Common Terms/Glossary

Below are some common terms relating to accessibility in the arts. This information is copyright free. Readers are encouraged to copy and share it, but please credit the National Arts and Disability Center.

Accessibility

When we modify information, architecture, devices or methods to allow easier access by people with disabilities, we are making those items accessible. Examples include: providing sign language interpreters for a poetry reading; building an accessible ramp for a theatre stage, audio-describing a film; and/or providing technical aids for access to a computer.

Accessible Route

A continuous unobstructed path connecting all accessible elements and spaces of a building or facility. Interior accessible routes may include corridors, floors, ramps, elevators, lifts, and clear floor space at fixtures. Exterior accessible routes may include parking access aisles, curb ramps, crosswalks at vehicular ways, walks, ramps, and lifts.

Alternative Formats

The provision of information that is regularly provided by an organization in visual or audible formats in alternative formats such as computer diskettes, tape recordings, Braille or large print, or captioning.

American Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) is the major language used by the American Deaf population. Its medium is visible through hand movements and facial expressions rather than aural. ASL has its own vocabulary, idioms, grammar, and syntax different from English.

Assistive Listening Systems (ALS)

Assistive listening systems enhance the sound for people who are hard of hearing to assist them with amplification and clarity. ALS's enable an individual who benefits from amplification to focus directly on the sound source without having to contend with background noise that can make it difficult to concentrate on conversation. Options to consider include FM systems, infrared or induction loop technologies.

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Assistive Technology

Devices used by people with disabilities to compensate for functional limitations and to enhance and increase learning, independence, mobility, communication, environmental control and choice. Devices may include voice activated computer software, simple to sophisticated wheelchairs or mobility aids, screen reading computer software that reads out loud information from a computer screen, or a mouth or head stick for painting.

Audio Description

Audio description is a narration of a live theatre event, visual arts exhibit at a museum, television, film or video program's visual elements for persons with visual disabilities. Audio description is inserted in the natural pauses of a program's dialogue, and can be used to describe visual elements such as body language, settings, and actions made.

Auxiliary Aids and Services

According to ADA regulations, Auxiliary aids and services include a wide range of services and devices that promote effective communication. These services and devices include:

- qualified interpreters or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments
- Qualified readers, taped texts, or other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments and
- TDD's, computer terminals, speech synthesizers and communication boards for individuals with speech impairments

Braille

Braille is a system of exact translation of printed letters into raised dots, which can be read by fingertips by people who are blind. Braille can be used in exhibition labeling, publications, and signage.

Captioned

A video or film program with subtitles reflecting the content of the spoken or descriptive material.

Closed Captioning

Captions are text superimposed over video for the benefit of deaf and hard of hearing viewers. Closed captions are hidden (encoded) as data within the video signal and must be decoded to be visible. Captions are designed to convey on- and off-screen effects, speaker identifications and other information helpful to deaf and hard of hearing people.

Open Captioning

Open Captioning places the text on screen in a black reader box at all times.

Real-time Captioning

Roll-up captions that are created and transmitted at time of broadcast origination.

Theatrical Open Captioning

Open captioning of live theatre performances. This technology has enabled many people to experience the joy of theatre for the first time.

Commercial Facilities
According to Title lll regulations of the ADA, a commercial facility is a privately owned non residential facility involved in commercial activity, such as a factory, warehouse, corporate office building or other facility in which employment may occur.

Disability

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, someone who:

1. Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, or
2. Has a record of such an impairment, or
3. Is regarded as having such an impairment is a person with a disability.

Inclusion

To be given the opportunity to participate in all activities available in a community; for example having the choice to attend an arts performance in your own community. Inclusion isn't a new program, trend or something one "does" for someone else. It is not a bandwagon. People are either included or excluded. Discussion of inclusion typically addresses issues related to diversity, community building and consequence of exclusion.

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Interpreters

People who are deaf or hard of hearing often request interpreters or transliterators in order to participate in docent tours, lectures, presentations, or events. Interpreters translate from spoken language to American Sign Language (ASL) and visa versa.

International Symbol of Accessibility

Access symbols can be found at the Disability Access Symbols Project http://www.gag.org/resources/das.php Advertisements, conference and program brochures, flyers, press releases, and membership forms, are examples of materials that may display these symbols to advertise the physical access of a facility, program or meeting.

Large Print

Large print brochures and educational materials are for individuals with partial sight. On a personal computer, font size 16 or greater will produce large print.

Major Life Activity

Major life activities include such activities as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

Program Accessibility

Under the ADA, Title II standard requires facilities to be readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. To become accessible a facility may need to alter an existing facility, acquire or construct additional facilities, or relocate a service or program to an accessible facility.

Public Accommodation

According to Title lll ADA regulations, a place of public accommodation is a private establishment (for profit or nonprofit) that fits one of twelve categories specified by the Department of Justice in ADA regulations. It includes hotels, restaurants, theaters, museums, retail stores, private schools, banks, doctor's office, and health clubs.

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Qualified Individual With a Disability

Under Title I, the employment provision of the ADA, a qualified individual with a disability is a person who meets legitimate skill, experience, education, or other requirements of an employment position that he or she holds or seeks, and can perform the essential functions of the position with or without reasonable accommodation. In a nonemployment context, a qualified person with a disability meets the definition of a person with a disability and meets the essential eligibility requirements for a program, activity, service or benefit offered by a public entity.

Qualified Interpreter

According to ADA Titles II and III, a qualified interpreter is an interpreter who is able to sign to the individual who is deaf what is being said by the hearing person and who can voice the hearing person what is being signed by the individual who is deaf. This communication must be conveyed effectively, accurately, and impartially through the use of any necessary specialized vocabulary.

Readily Achievable

Under Title III of the ADA, places of public accommodation are required to remove from public areas barriers to access. Barrier removal is readily achievable when it is carried out without much difficulty or expense.

Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable accommodation means making any change or adjustment to a job or work environment that permits a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to apply for a job or to enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment equal to other employees without disabilities. This may include providing readers, sign language interpreters, or modifying the physical environment to make it accessible.

Scripting

Is the provision of a written script of a video, film or a performance as an accommodation for a person who is hard of hearing or deaf.

Sensory Seminars/Tours

Sensory Seminars/Tours are offered at performing arts performances. These pre-performance seminars allow patrons to feel props, set pieces, and costumes in order to give them a better understanding of a character's body type and personality, the spatial relationship of the set, and the time period of the production.

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Service Animal

According to the ADA a service animal is any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. If they meet this definition, the animals are considered service animals regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government. State and local government offices, as well as privately owned businesses such as museums, galleries, theatres, concert halls, restaurants and retail stores are required to allow people with disabilities to bring their dogs onto the premises in whatever areas other customers/ patrons are generally allowed.

Sign Interpreted Performances

Sign Interpreted Performances are theatre performances or readings that are interpreted.

Theatrical Sign Language Interpretation

Theatrical sign language interpretation translates from spoken language to American Sign Language (ASL) utilizing specific techniques for signing plays, and musicals.

Placed Style

The placed style of interpreting in the theatre is by far the most common. It is characterized by the static placement of the interpreter(s) in one location for the duration of the performance.

Shadow Interpreting

Shadow interpreting is when the interpreters actually follow the actors on stage, as their shadow. The shadowed style of interpreting is the most inclusive style of interpreting for the theatre. It involves placing the interpreters directly within the action — nearly making them "sign language actors." In this style, the interpreters are "blocked" into each scene, and literally shadow the actor.

Touch Tour

A touch tour uses tactile diagrams, audio narrative, interpretive sound compositions, and hands-on art activities to replace traditional art history techniques and make art come alive for people who are blind or visually impaired.

TTY

A TTY traditionally provides a text method of communication over the telephone for individuals who may be deaf or who have speech impairments.

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Undue Hardship

Under the employment provisions of the ADA, an employer is not required to provide a reasonable accommodation if it would result in an undue hardship. For the employer, "undue hardship" means it would require significant difficulty or expense, or would alter the nature or operation of the business.

Universal Design

Universal design is the design of products, communications and the built environment to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The intent of universal design is to simplify life for everyone. Universal design benefits people of all ages and abilities.

Video Description

Video description makes television accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. Narrated descriptions of a program's key visual elements — such as actions, body language, graphics and scene changes — are recorded and carefully blended, into natural pauses in the program soundtrack, creating an additional mixed audio track broadcast simultaneously with the program.

Wheelchair and Companion Seating

Seating for wheelchair users adjacent seating for individuals accompanying wheelchair users.