



Guidelines for Accessibility

It is essential that we continually remind ourselves that we cannot make universal claims on accessibility. What is made accessible, and how that accessibility is experienced might be so diverse that it becomes impossible to make any universal statement. The Beyond Compliance Coordinating Committee has developed accessibility guidelines in an effort to highlight the many ways in which event/conference planners and presenters can make events accessible as possible. In order to capture the emotionality involved with access, stories of inaccessibility are intertwined with basic guidelines.

Presenters should:

- Remember the subject of their study might be present in the audience.
- Invite people to stand up or stretch, especially during longer sessions if they want to.
- Provide audio files in addition to PDF and Word files- Word is accessible and transferable.
- Submit advanced copies of presentation documents.
- Remember, when using visual-based materials in presentations.
 - Describe the visually presented contents (picture, film, etc.)
 - If a large portion of presentation time involves visual presentation, arrange with conference organizers for narrators to provide oral descriptions to individual participants with visual impairment.
 - Caption audio/visual materials (visual, artwork, pictures, etc.)
 - For films, first contact and ask the filmmakers if there is a captioned version. If not, urge the filmmakers to make one. It should not be individual event organizers' responsibility to caption a film.
 - If the filmmakers are not willing to caption their film, find a local media agency that does captioning.

"Sometimes, what will be good for one person is not always good for another. Sometimes our needs conflict with one another. For example, I get easily distracted when people interrupt me when I'm talking, but at the same time, I tend to impulsively interrupt people. It would be easy for some teachers to take up the task to never interrupt students, but if that standard was used to gauge accessibility in my classroom, it could potentially systematically exclude particular embodiments."

And presenters:

- Time your presentation carefully in order to encourage dialogue and respect others' presentations. Try not to rush through your presentation: rushed presentations make CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) and interpretation difficult. Speak slowly, define terms, and spell out complicated names and/or terms.
- Please use scent-free products.
- Try presenting with multiple modalities. Even if your preference is an oral reading of your work/paper it is helpful to support the linguistic piece with visual representation of text (PowerPoint, Document Camera in rooms where CART is not available).
- While it may be common practice for presenters to read their papers, please be aware that lack of eye contact and/or the inability to see your lips may make your presentation inaccessible to some. Make attempts to look up throughout your presentation.

“Access is a concept, a practice, and an approach. The word comes, at least minimally, from the Latin word accessus [an approach]. On the conceptual level then, access brings about presence and provides the ability to put information to use and set social justice in action. Most often, with access come agency & subjectivity. When we talk about access--what are we talking about--access to what? Information, economic, social, & cultural capital? Physical spaces? Technology, knowledge, history?”

Event Planners should note:

- Programs should include information addressing potentially emotionally traumatizing presentations/topics, so that attendees can better use their discretion.
- Encourage caucuses or panels about accessibility.
- Consider scholarships or financial assistance for participants.
- Provide sign language interpreter(s) and/or CART.
- Alternative formats for major printed materials, including conference programs.
 - Braille, large print in 18 points, screen-reader program compatible files in diskette.
- Consider availability of personal care attendants or referral to agencies providing such services.

“As a student with a learning disability, ‘institutions of higher learning’ have done a lot to open up access to some things, but have also done a lot to limit me in other ways. For example, when school gets tough, usually my activist work is neglected because I have been taught that my schoolwork is my top priority, and activist work isn’t thought of as a kind of schoolwork. As a result, schools have set up a system, which works to exclude people like me from activism. And it’s not just my activist work that suffers, but my community of support is neglected as well, making school that much more difficult.”

And one last thing, planners:

- Note the physical accessibility of the event location: make location of accessible entrances, bathrooms, etc. clear with flyers/posters.
 - Wheelchair accessibility - route, bathroom, automatic doors (or make sure you station somebody if the doors are manual or the button does not work), seating, signs, parking, etc.
 - Accessible seating: multiple types of seats with backs, considering comfort.
- Include brief information on how the event is accessible on the advertisements. Also list the contacts for general inquiries as well as specific accessibility related inquiries or requests.
- Provide assistive listening devices on request.
- For individuals bringing service animals, provide referral information for veterinarian services.
- Consider designating a room for people to relax from physical or emotional tiredness.