent them from living full and active lives. Living with disability means being confronted with environmental and social barriers daily; any portrayal of disabled people, in whatever context, which does not reflect this experience is both grossly inaccurate and a major cause of their continued existence.

Disabled people and charity

Avoid depicting disabled individuals as receivers of charity. Show disabled people interacting with both disabled and non-disabled people as equals; giving as well as receiving. Too often disabled individuals are presented solely as recipients of pity.

Disabled people and individuality

Shun one dimensional characterisations of disabled people. Wherever appropriate portray disabled people as having individual and complex personalities with a full range of emotions



You can include disabled people's stories in any of your exhibitions, it doesn't have to be about disability itself. This wheelchair is in a display about technology

from Colin Barnes, *Disabling Imagery and the Media*, British Council of Organisations of Disabled People and Ryburn Publishing Ltd, 1992



and activities.

In common with all human beings disabled individuals experience a variety of emotions such as happiness, depression, anger etc., and play an assortment of roles including lover, parent, provider etc. This variation should be accurately reflected in media portrayals of disabled people.

Disabled people and evil

Avoid presenting physical or intellectual characteristics of any kind as the sole determinants of personality. Be particularly cautious about implying a correlation between impairment and evil.

Disabled people and disability voyeurism

Refrain from presenting disabled people as objects of curiosity. Disabled individuals should be presented as members of an average population or a cast of characters. Disabled people are generally able to participate in all aspects of community life, and should be portrayed in a wide variety of roles and situations.

Disabled people and comedy

A disabled individual should not be ridiculed or made the butt of a joke (blind people or people with visual impairments do not drive cars, play darts or bump into everything in their path; despite the myth making of some script writers, rather limited comedians, and unscrupulous mainstream advertisers).

Disabled people and sensationalism

Avoid the sensational in portrayals of disabled people. Be especially cautious of the stereotype of disabled people as either the victims or the perpetrators of violence.

Disabled people and the super cripple

Resist presenting disabled characters with extra-ordinary abilities or attributes. To do so is to suggest that a disabled individual must over compensate and become super human to be accepted by society.

Disabled people and will-power

Avoid the 'stiff upper lip' type storyline that implies a disabled character need only have the 'will' and the 'right attitude' to succeed.

Disabled people and sexuality

Avoid showing disabled people as sexually abnormal. Do not portray disabled individuals as sexually dead or as sexually degenerate. Show disabled people in loving relationships expressing the same sexual needs and desires. as non-disabled people.

Disabled people and the disabled population

When depicting disabled people in the media ensure that they are representative of the sexual, racial, ethnic, gender and age divisions in the disabled population as a whole .

Disability and Museums

“Disablism blights our society. From getting an education to getting around, building a career to becoming a parent, going out with friends to using the internet, disabled people face many more challenges than their non-disabled fellow citizens and are routinely discriminated against and excluded. Nobody could seriously suggest that disabled people *should* have fewer opportunities than non-disabled people but somehow we find ourselves in a situation where the reality, as lived by disabled people today, would suggest otherwise”¹.

Read that paragraph again. In a sense, it says everything I want you to take away from this article.

Demos (who describe themselves as the ‘London-based thinktank for everyday democracy’) defines disablism as “discriminatory, oppressive or abusive behaviour arising from the belief that disabled people are inferior to others”. The authors add, sardonically, that “you won’t find a definition in a dictionary”².

I am a disabled person. I am also a trainer and consultant working with a variety of organisations, including museums, and I have no doubt: oppression against disabled and deaf people (disablism) is rife in our society and it is largely ‘under the radar’ even of individuals and organisations whose primary concern is equality and human rights issues. We tolerate a practical approach to, and a rhetoric about, disability and disabled and deaf people that is entirely unacceptable and would not be countenanced in relation to any other equality issues in 2009.

I know that equality goes beyond language and window-dressing and I know, too, that there are many individuals and groups of people who put up with shockingly abusive and oppressive attitudes. However, when it comes to disability, I believe that many people do not even know what they *should* think, do or say. They do not even know how to have the conversations. As a result, the systemic change and the cultural shifts are simply not happening.

In 1976 the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation identified a distinction between impairment and disability. The Disabled People’s Movement, a civil rights movement, had been gradually emerging and getting stronger and a politics of disability began to grow.

¹ *Disablism How to tackle the last prejudice*, P. Miller, S. Parker & S. Gillinson, Demos, 2004, p.11

² *ibid* p. 9



Making your museum accessible to disabled people is about looking under the surface and making sure inclusion goes all the way through the organisation

Michèle Taylor, Freelance trainer and Consultant

This is an amended version of an article that appeared in engage, the international journal of visual art and gallery education, no 23, spring 2009

Academics such as Mike Oliver³ started to express this as the ‘social model of disability’.

The social model was formulated in direct contrast to the individual model, which has dominated how we think about disability and disabled and deaf people for centuries and it is at the bottom of those attitudes and experiences outlined above.

The individual model is a deficit model which focuses on what is wrong with the individual, how they differ from a ‘normal’ healthy person and the ways in which they cannot function. Medical professionals and policy makers using the individual model will look at ways of compensating disabled people with ‘special’ and targeted provision.

Sub-divisions of the individual model include the medical model (which is based on an assumption that disabled and deaf people need to be cured or normalised) and the charity model (which is based on an assumption that disabled people are receivers of individuals’ and society’s resources and beneficence, rather than being contributors).

From an individual model point of view, people are disabled by things such as cerebral palsy, injuries, brain damage, multiple sclerosis, blindness and epilepsy.

The social model challenges this understanding.

The distinction between impairment and disability is crucial. Impairment is an injury, illness or congenital condition that causes (or is likely to cause) a long-term effect on physical appearance and/or limitation of function that differs from what is usual. Disability, though, is what a disabled or deaf person encounters when they have to contend with barriers which society places in the way of their easy and full functioning. It describes the loss or limitation of opportunity to participate in society on an equal level with others because of social, attitudinal and environmental barriers.


The social model, then, says that people are disabled by things such as stairs, narrow doorways, high display cabinets, small print, information in one format, interpretation text written on glass, ignorance, skewed imagery and representation of disabled people and complex language.

The individual model fundamentally supports assumptions and a power imbalance that the social model challenges. It perpetuates and sustains disablism since it necessarily sees impairment (or ‘disability’ in its own terms) as negative, to be pitied, to be remedied, to be feared and avoided.

I cannot recommend highly enough the social model as a basis for policy and practice in your Museum. Not because it is a consistent and watertight political system, or because it is a robust philosophical framework. Frankly, I am not convinced that it is either of those things⁴. However, I am utterly wedded to the social model as the only constructive basis for a practical approach that works. This is not least because it is an empowering model for organisations who are providing goods, facilities and services and who are employing people. The factors that cause disability within the individual model are completely outside the control of professionals managing and staffing museums and galleries. The factors that

³ For example, *The Politics of Disablement*, MacMillan 1990

⁴ See as well, for example, Liz Crow, “Including All of Our Lives: renewing the social model of disability” in *Exploring the Divide: Illness and Disability* C. Barnes and G. Mercer (ed), the Disability Press, 1996 for a critique of the original understanding of the social model



disable people within a social model understanding are aspects of the environment which those people (you!) create, sustain and are part of. To put it bluntly, you have control over whether the environment you create disables me or not.

In summary:

where the individual model locates the problem with the individual, the social model locates it within the environment; the social model shifts the gaze from the individual to the environment

where the individual model asks, “what’s wrong with you?”, the social model asks, “where are the barriers here?”

where the individual model asks for all sorts of irrelevant and personal information, the social model asks for information only on a need to know basis.

The questions staff ask, and language more generally, can be checked against the social model: will the answer actually tell you what you need to do or to change? If not the question probably comes from the individual model with all its built-in imbalance and oppression.

An important side-effect of taking seriously the social model is that removing barriers will inevitably benefit people other than the disabled and deaf people for whom the barriers were most obvious.

Of course the legislative context is important. Here in Britain, the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and its subsequent amendments (including the amendments of the Disability Discrimination Act (2005)) provide a backdrop of legal duties. Fundamentally, disabled and deaf people were given a new right not to be unjustifiably discriminated against in a number of areas including the provision of goods, facilities and services and employment. Museums, like other organisations, must ensure that they make ‘reasonable adjustment’ to their policies, procedures, practices and premises to ensure that disabled and deaf people are not treated less favourably on account of their impairment⁵. Organisations that are public bodies must fulfil six general duties given in the 2005 amendment. These duties require organisations to be pro-active in ensuring equality for disabled and deaf people.

It is important to recognise that there is a large gap between compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act on the one hand and best practice on the other.


The wider framework includes the UN Convention on The Rights of Disabled People, which was adopted on 13th December 2006. This aspires to “ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity”⁶. In addition, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “[e]veryone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts ...”⁷.

To understand all of these issues is to understand something of the task an organisation faces when it is serious about engaging with disabled and deaf people. It is not about

⁵ The DDA itself uses language that is more consistent with the individual model.

⁶ Article 1

⁷ Article 27



isolated, ad hoc solutions to specific issues within the organisation (no matter how well-intentioned). The cultural sector is fond of using the word strategic; it might be helpful to think instead of solutions being *systemic*. To adopt systemic understanding and approach will provide a strong basis for making meaningful, respectful and effective changes to the way an organisation works.

A Museum is a system; each team or department is a system. A Museum operates *within* systems and these systems include the wider society which (as I hope I've shown) is fundamentally opposed, or at least resistant, to the equality of disabled people. Disabled and deaf visitors and potential visitors, staff and potential staff, board members and potential board members operate within systems. Museums must understand these systems and appreciate the disablism within them in order to engage fully with disabled and deaf people.


It is importantly about the practicalities: marketing; how people get into and around buildings, displays, exhibitions and information; how artefacts are described, interpreted and physically positioned. However, it is also about much more than that. It is about how Museums convince disabled and deaf people that we really are welcome in your building or event; on your board; in the work that is exhibited. It is about how disabled and deaf people are portrayed in publicity materials. It is about how staff are trained to be confident, comfortable and resourceful around disabled and deaf people. It is about working culture and how it suits disabled and deaf people or not. In short, it is about how far Museums are prepared to question the whole way the systems of that organisation are run.

My own view is that, whereas 20 years ago disabled people were on the outside looking *in*, we are now on the inside looking *on*. In other words, we are very often allowed into the buildings and events, but once we get there, there is not a lot for us to participate in, not much in the way of artefacts, artworks, or interpretation in which we see ourselves and very little in the way of activities where we can join in on our own – and equal - terms.

This, inevitably, is where we get to if we concentrate only in thinking about access. We need a bigger idea, a more systems-based view in order to think in terms of real inclusion and the involvement of disabled and deaf people.

Of course it is important to think about access. From a social model perspective, it is vital to review your environments and expose the barriers. A good start is to think in terms of physical barriers, sensory barriers, intellectual barriers, attitudinal barriers and you may need to (you should) talk to disabled and deaf people to ensure that you have identified all the issues. You then need to engage with some creative problem-solving in order to come up with ways of removing those barriers. Where these are expensive or where they require resources you do not have, you need to rethink and come up with cheaper easier ways of achieving the same result. For example, if there is not the budget to install automatic doors, can you at least put in a doorbell (at an appropriate height!) so that someone who cannot manage the doors independently can at least alert staff to the fact that they are there and need help? Where you cannot redesign the serving counter at the café, can you train staff to provide discreet table service?

The most important *systemic* things you can do in your organisation are to:

- 
- instigate a rolling programme of Disability Equality Training (based on the social model of disability) to ensure you have a 'disability-confident' staff team
 - consult disabled and deaf people to ensure you are really meeting people's needs
 - embed inclusive practice into your policy and practice around exhibition design and programming
 - plan for other improvements over time: nobody expects you to solve all the problems overnight
 - talk to other museums to share ideas and resources
 - It is a paradox: in purely practical terms, this is not difficult. Three simple stages are all it takes:
 - identify the barrier
 - understand why it is a barrier
 - remove it

What might be difficult is that a Museum that takes this seriously may find themselves 'swimming against the tide' as they challenge other, bigger systems.

Museums, telling stories and keeping artefacts in trust for society, can be an agent for change for disabled and deaf people in society. There is a great deal more that needs to happen as well but the contribution you can make can be vital. A systemic approach will ensure that engagement with disabled and deaf people goes beyond simply providing access to what you have to offer.

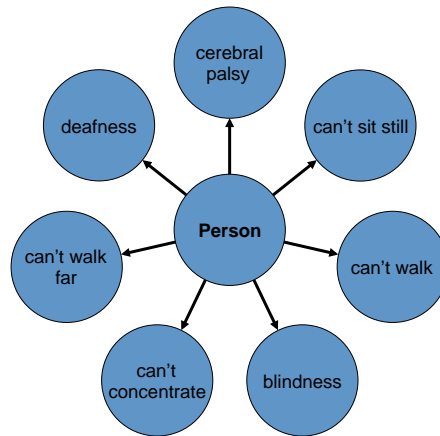
The Niarchos Disability Projects

Social Model of Disability

Medical Model of Disability

The Medical Model focuses on
the individual

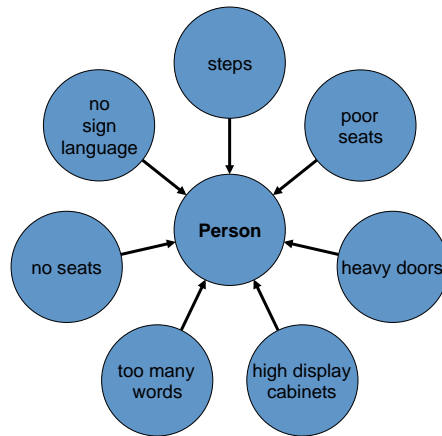
Medical Model



Social Model of Disability

The Social Model focuses on
the environment

Social Model



Causes of Disability

Medical model

e.g.

Blindness

Deafness

Paralysis

Accidents

Violence

Genetic disorders

Illness

Social model

e.g.

Steps

Cobbles

Heavy doors

Attitude

Employment practices

Poor customer care

Social model of disability

Medical	Social
Individual	Environment
What's wrong with you?	Where are the obstacles here?
Personal information	Practical Information

Social Model of Disability

This means looking for *obstacles*

And then seeking creative solutions

It Also Means

recognising obstacles such as

- attitude
- expectations
- stereotypes and assumptions

The Good News...

- The Social Model empowers your Museums
- Your Museums can make a difference to how disabled people are seen...
- ...and how they see themselves

Identifying Barriers and Solutions

Think about your museum. What barriers do you still have, that might stop disabled people visiting?

How might these barriers be removed?

	Barriers	Solutions
Your building		
Marketing		

	Barriers	Solutions
Exhibitions and displays		
Staff Attitudes		

	Barriers	Solutions
Policy / Organisational Culture		
Other		

QUICK CHECKLIST on how you are doing in providing services for disabled people

How to use this checklist

Using this checklist will provide you with a quick overview of:

- the things you're doing well;
- the things you need to improve;
- things you may not even have thought about yet.

You may want to talk about the results with other colleagues.

The quick checklist will also help you to identify the areas where you may wish to concentrate your effort for the more detailed assessment.

(This document is adapted from Museums, Libraries and Archives, UK)

Do you:	Tick if you are doing this well	Tick if you need to improve this	Tick if you have not thought about this yet
1. Talk to a wide range of disabled people to help you improve your museum?			
2. Set up specific events or opportunities at your museum for disabled people?			
3. Think about what you offer your visitors so that you can encourage disabled people to visit your museum?			
4. Create environments that are easy for disabled people to use?			
5. Make sure your staff are able to provide support for disabled people?			
6. Promote your museum as a place for disabled people?			
7. Evaluate your services, programmes and activities?			

Writing an Access Guide

Remember - look at examples from other organisations.

Remember - it is very important that you give accurate information.

A. Getting there

Can visitors easily get to your museum by public transport?

Is there any parking? Is any of it reserved for disabled people?

Is the Museum easy to find and is the main entrance easy to find?

Is there more than one entrance? If so, is it clear which one might be better for some disabled visitors to use (for example, if there are steps at your main entrance, do you have another entrance without steps)?

B. Entrances and internal doors

Are there any steps, or a ramp, or is it level?

Are steps and ramps clearly marked?

Do steps and ramps have handrails?

Are doorways wide enough for someone in a wheelchair to get through?

Are doors light enough to be opened easily, or are they automatic, do they slide or swing open?

What is the ground and floor surface like (for example, is it shiny tiling, or carpet, or rubber matting)?

Do you have to pay to get into this Museum? If so, are there any concessionary prices available for disabled people, and do you need someone to give you any proof that they are disabled)?

C. Getting around


Describe any corridors (for example, are they wide, narrow, dark, light, usually busy, usually quiet?).

Do all your spaces (for example, exhibition areas and foyers) have plenty of clear space for a wheelchair user or someone using sticks or crutches to navigate easily, including turning round?

Describe the colour scheme (for example, is there good colour contrast or is it hard to distinguish walls from floors?)



An access guide needs to include basic information such as finding your way around the building



Are doors in a contrasting colour so that they can be easily noticed?

Is there music or other sound playing? If so, is it loud, would you be willing to turn it down if asked?

Are there stairs? If so, are they clearly marked and do they have handrails?

Are there lifts? If so, are the doors wide enough to allow a wheelchair user in? Are the buttons low enough for small people or people in wheelchairs to use? Are the buttons marked in Braille? Is it clear which floors are which? Is there a mirror on the back wall of the lift? Does the lift have spoken information to tell users which floor they are at and when the doors are opening and closing?

Are there seats available around the Museum?

D. Signage and information

Is it easy to find information?

Is information available in different formats (Braille, audio, large print?)

Are signs easy to see? Are the letters big enough? Do they have good colour contrast with the background?

Do signs use pictures as well as words?

Is it easy to find your way around the museum using the signs?

Do you have any induction loops in your museum? If so, in which areas?

E. Social and reception areas

Do these areas seem to get busy, or are they big enough for the number of people who usually use it?

Is it easy to move around these areas and to see where to move onto to start your visit to the museum?

Are these areas dark or light?

Is there music or other sound playing? If so, is it loud?

Are surfaces of counters and desks at two different heights?

Can furniture in café areas be moved around?


Do staff seem to be sensitive to people's needs and willing to help?

Have your staff been trained in disability equality?

If you have a café, is there information about people's dietary requirements?

F. Toilets

Are there plenty of toilets?



Are there accessible toilets?

Are they well signposted and easy to get to?

Are they clean and kept well-stocked?

Are there baby changing facilities? And in the accessible toilets?

Are the accessible toilets kept clear of clutter?

G. Galleries and exhibitions

Are exhibitions designed so that it is easy to see everything? Can a small person or someone in a wheelchair see all the exhibits?

Are there any exhibits that can be touched?

Are labels in different formats? Are they large enough and is it positioned so that most people will be able to read them. Are they written in easy to understand language?

Is it clear whether there is a preferred route round the exhibition?

Is there a catalogue? If so, is it available in different formats?

Are there any audio tours available?

Are there any Sign Language interpreted events?

H. General

How long would you allow for a trip to this Museum?

Why would a disabled person want to visit this museum?

Are there other nearby Museums that visitors might find interesting?

Would this be a good Museum to bring children to?

Presenting a Proposal

You may need to present a proposal to convince people to fund a project or a programme of work with disabled people. This may mean presenting to an external audience or to people within your own organisation to get support for a project.

Your presentation must convince the audience that this is a good project and persuade them to invest in it.

You must know your audience - what their priorities are, and the sorts of work they are likely to support.

Make sure you include the following elements:

1. your overall aims for the project (and include how the project fits into the overall aims and character of your museum)
2. the objectives (those smaller, measurable tasks that will contribute to realising the aims)
3. your target group for the project
4. activity details (what will happen, where, when and for how long)
5. which members of staff will be involved at every stage
6. details of how you will evaluate the project, including things you did not expect
7. the timescale (when you will plan, deliver, review)
8. resources you need (people, time, money, research, anything else)
9. any risks to the success of the project and how you will avoid them
10. be passionate, make the audience share your enthusiasm
11. has this been done anywhere else and if so, are there lessons to learn?
12. how will you share your learning from this project with other museums?
13. why should they support this project, what are the wider benefits?



If you want funding for a project, you need to be able to convince the people with money that it is worthwhile

Writing an Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

An overview of your project and an introduction to the things you have learned

2. What did you do?

What were your aims and objectives? (These should be in your original application form)

How did you go about planning, delivering and reviewing your project?

What actually happened, when, where and who was involved (staff, other experts and participants)?

What partnerships did you develop? (Who did you work with, especially disabled people?)

4. What did you learn?

Did you meet your objectives?

If so, how and why and how do you know?

If not, why not and how do you know?

What lessons did you learn?

What (if anything) would you do differently next time?

5. Other impact

Impact means the things that happened as a result of the project or the difference that your project made; for example, to disabled people, to other visitors, to staff or to the whole museum.

Did anything happen as a result of the project that you haven't already described? For example, have there been more disabled visitors generally to your museum? Or have other visitors commented that they like the changes you've made? Or maybe staff who haven't been directly involved in the project have shown an interest in bringing disability into their work.

Did the project have any impact on your museum as a whole organisation? How do you know?



For any exhibition, project, workshop or new idea, you need to find out if it worked. For example, do people find these stools useful and, if not, is there something you can do to increase their usefulness? Evaluation is about learning so that you can plan better in the future.



6. Budget

Include a summary of the project budget.

Explain any changes from your original budget

Was this as anticipated?

If not, why not?

7. Conclusions

Summarise your learning and what you might do next to develop your museum's work with disabled people.

Discuss how others might use your learning.

The Niarchos Disability Projects

Applying for Funds

Your organisation

Funders will be looking for:

- The size of the organisation
- How many staff
- How much money are you used to handling?

This is about what, in English, is called **capacity**

Do they believe you can deliver the project?

The project (1)

They will be looking for:

- The project 'in a nutshell'
- Whether you are clear about what you want to achieve (the aims)
- Whether you are clear about the steps you need to take to get there (the objectives)
- Whether it happens in the right time period
- Whether the objectives are SMART

This is about **clarity**

The project (2)

They will be looking for:

- How important this project is in your museum
- Whether you are bringing in help from other people
- Whether and how disabled people are taking an active role in the project

Evaluating the project

They will be looking for:

- How you will be able to show you that their money has been well spent
- How you will learn from the project

This is about the value of the project

Support

The will be looking for:

- How much you have thought about their needs
- How their money will have longer benefit for the museum

Costs

They will be looking for:

- How realistic you are being about what the project will cost
- How this relates to your overall spending
- Whether their money is being used efficiently

Declaration

They will be looking for:

- Support from someone high up in the museum

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Policy and Planning
or Knowing What You're Doing
and Why You're Doing It

What is policy?

- Statement of quality and commitment to the public
- Statement of responsibility and accountability
- Showing HOW a museums mission works in practice
- Showing HOW resources will be allocated and used to reach certain goals

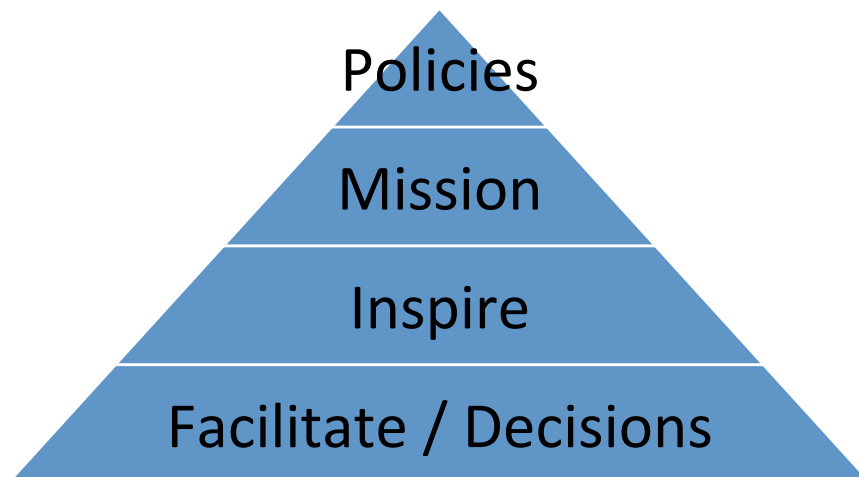
Place of policy

“Without a fully understood mission, policies remain an empty form. However, when they are supportive of an agreed mission, policies can be directed more effectively towards a common end”

(Source: *The Manual of Museum Management*, Lord & Lord, HMSO 2000, p7)

Mission and Policies

(Lord & Lord 2000)



Main components

- A statement of goals
- A statement of functions
- Level of quality
- Realistic standards
- Relate to the present AND the future

- It should be comprehensive

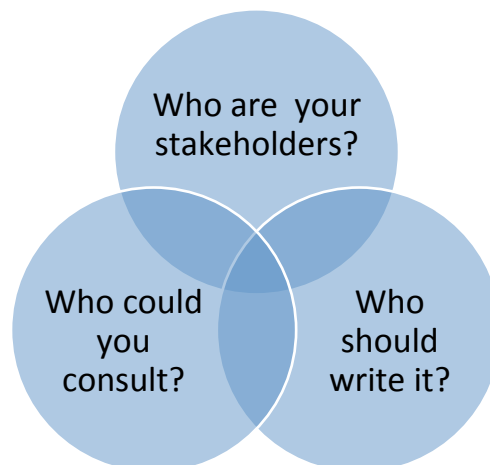
Who is it for?

- Directors
- Trustees
- Boards
- Staff
- Public
- Other stakeholders (funders, press etc)

Developing policy

- Who are your stakeholders?
- Who needs to be consulted?
- Who should write it?

Brainstorm



Giving it life

- Monitoring
 - Who can monitor it?
 - How often should this happen
- Review
 - When should it be updated?

Planning for Disability Equality

Area of work	In 1 month	In 6 months	What I need
Buildings			
Exhibitions			
Information			
Staff			
Education			

The Niarchos Disability Projects

Preparing an Access Guide

What is an Access Guide?

- It is a document which gives deaf and disabled people vital information if they are to visit your museum and get as much out of it as anyone else
- This means that you need to include any barriers that remain as well as things you have done to remove obstacles

What do I Need to Include?

This is a decision for you to make.

Some museums include a great deal of detailed information and others only give a basic level.

Either way, make sure people know how to get further details – and that the people staffing those ‘phones or e-mails are properly briefed; you can’t anticipate everyone’s information needs so you need to be responsive

Think Creatively

One of our favourite examples is the one from the Ironbridge museum.

It tells you how long you are likely to want to spend in each museum – this is really useful information since it allows people to decide what their energy levels can cope with.

Use your imagination, what would *you* want to know (and be prepared that all sorts of visitors might find your Access Guide useful!)

Remember

- Pictures are especially useful
- If and when you have a website, include the Access Guide on it, and make it downloadable
- Your Guide must include “the good, the bad and the ugly”!

Guidelines On Involving And Consulting Disabled People

1. ***Start with a 'blank sheet of paper' and let disabled people tell you what's important***

Be open and honest about the things that can't be done and about how you will use any comments (will they be treated as suggestions, recommendations or as things that absolutely must be done?)

2. ***Understand your starting point and set realistic objectives and timescales***

Discuss what the disabled people you are consulting might need in order to be useful to you, for example training or other learning opportunities.

3. ***Establish wide support within your organisation for consulting users***

This can increase value for money and help staff understand why you're doing it.

4. ***Identify and develop relationships with user 'champions' early on***

User 'champions' are disabled people who will understand what you are trying to do in your museum, believe it is important and have influence amongst disabled people locally, They play an important role in telling you about difficulties and in motivating others to take part.

5. ***Draw up a profile of users and potential users***

Use different ways of consulting to make sure you get a spread of views.

6. ***Don't rely on paper-based communication***

This is not useful for many disabled people. You may need to send e-mails, spend time on the 'phone or even meet people face to face.

7. ***Involve users in writing questions***

Questionnaires and surveys can put people off right from the beginning if the questions are not right so get advice before you write anything.

8. ***Consider using open-ended interviews and discussions with users***

This can lead to more honest and transparent feedback.



Make sure you meet people's access requirements, for example booking Sign Language Interpreters

Adapted from Museums Libraries and Archives (UK)



9. Meet users at a time and place convenient to them

That way you make sure you are respecting their access requirements.

10. Don't expect users to behave like paid staff

However, they should be paid for their contribution in whatever ways you can manage. You must pay expenses, and you may want to consider a fee.

11. Set your priorities based on what matters most to users.

12. Provide regular feedback to users

Tell them about what they said to you and what you are changing as a result.

Partnerships - factors of success

During our work, we have noticed that some aspects of partnership working need to be right if the partnership is to be effective.

1. Partner organisations need to be equal in the partnership
2. Everyone in the partner organisations needs to understand the benefits of the partnership; if only one or two people in the organisation support the partnership, it is going to be difficult for that organisation to be fully involved.
3. All partner organisations need to agree aims and objectives and say that they are committed to them.
4. All partner organisations need to be realistic about how much time and other resources the work might need, and show that they can give that time and other resources
5. Ideally, all partner organisations need to understand that they might need to change the culture of their organisation if they are going to be successful in the work
6. There needs to be good, clear communication between partners, probably between named individuals in each organisation; this helps keep it simple.
7. All partners need to have realistic expectations of what the work might achieve.

Can you think of others from your experience?



One advantage of partnerships is that you may be able to share a larger organisation's resources

The Niarchos Disability Projects

Consulting Deaf and Disabled People

A survey shows that libraries, museums and libraries and archives who were “high performers” (scoring on at least 85 of 125 indicators) were around:

- 50% more likely to carry out informal consultation with users than “low performers”
- 4 times more likely to hold events designed to allow people to comment
- 4 times more likely to consult user groups
- 10 times more likely to pilot new services with users and non-users
- 10 times more likely to consult non-users

Partnership

- Consultation should be based on a partnership approach rather than a provider approach.
- This way, people will feel a sense of ownership and will be more likely to get involved

To consider...

- You need to manage expectations
- You need to pay people's expenses
- It may be appropriate to pay people for their time
- Identify the gatekeepers
- What kind of model would best suit your Museum?
- Get the access right!!



Developing Local Partnerships with Disabled People

Ivan Kručićan, National Museum of Serbia, Belgrade

Trying to develop an inclusive approach and to organise exhibitions and other events in the National Museum in Belgrade, we had to check out the needs of disabled people and plan how we could meet those needs

At first everything was straightforward, because people from different organisations of disabled people wanted to help and were thrilled with the idea. Soon we discovered that they were inexperienced and didn't know exactly what to ask for. This was mainly because of lack of accessible cultural offer (apart from concerts in a few concert halls in Belgrade). So, the most logical way of thinking was to try to make our regular museum exhibitions and events available for a wider audience. But then, we faced other problems, for example that most of our galleries were either inaccessible for wheelchair users, or touching was forbidden or there were not enough explanations..

Unfortunately, even working together with disabled people's organisations, we started using the medical approach at first, not even knowing what it was. This beginner's mistake helped us learn a lot. We recognised the usual problem, not just in Belgrade or Serbia, but also elsewhere in the region: that is that we have to use a different understanding of what disabled people need and expect. Most of the organisations were using different terminology, but the problem was not just in the use of language, but in quite different approaches and ways of understanding the problems and searching for possible solutions.


This is where the guidance of CHwB experts was very helpful, because they helped us recognise our mistakes and they guided us through both a more helpful use of words and also through approaches and ways to solve problems.

Cooperation with disabled people's organisations became much better after we went through CHwB's series of workshops and programs.

In order to develop partnership, we started from our own potential and resources. It turned out that both sides had a lot to offer and we were helping each other find better models for the future. So, from the first modest steps towards inclusion, until today, when we are working together with several organisations on different projects, there were a few phases.

At first we were trying just to make some exhibits accessible and to improve physical access. Later, we started thinking more about the lack of artistic education among disabled people and started working together with their organisations on education and explanations of the most important subjects and movements they're interested in.

After that, we started using the resources of disabled people's organisations to inform more disabled people about events they could attend.



After several inclusive exhibitions, we have managed to encourage more individuals to visit us, but also to keep up the good work with organisations and groups.

Now, we have several projects going on. The Library of the Association of the Blind was incomplete and now we want to fill in the gap they have in texts about art and culture. Through very good cooperation with several other organisations (The Serbian Society for Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, The Association of Deaf and others), we are starting a wider project with support of some other cultural institutions. As state strategy is to improve access, according mainly to a legal framework, organisations of disabled people have found out that there are a few cultural institutions that have already improved their access and that others that are making first steps towards inclusion. In order to avoid different beginner's mistakes, we have decided to prepare and publish an inclusion guide book, with some theoretical explanations, but mainly with case studies and practical examples of good and bad practice and the ways things were done here so far. The platform for this project is still not fully defined, but it will include partnerships with around 10 institutions (state and NGO).

The partnership with Association of the Blind, which was already very positive. was recently improved still further, because we have been given permission to use their recording studio for making audio files for the library for the blind.

Our last project is also the result of a good partnership with Association of Deaf. Next year, our parliament will vote for the new law that will improve the treatment of deaf people and sign language. Translators in public institutions will be compulsory, but the organisation of deaf doesn't have enough interpreters. Even if it had, it would be a great problem to pay them for every event, because the budgets of all public institutions are being cut. There is an idea to organise training and education for sign language for people employed in public institution and after that to continue to work together with the Association of Deaf on different projects where will be able to practice and improve.

We are now experienced enough to avoid first mistakes. At first all of us were relying on our enthusiasm and whenever we had a project, its success would depend on some third party, other than the Museum or partner organisation, it could possibly happen that something went wrong or more often late. We are now approaching our aims much more realistically and if two or more partners are included we are setting more flexible deadlines.

Examples - Further Information

Here is a list of the examples documents you have in the toolkit, with details of where they are from and some additional websites to look at to find more examples. All of the documents are used with permission.

Document Title	Produced by
Australian Maritime Museum Access Guide	Used with permission of the Australian Maritime Museum
The British Museum Access Information	Used with permission of The British Museum
Discovery Museum Access Information	Used with permission of the Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Service
Hertford Museum Access Guide	Used with permission of Hertford Museum
Natural History Museum, London, Access Information	Used with permission of the Natural History Museum

Other Information	Can be Found At
Fitzwilliam Museum Access Information for Visitors	http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/visit/access/
Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design, the Smithsonian Institute	http://www.si.edu/Accessibility/SGAED
An Access Guide to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum	http://www.ironbridge.org.uk/assets/Uploads/accessguide.pdf
Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum Access Guide	http://www.nrm.org.uk/html/a_guide.html



Access guide



Auslan interpreter Chevo Brown provides commentary on a tour of the HMB Endeavour replica

The museum aims to offer maximum access to its exhibitions and facilities. If you have a question or comment about access, please phone +61 2 9298 3777. For group bookings, please phone our bookings officer on +61 2 9298 3655.

Find out how to [get to the museum](#).

If you are visiting with children, you can find everything you need to know in our [Parents' survival guide](#).

Accessible parking

Two dedicated accessible parking spaces are located outside the main entry to the museum. To pre-book parking, please call +61 2 9298 3777.

Getting around the museum

There is ramp access into the main museum building via the main entrance. There is lift or ramp access to all exhibition spaces within the main building, and to wharves and the viewing platform outside the museum. There is limited access onto the vessels. For more information, please phone +61 2 9298 3777.

Courtesy wheelchairs are available and require a refundable deposit and photo ID. To pre-book a wheelchair, please phone +61 2 9298 3777.

Accessible toilets are located on the museum lower level (accessible by lift and walkway) and in the ground level entry foyer.

Hearing and vision impaired services and programs

- Audio-induction loops are available in the theatre, main ticket areas and museum meeting rooms. Please phone +61 2 9298 3777 for more information. Interactive displays are located throughout the museum.
- The museum runs Auslan-interpreted programs for the deaf community and programs such as descriptive touch tours for visitors with vision impairment. Please phone +61 2 9298 3777 for more information.
- [Flags Ahoy!](#) is an annual display at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour Sydney NSW, celebrating International Day of People with Disability. The program is designed and run in partnership with community and disability groups from across New South Wales.

Carers information

Carers are offered free access to all our vessels. Please present your carers' card or companion card when purchasing tickets.

Access to our website

Change text size

To change the text size of our website pages in Internet Explorer, click on 'View' in the menu at the top of the page, select 'Text Size' and adjust to suit. For information about how to change the text size in other browsers, such as Firefox, Netscape, Opera and Safari, visit the [W3C web accessibility website](#).

On your computer

You can make other changes to help you better access your computer, such as:

- magnify the screen
- make your mouse pointer easier to see
- change colours
- enable the computer's 'narrator', a text-to-speech function.

To make these changes using the Accessibility options provided by Windows, go to Start > All programs > Accessories and select Accessibility.

USEFUL LINKS

[What's on](#)

[Ticket prices and group visits](#)

[Getting here](#)

[Guided visits](#)

[Visiting](#)

[Access](#)

[English](#)

[Deutsch](#)

[Español](#)

[Français](#)

[Italiano](#)

[Русский](#)

[中文](#)

[日本語](#)

[한국어](#)

Access



Museum entrances

The Great Russell Street entrance has 12 steps with a handrail.

There are self-operable lifts on both sides of the steps.

There is level access at the Montague Place entrance.

For information: +44 (0)20 7323 8299

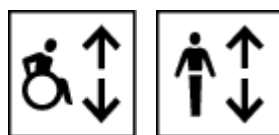


Borrow a wheelchair

Wheelchairs are available at both entrances to borrow for your visit.

Unfortunately the Museum cannot provide assistance around the Museum for wheelchair users.

Companion tickets to all exhibitions and events are free of charge.



Lifts and access to galleries

The majority of galleries and all special exhibitions are fully accessible.

Free plans of the Museum are available in the Great Court, these show the location of lifts.

[View the location of lifts and galleries on the floorplan.](#)



Guide and assistance dogs

Guide and assistance dogs are welcome. Dog bowls are available.

Ask at the Information Desk in the Great Court.



Disabled parking

There are a limited number of p available for disabled visitors to

Please telephone +44 (0)20 73: hours in advance.

You will need to provide the det registration number, make and and the date of your visit.



Seating

There are benches and stools in Seating is available in selected

Ask at the Information Desk in t

Please telephone +44 (0)20 7323 8299 in advance.



Sound enhancement system / Induction loops

Induction loops operate in the Clore Centre and Information Desk.

A sound enhancement system with portable induction loops is available for most gallery talks and eyeOpener tours.



British Sign Language (BSL)

Signed gallery talks are programmed once a month at the Museum.

[See events calendar](#)

[BSL Multimedia Guide of 200 objects available](#)

[BSL translations of 18 highlight objects](#)



Handling sessions

The Museum runs daily hands on sessions in [selected galleries](#).

Touch tours

A touch tour is available for the [Gallery \(Room 4\)](#) and the [Parthenon \(Room 18\)](#), which has Braille lab cast reliefs of the Parthenon sculptures.



Multimedia guides

Over 200 audio descriptions of the Museum's highlight objects with interactive map of the galleries.

Sponsored by Korean Air

[Book online](#)

[BSL Multimedia Guide](#)

[Children's multimedia guide](#)

Ask at the Multimedia Guide Desk



Access provision for groups

- Accompanied visits with a Museum volunteer
- Tailored handling sessions around a group-specific interest area for learning disabled
- Tailored sign interpreted talks addressing group-specific interest areas of the collection

If a member or members of your group require access provision please contact Jane Samuels, Access Manager, at least six weeks in advance of your visit on +44 (0)20 7323 8506 or

jsamuels@britishmuseum.org

[Download Disability Equality Scheme and Action plan](#)

Enewsletter sign up

Follow the British Museum

Share britishmuseum.org

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Access Information for Discovery Museum

Entrance

The approach to the main gate from the car park and footpath is tarmac. At the main gate there is a gentle slope to the main entrance. Automatic sliding doors lead into the main entrance dominated by 'Turbinia', the first steam powered ship. Here you will also find the Information Desk and shop area.

Getting around

Inside the Museum there are lifts and stairs providing access to all floors. All lifts have voice announcers and Braille indicators. The Museum is spread out across the lower ground, ground, first and second floors with access to the fourth floor when exhibitions are showing in the Great Hall. The café is on the second floor.

All floors have level access, with ramped access from lower ground to ground floor in the main entrance. Stairs have raised tactile indicators on the handrails. Part of the Newcastle Story gallery has a raised track floor to guide you around.

Large static visual and touch orientation maps are in production to help you find your way around each floor of the Museum.

Seating

Chairs with armrests can be found in the main entrance. On the first floor there is bench seating in Working Lives Gallery and Tyneside Challenge. There are seats with arms and bench seating in the Soldier's Life gallery. The Story of the Tyne, Tyneside Challenge and Working Lives galleries have seats with arms and bench seating. There are seats with arms and a sofa in Live Wires. On the second floor there is bench seating in Science Maze and a relaxing resource area with sofas in Fashion Works.

Borrowing a wheelchair

Two wheelchairs are available for visitor use. They can be found at the main entrance. Please ask at the Information Desk.

Public telephone

The shop telephone can be used on request for emergencies or to book taxis for disabled people.

Gallery plans

Standard, large print and Braille plans are available from the Information Desk.

Pre-visit information

Pre-visit information packs are available to borrow for free for blind and partially sighted people to plan a visit. Please contact the museum. The packs include:

- Large print museum leaflet
- Braille museum leaflet
- Large print detailed guide to the museum and its facilities
- Braille detailed guide to the museum and its facilities
- Audio CD detailed guide to the museum and its facilities
- Audio tape detailed guide to the museum and its facilities
- Large print maps of the museum floors
- Braille and tactile (touch) maps of the museum floors

Dogs

We welcome assistance dogs. The Information Desk can provide a bowl of water.

Induction loops

Induction points are fitted in Story of the Tyne, Tyneside Challenge and Working Lives. An induction loop is fitted in the Great Hall. Counter loops are fitted to the shop, Information Desk, Tyne & Wear Museums' reception and café.

The displays

Most audio points also have text versions beside them. The audio visual displays in Story of the Tyne, Tyneside Challenge and Working Lives are subtitled. There is BSL interpretation added to the North East Innovators video screen outside Tyneside Challenge.

Audio guides

A general 'highlights' audio guide is available in English, Urdu, Sylheti, Cantonese, French and Norwegian. An audio description guide for blind and partially sighted visitors also includes a range of touch experiences.

The audio handset is similar to a television remote control. It has numbered push pads and play and pause buttons. There are optional earpieces and straps for hands-free operation. The guide

is free for blind and partially sighted people and is available from the Information Desk on the Lower Ground Floor.

Guided tours of the Museum

The curator, visitor services and learning staff can lead tours but these must be booked in advance. They last between forty five minutes to an hour.

Fire alarms

The fire alarms have voice evacuation sounders, visual flashing lights and there are rolling text messages around the museum. The lift cannot be used in the event of a fire. There are evac-chairs to assist people unable to exit the building and safe fire refuge points to await evacuation. These are clearly signposted. If you will need assistance to exit the building in the event of a fire alarm please tell a member of staff.

Toilets and baby changing

There are male and female toilets on the ground and second floors. Separate accessible toilets are on the ground, first and second floors. The accessible toilet on the second floor also has a day bed and shower with a seat. There is also a wide accessible toilet in the People's Gallery on the ground floor fitted with a hoist, day bed and shower.

There is baby changing in the male and female toilets on the ground and second floors and in the accessible toilets on the ground, first and second floors and in the wide accessible toilet in the People's Gallery.

Eating at Café Discovery

The café is on the second floor. Hot and cold drinks are available and meals and sandwiches at lunchtime. Large print menus, large handled cutlery and open ended handled mugs are available on request.

If there is anything that we can do to make your visit more enjoyable please contact us, we will be happy to assist you.

Disability And Access

This guide has been produced to assist and enable our visitors with disabilities to enjoy to the full their visit to Hertford Museum.

Hertford Museum welcomes visitors with disabilities, together with their helpers or carers, and we actively seek to promote and provide equal opportunity for all who visit us. We would wish to encourage everyone to fully enjoy the range of facilities and entertainment available.

Arranging your visit

The museum is open 10am-5pm Tuesday to Saturday and admission is free. There is usually a small charge for specific events or workshops. The museum is located on Bull Plain, just off Maidenhead Street in the centre of the town. The road is accessible by car. There are double yellow lines outside the museum.

Parking is available on Bull Plain (limited to 30 mins) and in the multi storey car park on Gascoyne Way or Bircherley Green and in St Andrew Street (short stay) which are close by in the town. There are 3 disabled badge holder spaces at the other end of Bull Plain.

For more information about Hertford Museum's services, please contact the museum on 01992 582686 and ask to speak to the Curator, Helen Gurney. Alternatively, please email the museum on info@hertfordmuseum.org.

Access to the Museum services

Hertford Museum is located in a Grade II listed building that dates back to 1610. It opened as a museum in 1914 and the museum is now a registered charity and a registered museum which receives support from Hertford Town Council. It relies heavily on public support and donations.

The museum re-opened to the public in February 2010 after a major Heritage Lottery funded development project which involved improving the museum's services so that the local

community and other visitors can get access to and enjoy their heritage.

Entrance

The entrance is on one level and the front door is always open during opening hours. When the museum is closed (Mondays and Sundays), there is a bell to alert members of staff for deliveries.

The lobby has automatic doors which open in to give visitors access into the main building.

Ground Floor

As you enter the automatic doors, there is a lectern which has a raised orientation map on it to show visitors the building layout.

To the left of the entrance is the resource room, three computers for visitors to use (internet access and printing facility) and a doorway leading into our exhibitions room. There is also a touch screen kiosk for visitors to access the photographic collection.

To the right of the entrance is the visitor computers right of the entrance is the reception area (with a wheelchair accessible desk height) and museum shop. The reception desk has a hearing loop fitted.

Some of the items in the museum shop are on high level shelving, but staff are always at reception and are more than happy to help assist people.

There is a ramp with a handrail leading from the museum shop and reception desk into the museum displays. The flooring here changes from carpet to wooden floor boards. The room is painted a dark red and has 5 different sized display cases with different objects in and items hung on the wall.

Straight ahead is the platform lift that leads onto the next level (for the toilets, Andrews Room and out into the garden). Staff will help visitors with using this lift. On the other side of the room is the platform lift that leads to the first floor displays. Staff will help visitors with using this lift.

Straight ahead are three steps leading to the next level.

Toilets and Andrews Room

At the next level there is a small lobby area (carpeted). The walls are a lighter colour.

To the right is a wheelchair accessible WC also fitted with a toilet suitable for a small child and a nappy changing facility. There is an emergency pull cord in this room which will alert staff at reception. This room has a tiled floor with light coloured walls.

Straight ahead is the Andrews Room which is a multi purpose room for activities, school visits and groups. This is not always open. You can find out in advance what's on at the museum on the website or ask staff at reception. This has a lino floor and is brightly coloured with high windows. This room opens out onto the museum garden. There are cupboards at either end of the room and the room will often be laid out with tables and chairs. There are two doors that lead out into the museum garden with push bars.

To the left is a short corridor with a toilet for ambulant disabled people and another toilet next to this. These are for either male or female. Both have a tiled floor with blue tiled walls.

Nearby is a door with a push bar out into the museum garden.

Museum garden

The museum garden can be accessed from this area. There is a shingle path around a central knot work design and other beds with plants around. There is a 'camomile seat' for visitors to sit on. There are three wide steps at the other end to take visitors to the lower level. There is also a wheelchair ramp available which staff can provide to enable wheelchair access down to the lower level.

The lower level has a large fire door and other flower beds as well as a small seating area. This leads round (on a shingle path) to the rear of the museum where visitors can return to the museum and either climb the stairs to the first floor or go back to

the displays on the ground floor.

First floor

The first floor can be approached either by the platform lift in the ground floor display area or by climbing the stairs.

In the ground floor display area there is a door that leads to a lobby where two flights of stairs lead up to a spacious lobby area with glass panes allowing visitors to see through into the displays.

There are doors on either side of the staircase that lead to the displays.

The first floor displays is one open area. The whole area is carpeted and is on one level. There are a variety of display cases of different sizes with lots of objects in them. There are text panels in each case with labels. There are also signs above most of the display cases to tell visitors what they contain. Most of the objects are in cases. Some are hanging from the ceiling. There is a dentist chair on open display.

There are tactile objects on some or nearby some of the display cases.

There are interactive exhibits such as a spinning zoetrope, dressing up box for children, an old school desk, a shop role play area and a magnetic 'wartime evacuee' interactive.

There are 4 'listening posts' around the displays which have soundtracks relating to different themes such as school days, working, free time. Typed transcripts of these are available at reception or on the window sills near the dentist chair.

Near the lift entrance, there is a ceiling mounted ring display of well known Hertford faces which are numbered. Visitors can use the old fashioned black phone and dial a number to find out more information about each Hertford face. Next to this is typed information relating to each face.

From either door out of this area, visitors can retrace their steps

back downstairs. Access back down to the ground floor is also available using the platform lift near the Hertford Faces ring.



Accessible facilities



Toilets

There are **accessible toilets** by the Mammals gallery, and in the Underground Café. In the Red Zone, they are in the entrance lobby. In the Darwin Centre, you'll find them next to the information desk.

Eating and shopping

Most counters at our **restaurants and cafés** are accessible. Disability-aware staff are on hand to help. Find more information in Eating and drinking and Shops.

Sign language

Some Museum staff offer **signing and communication** skills. Signed interpretation is an integral part of the Museum's education programme, for more information please call our schools booking line +44(0)20 7942 5555.

We also run regular monthly **Nature Live talks** and **Spirit Collection Tours** that are British Sign Language interpreted. These free talks and tours will give you exciting insights into our Museum science and behind-the-scenes collections. Check times and dates. For more information email us.

Telephones

There are **accessible telephones** in the Cromwell Road entrance lobby, the Central Hall toilet lobby and the Earth Galleries entrance lobby.

Typetalk

We welcome **textphone calls** via Typetalk, user prefix 18001 020 942 5000.

Library and reading rooms

In the Library, online images can be viewed with **high-resolution monitors**. A number of accessible reading rooms are available. Please ask staff for assistance. You can access the Library Catalogue using Jaws or Zoomtext software, installed on a computer in the General Library.

Library opening times: Monday to Friday, 10.00 to 16.30. For more information, please call the Library enquiry desk on +44 (0)20 7942 5460.

Darwin Centre Spirit Collection Tours

If you have any access requirements, it is essential to pre-book for a tour. Please call +44 (0)207 942 6128 or book in person at one of the information desks, explaining your requirements.



Sign in | Register | Why register?



You are here: [Home](#) > [Visit us](#) > [Access guide](#) > Getting around the Museum

Getting around the Museum

Access guide

- [Accessible travel](#)
- [Museum entrances](#)
- [Getting around the Museum](#)
- [Accessible facilities](#)



Lifts

All floors of the Blue, Green and Red zones and the Darwin Centre are accessible by lift. There is currently no step-free access to Earth Lab, but you can find extensive information on rock, mineral and fossil identification on the [Earth Lab datasite](#).

Guide dogs

We welcome guide dogs. There are grass areas for them outside, and water is available on request. The cloakroom offers a secure place to **leave your dog with attendants**. For more information, please call the information desk on +44 (0)207 942 5011.

Maps

For a **large-print map** of the Museum, please ask at any information desk.

Disabled visitors

We have an inclusive admission policy ensuring all paying visitors are treated equally and with dignity. Disabled visitors are entitled to a concessionary ticket* for our paying exhibitions. Also they are entitled to be accompanied by up to 2 helpers free of charge.

*Concessionary tickets are also available to children, adults over 60, students and the unemployed (proof may be required).

Wheelchairs

Wheelchairs are **available on loan** from the cloakrooms. These can be found just inside the Exhibition Road entrance and behind the Central Hall by the main toilets. There is no charge for this service.

Emergency evacuations

If you have particular needs in the event of an **emergency evacuation**, please let us know when you arrive. Throughout the Museum there are **safe refuge areas** linked via intercom to the control room.

[Print version](#)

Bookmarks

Bookmark this page in NaturePlus
See other people's bookmarks

Related information

[Galleries](#)
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In 2003 nearly 12,000 scientists from over 60 countries came to work at the Museum.



[More information](#)



Sign in | Register | Why register?

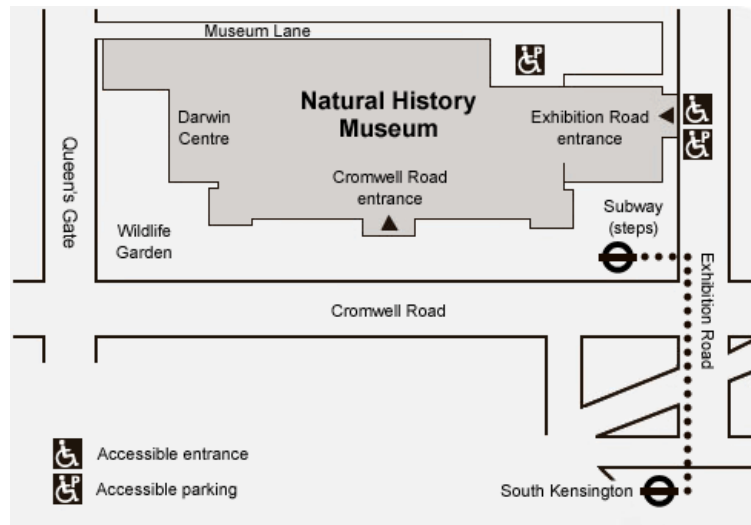


You are here: [Home](#) > [Visit us](#) > [Access guide](#) > Museum entrances

Museum entrances

Access guide

- [Accessible travel](#)
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Choose which Museum entrance is suitable for you.

The Museum has 2 entrances, the Cromwell Road entrance has **steps**. The Exhibition Road entrance is **step-free**, and best for entry with wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Cromwell Road entrance,
10 steps via a ramped path at either side of the entrance

Exhibition Road entrance
There are no steps into the entrance lobby. Beyond that are 18 steps, or you can take the **lift**.

Wheelchairs are available on loan from the cloakrooms just inside the Exhibition Road entrance.

Step-free access to After Hours
Limited car parking for Blue Badge holders can be booked via the Control Room on +44 (0)20 7942 5888.

If you are needing assistance or have any queries concerning these arrangements then please contact Customer Services by telephone +44 (0)20 7942 5839 or [email us](#).

[Print version](#)

Floor Plans



- [Green Zone](#)
- [Blue Zone](#)
- [Red Zone](#)
- [Orange Zone](#)

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Related information

- [Getting here](#)
- [Galleries](#)
- [Parents' survival guide](#)
- [Contact and enquiries](#)

External links

- [Museum and South Kensington on Google Maps](#)
- [Transport for London Journey Planner](#)

Toolbox

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