Accessibility Guidelines for Presenters

Edition IV - July 2015

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Introduction

It is strongly recommended that organizations hosting meetings, events, and conferences adopt a policy of inclusion and access. This language is recommend for inclusion in operating policies or bylaws:

> "Access Policy: It is the policy of this organization to make all meetings accessible to the widest range of people possible. This means preparing to be inclusive of a diverse audience and being aware that there may be people who are not able to:
> - see well or at all,
> - hear well or at all,
> - move well or at all,
> - speak well or at all, or
> - understand information presented in some ways well or at all."

The following guidelines are provided for speakers and presenters engaged in meetings, events, and conferences with organizations adopting this access policy.

In fact, the host organization may wish to produce a copy of this document to share with invited speakers and presenters in advance, with the following note:

> "This guidance provides how-to information for effectively including diverse audiences when presenting. Most of these guidelines will enhance the effectiveness and quality of your presentation for people both **with** and **without** disabilities. If you have questions about these guideline please contact the event coordinator."

Basic Tips For Presenters

<u>Check site or room for access</u> - before starting, check for access for mobility device users. Even though initially the room may have been set up to ensure access, items can get moved around over time. Move or rearrange furniture if needed to improve access.

<u>Speak clearly and avoid speaking too fast</u>, so participants and sign language interpreters, translators, and real-time caption providers can understand you and keep up.

<u>Use simple language:</u>

- Avoid or explain jargon, acronyms, and idioms. For example, idiomatic expressions such as, "raising the bar," can be interpreted literally by some people with cognitive disabilities.

- Give people time to process information.
- Pause between topics. When you ask if anyone has questions, some people with cognitive disabilities will need extra time to form their thoughts into words.

<u>Describe all visuals</u> for people who are blind, who cannot understand them well or who are seated a good distance from the speaker. Media and visual aids include use of slides, charts, models, gestures, computers, content of chalk and white boards, easel paper, posters, etc. This presentation technique is also helpful for attendees without vision loss.

- State what you are showing, for example, *"This arrangement of sticky notes shows … ," "This map shows… ," "These results indicate …"*
- Do not to leave out information for some people in your audience. For example, if you say "as you see in this chart" or "as you can read it on the slide." you are excluding people who cannot see the slide.
- When you ask a question of the audience, summarize the response, such as, Speaker: "If you make your websites fully accessible, please raise your hand."...then state the results: "About half raised their hand.
- Distributing a presentation outline with plenty of room for note taking and / or copies of your visuals (at or before via the event organizer) may be appreciated by some and may be especially helpful to many who have difficulty taking notes or who cannot take notes. Many conferences post presentations on a website or send to participants ahead of time so that those who choose to use the presentation as a note-taking tool can download them and print them, or load them to a device.

Sound Amplification

<u>Use microphones</u> - Always use the amplification system provided. This assures that participants will hear you more clearly and that any assistive listening equipment in use will work properly. (Not all people with hearing loss "speak" American Sign Language and/or use sign language interpreters. Many rely instead on captioning and assistive listening equipment.)

- Even in a small room, some people might need the audio electronically, including people using assistive listening systems and computer-assisted realtime translation (CART, a method of creating captions of live speech). Note that if you ask, *"Can everyone hear me OK?"* some people might be uncomfortable saying that they cannot. Do you remember an experience when people around you broke out in laughter, but you didn't hear the joke? Using sound amplification helps to ensure that fewer people are left out.
- When microphones are not available to the audience, always repeat all comments and questions into the microphone before answering them.
- Be visible - Position yourself be in good light so participants can see your face when you talk, which helps some people hear and understand better. Especially when you don't have a microphone, be careful not to face away from the audience to read projected material.
- Face the audience when you speak and keep your hands away from your mouth so that people who speech read (formerly known as lip reading) can understand you.

- Avoid positioning yourself in front of unshaded or undraped windows or very bright surfaces. Back light turns the speaker into a silhouette and makes it impossible to see facial expressions or speech reading.
- Do not speak while facing and writing on a board or easel paper. One way to avoid this is to have an assistant or co-presenter do the writing for you.
- Ensure that only one person speaks at a time by asking members of the group to wait until they are acknowledged before commenting or asking a question.
- Always require audience members who are asking a question to wait for the microphone before they ask their questions. Assure that you have someone to run the microphone.

Working with Interpreters and Real-time Captioners

When working with sign language interpreters and translators, and real-time captioners, always ensure that:

- The area is well lit and the interpreter can still be seen if the lights are dimmed. Adjustable spotlights may be needed.
- You do not walk in front of interpreters while they are signing.
- You slow your speaking rate if you tend to be a rapid speaker and slow your pace when reading printed material.
- The interpreters/captioners know you are willing to be stopped during your presentation if the interpreters need clarification.
- You speak directly to the person using the interpreter, not the interpreter.
- You spell unusual terms, names and foreign words.
- When using visuals allow extra time for the audience to look at the items after you discuss them. People using interpreters or captioners cannot examine items when they are watching the interpreter or captioning.
- When possible, offer the interpreters/captioners advance copies of your slides, notes and handouts so they become familiar with any unique terms, acronyms, terms, names, etc. that you will be using. This makes for more accurate interpretation of the information.
- When someone with a speech disability is speaking, you provide additional time and assistance in clarifying what was said for the interpreters.
- Let the event coordinator know if you plan to divide your audience into smaller groups for certain activities. If this is the case, additional interpreters may be needed to avoid having all participants using interpreters in the same segregated group(s). Locate the groups using the interpreters in the quietest area possible.

Handouts

It is important that information be provided in formats that are usable:

- Participants might need hard copies of material in alternative formats such as large print, audio, braille, or an electronic file format (such as PDF or Word); however, if they get the material in advance electronically, they might not need it in hard copy at all. When handout material is sent in advance of presentations, people can access the material using their own customized viewing and listening technology, which can include computer software that allows for screen reading, magnification, or voice recognition.
- People with low vision may be able to read the text version of handouts if they are provided in a larger print.
- If you will be referring to handouts during your presentation, be aware that when you ask the audience to refer to a specific page, you may have to give different page numbers depending on the formats used. For example, *"Turn to page 10 regular print, or search for the phrase 'Sound Amplification' in your digital version."*
- Keep to your presentation handouts as much as possible. If you vary from the material, mention that fact so the audience does not get lost.
- Spiral bound or bound materials that can lie flat when opened are easier for all people to use. Tabs are also helpful.

Accessible Printed Materials

- Print all text visuals in as large a font size as possible (20 to 24 point).
- Make text and important visuals big enough to be read from the back of the room. This includes graphics on slides, multimedia, posters, and other non-electronic material.
- Use an easy-to-read font face that does not have serifs. The following are options for accessible fonts (all are "sans serif" fonts): Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Tahoma, and Verdana. For reference, an example of a "serif" font is Times New Roman.
- Simple fonts with consistent thickness are often easier to read from a distance (as opposed to fonts where parts of the letters are thin, like Times New Roman). Avoid italics and fancy fonts that are difficult to read.
- Use initial upper, followed by lowercase letters, avoid use of all capital letters.
- Use appropriate background and text colors. Some suggest when presenting in a light room to display dark text on a light background. When presenting in a darkened room to display light text on a dark background, and ensure that the weight of text is sufficient (for example, bold).
- Present one idea per visual.
- Use high contrast colors.
- Use high contrast between lettering and background.
- Limit text to six to eight lines.
- Use print text over solid backgrounds, avoiding printing text over patterned backgrounds.
- Simplify by using key words, brief and concise phrases or bullets and avoiding complete sentences.

- Use initial upper and followed by lowercase letters, AVOID USE OF ALL UPPERCASE LETTERS.
- Use visuals that are large enough to be seen clearly.
- Avoid complex graphics and tables.
- Test visuals on the viewing surface to be used prior to the presentation. (Sometimes colors that appear to be fine on a computer monitor wash out when projected.)
- Allowing enough time for people to process each visual.
- Using odor-free markers for the comfort of those who with significant allergies, asthma, chemical sensitivities, and respiratory-related conditions.

Translating Print Materials to Braille

Most large urban areas have companies or organizations which can translate printed material to Braille. You can consider producing Braille documents "in house" by using a computer, Braille translation software, and a Braille printer. Software programs exist which can translate common word processing formats directly into Braille, but they are not error free. This is especially true when the document contains special characters, jargon, graphics, or charts. The disadvantage with this in-house method is the difficulty in ensuring quality control and accuracy. Since the typical individual will not be able to proofread a Braille document, the initial cost saving may be quickly lost by having to redo documents with errors. We recommend that if material is produced in house, it should be reviewed by a Braille reader to assure that it is accurate.

When using a Braille transcription service, it is easier and less expensive when you provide the materials in electronic format. You can locate a transcription service by searching the Internet (a resource is provided at the end of this guide).

When Brailling:

- Convert symbols, icons, and other abbreviations to text.
- Omit the use of "number" (#) signs because they are automatically inserted in front of numbers in Braille.
- Do not include extra blank lines in your text. Indicate new paragraphs with the use of one tab.
- Determine what commands the Braille software reads from your word-processed version. Typical commands include: center, tab, indent, (hard) return, and page break.
- Convert columns to continuous text. Tables, graphics, and pictorial representations need to be converted to text.
- Eliminate the use of stylistic factors such as bold type, underlining, and special symbols. Italics are the only stylistic type form that typically translates into Brailed formats.
- Use both upper and lower case letters in words; the use of all upper case, for example, doubles the pages or space needed for the Braille.
- Convert any bullets in the text to an asterisk (*) or a hyphen (-).

Digital Format (Electronic Text)

- People who are blind, have low vision or have a learning disability and who have access to computers often benefit from having documents in electronic form. Individuals who have access to a computer can then read the document using a screen reader which, through synthesized speech, verbalizes what is on the screen including control buttons, menus, text, and punctuation. Digital files may also be accessed as an electronic Braille display, with a computer monitor using a larger font size or screen magnification, or they can be printed in Braille.
- Tables should be explained in plain text. Graphics or text boxes should be first described in text format then deleted.

Recording Materials for Distribution

Professional readers can be used or you can record your materials on your own. When recording material the reader should:

- Use a quiet recording space where there is no background noise.
- Have a clear, crisp reading voice and use a conversational tone at a conversational pace; neither too slow nor too fast.
- Be proficient in the language being recorded.
- Be familiar with the material to minimize stumbling and hesitation.
- Not editorialize; the document should be read in full.
- Describe all tables, charts, graphics and pictorial information.
- Spell difficult or unusual words and words of foreign origin.
- At the beginning of the recording identify the reader, the title, copyright date, and size of the document, for example "A Guide to Planning Accessible Meetings", by June Isaacson Kailes and Darrell Jones, copyright 1993 2 hours, 10 minutes, read by Robert Kailes.
- When possible, tone index the recordings. Use a beep at the start of each new section. For longer documents use a double beep for the start of each chapter before stating the title. These beeps can be heard when the tape is in the fast forward or rewind mode. This allows the listener to move from one section to another.
- Read footnotes and other material immediately following the end of the sentence in which they are referred to. Read the number of the note, and when through with note say "end of note, return to text on page ___."

PowerPoint Presentations and Slide Decks

- Describe the content of graphic slides orally during your presentation
- Limit the information on each screen/slide so it is easily read from the back of the room (
- Have sufficient text descriptions (alt text) of graphs and tables for presentations posted online or sent digitally.
- Use of multimedia video should be captioned.
- Use the PowerPoint default font of 44-point bold font for headings.
- Use 32-point font or higher for short, simple bullets.
- Include no more than six lines of text on each slide.
- The outline view should contain all the text.

- Use the Accessible PowerPoint Template developed by the Disability Section Accessibility Committee of the American Public Health Association (Adapted from: American Public Health Association Disability Section).
- PREZI, which is a cloud-based storytelling tool that uses animation, remains inaccessible to many people with disabilities. The use of PREZI is not recommended at this time.

Captioning

When you have a choice, always bring captioned and audio-described versions of multimedia, slide shows, etc. If you are purchasing or renting such materials, request captioned and audio-described versions. Captions enable people who are deaf and some who are hard of hearing to watch and understand multimedia, without having to try and focus simultaneously on the interpreter. Videos are often fast-paced and significant information is lost when they are not captioned. Captions can also benefit adults who are hard of hearing, adults and children learning to read, as well as people for who English is a second language.

Like subtitles, captions display spoken dialogue as printed words on the screen. Unlike subtitles, captions are specifically designed for viewers who are deaf and hard of hearing by including environmental sounds and cues. Captions are carefully placed to identify speakers, on-and-offscreen sound effects, music and laughter.

Computer Aided Realtime Captioning (CART) is captioning technology that makes presentations accessible to people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, those for whom English is a second language or those who learn better by reading than by listening only. It is also very helpful in large audiences where the sound may not transfer as well. Realtime captioning provides simultaneous, word-for-word transcription of a speaker's words. It requires the skills of court reporters who have been trained to use specially developed software to create captions. Court reporters type the speaker's words as phonetic symbols on a stenographic keyboard which is attached to a computer. The symbols are converted into English words by translation software. The output is then displayed on a monitor or projected on a screen.

Video Soundtracks and Audio Descriptions

Audio-described materials ensure access to people with vision loss through a narration of actions and items which the viewer with vision can see, but not hear. Audio description may either be a separate audio track that can be played simultaneously with the regular audio portion of the video material (adding description during pauses in the regular audio), or it can be added to (or mixed with) an existing soundtrack. The latter is the technique used for videos.

If soundtracks are not captioned, try to obtain a text copy of the script. Copies of scripts are helpful to people who have hearing disabilities, but should not be used as substitutes for providing Interpreters or real time captioning. Advance text copy given to interpreters provides considerable aid to them in being prepared for technical words, proper names, and general flow of narrative. If soundtracks are not audio-described, describe the visuals either before or during the showing of the video.

Accessible Exhibit Booths

In order to make your booth accessible to people with disabilities, simple alterations can be made to remove or modify physical barriers and provide accessible promotional materials.

- Set up displays to allow those using mobility devices to easily enter the booth and view materials. This can be done by: lowering displays or counters and insuring there is ample entrance space.
- Provide order forms or promotional materials in alternate formats such as large print, computer disks or thumb drives for persons who are visually impaired.
- Make sure carpet is smoothly laid out and that any cords are securely taped down so as not to hinder wheelchair users from accessing your booth.
- Videos should be captioned for persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Approach persons with disabilities with a positive, relaxed attitude in the same way you would approach any other prospective customer.
- If attendee is deaf and with an interpreter, always address the attendee directly, not the interpreter.
- Plan in advance how you will welcome people with disabilities into your booth.
- If altering your display is not an option, make up in service what you lack in "architecture."

Poster Presentations

The American Public Health Association offers a comprehensive list of recommendations for poster sessions and presentation areas. Keeping the area free of loose tacks (which can puncture tires), keeping pathways large enough for mobility devices, and ensuring presentation materials are created with accessibility in mind. Their site is highly recommended.

Recommended Resources

Accessible Word & PDF documents, Directions from the University of Michigan, for creating an accessible MS Word and PDF files. Last accessed 05.31.15

Arditi, Aries, Accessibility, Lighthouse International. Last accessed 05.31.15

> *Covers:*
> - Accessible Design
> - Accessible Print Design
> - Effective Color Contrast
> - Making Text Legible

Braille Works - provides Braille, Large Print and Audio materials (800.258.7544). Last accessed 06.28.2015

The Media Access Group, last accessed 05.31.15

> *Covers:*
> Captioning
> Descriptive Video Services
>
> Download pdf files for more detail on specific services:
> Descriptive Narration for TV, Films and the Web
> Making Museums and Cultural Institutions Accessible
> Captioning for Web-based Meetings