

A Guide for Museums

Accessibility Toolkit



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Overview

Introduction

In 2016, six staff members from four departments at the Freer|Sackler formed an Accessibility Taskforce to evaluate and improve access to galleries, programming, and digital offerings. One result of our work has been to develop documents that outline our process, best practices, and progress. This toolkit serves as a resource guide and starter set for assisting others with accessibility measures to use at museums and establish a taskforces of their own.

This toolkit includes sample documents and templates.

Getting Started Checklist

Taskforce Proposal

Budget Proposal

Status Reports

Budget Tracking

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Resources

This document is available online: www.freersackler.si.edu/access-toolkit

Cover image: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Disability_symbols.svg

Last Updated: May 17, 2019

Getting Started Checklist

1. Form a team

- Call for volunteers from across the museum to participate.
 - Our team consisted of volunteers from the departments of Public and Scholarly Engagement, Exhibitions, Digital Media and Technology, and Marketing and Communications.

2. Create a resource email account

- Employ for internal communication and visitor inquiries.
 - We use fs-accessibility@si.edu

3. Create a shared file and tracking system for the team

- Ensure documents are stored in a common place with easy access.

4. Assess your institution's needs and opportunities

- Assess legal compliance.
- Consider website, exhibitions, buildings, signage, etc.
- Prioritize opportunities or action items by timeline, scope, and budget needs.
 - We used SWOT analysis template to inform our proposal and budget.

5. Talk to colleagues and do field research

- Reach out to community partners and establish your own user expert group. Create a contact list.
 - See resources section for ideas.

6. Create a plan

- Develop a proposal based on your needs, research, and budget.
 - Our proposal and budget are included in sample documents.

7. Develop a process to attain staff buy-in and approval

- Present the proposal to senior staff. This could be done individually, collectively, or both.
- Ensure the proposal aligns with museum goals and institutional policy.

8. Identify funding sources

- Consider where inexpensive solutions can be implemented within existing budgets and seek grant opportunities where available.
 - We found a series of inexpensive quick wins to enhance our offerings.

9. Get started!

- Once your project is approved, do the work.
 - We used the status report to keep us organized and on track.

10. Report out to staff, Board members, visitors, etc

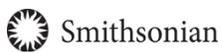
- Share successes and challenges often and regularly at staff meetings, internal newsletters, and on your website.
 - Check out our website at:
www.freersackler.si.edu/visit/accessibility/

Sample Documents



Accessibility Proposal

January 13, 2017



FREER|SACKLER

Purpose

When the Freer|Sackler reopened in October 2017 after a major renovation of its infrastructure, we had an opportunity to become a trailblazer for general visitors and for visitors with disabilities. Accessibility is becoming a national priority for museums and organizations, such as the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and American Alliance of Museum Directors (AAMD).¹ As a Smithsonian museum with AAM accreditation, the Freer|Sackler should strive to achieve the AAM goals of “diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion in all aspects of museum structure and programming—values vital to the future viability, relevance, and sustainability of museums.”²

This document, based on research in the field, outlines a prioritized list of achievable goals to better serve all of our visitors. It includes current offerings for visitors with disabilities as well as additional opportunities if the Freer|Sackler expands its offerings.

By making the Freer|Sackler more accessible, we will serve all visitors in a manner that is more welcoming, respectful, and collaborative. We will also have a new avenue to diversify our audiences.

¹ The American Alliance of Museums hosted a webinar on this and related issues in August 2016. See “Discussing Identity, Bias, Privilege and Diversity in the Museum Field,” <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/online-programs/edcom-google-hangouts/discussing-identity-bias-privilege-and-diversity-in-the-museum-field> (accessed December 21, 2016). In 2016 the AAMD compiled a report on how museums are addressing access. See Association of Art Museum Directors, Next Practices: Diversity and Inclusion (2016), <https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/050916-AAMDNextPracticesDiv-Incl.pdf> (accessed December 21, 2016).

² See the American Alliance of Museums 2016–2020 Strategic Plan, <http://aam-us.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/english.pdf?sfvrsn=0>; American Alliance of Museums Resources on Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion, http://www.aam-us.org/about-us/what-we-do/resources-on-diversity-equity-accessibility-inclusion/?utm_source=aam.us-org&utm_medium=1B.

Background

Currently, the Freer|Sackler provides visitors with:

- Free loans of manual wheelchairs
- Sign-language interpretation on tours (with written advance notice) and at selected public programs
- Open captioning of exhibition videos
- Tactile elements in selected exhibitions
- FM transmitters in the auditorium
- Accessible seating in the auditorium
- Service dogs are welcome

Proposal

The Smithsonian Accessibility Program has stressed that all Smithsonian museums should align with the Architectural Barriers Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

We proposed a strategic introduction of new amenities and programs for visitors with disabilities, including:

- Limited mobility
- Hearing loss
- Vision loss
- Cognitive disabilities/sensory processing disabilities

Phases

We recommend phasing in the launch of these initiatives to align with museum priorities, staff abilities, and resources available to invest in the project.

For the Freer|Sackler,

Phase One included amenities and programs that

- Had immediate high impact
- Appeared to require the fewest resources and the least amount of staff time
- Were likely to be implemented by October 2017

Phase Two included amenities and programs that

- Required more resources
- Required more staff time
- Planning could begin in 2017, but the program launch would not occur until 2018 or 2019

Phase Three included amenities and programs that

- Are more aspirational
- Require even more resources and staff time, possibly including the creation of new staff position(s)

Color key in Phase One

- Blue: “Low-hanging fruit.” Amenities and programs already in progress OR could be implemented with modest investment of staff and financial resources.
- ❖ Red: Legal compliance. Amenities and programs that should be implemented to be in accordance with legal compliance of ADA.
- Black: Desirable proposed amenities and programs for Phase One.

Phase One

- Limited Mobility
 - Provide physically lower information desks so visitors in wheelchairs can more easily interact with staff
 - Design and produce a tactile/limited mobility/large print/braille map of the museum that shows emergency egress

- Hearing Loss
 - For exhibition videos without words, include the phrase “no narration” on appropriate wall labels
 - Offer ASL interpretation at one museum-wide event per year
 - ❖ Add captions to all new videos produced for and shown on the Freer|Sackler YouTube channel
 - ❖ Make assistive listening devices available for mini-theaters in exhibitions
 - Transcribe highlights podcast and audio tour and make the transcriptions available at the information desks

- Vision Loss
 - Ensure the website and mobile sites are compliant with low-vision standards
 - ❖ Include verbal descriptions for all new videos produced for and shown on the Freer|Sackler YouTube channel
 - ❖ Make verbal descriptions available for mini-theaters in exhibitions. This could be part of a larger, verbal description podcast
 - Make large print label sets for exhibition wall texts and labels available at information desks (simple binders of text printouts)
 - Design and produce a tactile/limited mobility/large print/braille map of the museum that shows emergency egress

- Visitors in general
 - Install baby-changing stations in every restroom
 - Pilot and assess offering a limited number of folding stools to be checked out by visitors on request
 - Continue to work with SI Accessibility program to assess progress on access programs
 - Include an access summary on the “Plan Your Visit” webpage

- Staff and Volunteers
 - Provide ongoing training to implement the items listed above
 - Appoint an accessibility liaison to participate in the Accessibility Liaison Council managed by the SI Accessibility Program
 - Create an informal Freer|Sackler access group

Phase Two

- Hearing Loss
 - Pilot one ASL short video that translates an audio podcast
 - Pilot an ASL tour
 - Expand our ASL interpretation offering for public programs
 - Evaluate captions on YouTube videos and consider captioning older materials
 - Make portable assistive listening devices available for tours
- Vision Loss
 - Evaluate verbal description pilots and consider developing more verbal description throughout the museums
 - Post exhibition labels online to allow individuals to use screen readers in galleries
 - Pilot braille museum guide or map
 - Pilot a touch tour using tactile elements to help visitors experience artworks
- Sensory processing disabilities or cognitive disabilities
 - Participate in Morning at the Museum (for children with autism)
 - Develop and post online activities from Morning at the Museum for self-guided visits
 - Pilot programs for adults with dementia or memory loss
- Visitors in general
 - Continue to work with the SI Accessibility Program to assess progress on access programs
- Staff and Volunteers
 - Provide ongoing training to implement these items
 - Develop evaluation plans to assess the projects and products created for visitors
 - Assess expansion of the Freer|Sackler docent and/or volunteer programs to develop and support delivery of accessibility tours, experiences, and programs

Phase Three

- Hearing Loss
 - Possibly continue to create descriptive captioning for videos
 - Evaluate ASL video pilot and consider developing others
 - Introduce regularly scheduled ASL tours
- Vision Loss
 - Offer a guiding service
 - Schedule regular verbal description and tactile tours
 - Pilot sessions in collections storage at which a limited number of participants can handle pottery

 - Introduce screen readers for in-gallery computers and adopt comprehensive access using universal design for touch screens in exhibitions
 - Produce color-blind guides
- Sensory processing disabilities and cognitive disabilities
 - Offer sensory backpacks at the information desks
 - Offer ear defenders at the information desks
 - Pilot regular programs for children with sensory processing disabilities or cognitive disabilities
 - Pilot regular programs for adults with cognitive disabilities
- Visitors in general
 - Continue to work with SI Accessibility Program to assess progress on access programs
 - Include tactile enhancements (e.g., 3-D printed objects) in certain galleries
 - Offer a hands-on desk in certain galleries
- Staff
 - Ongoing training to implement these items
 - Implement evaluation plans to assess the projects and products developed for visitors
 - Pilot specialized docent/volunteer accessibility cohort

Accessibility Proposal Estimated Budget

One-time Costs

Category	Item	Low Estimate	High Estimate
Hearing loss	Existing YouTube video captions (number of videos, number of hours)	Total cost; contractor (cost/minute)	Total cost; contractor (cost/minute)
Vision loss	Website compliance	Total cost; staff time	Total cost; contractor (cost/year plus cost for focus group)
Vision loss	Existing YouTube verbal descriptions (numbers of videos, number of hours)	Total cost; contractor (cost/hour)	Total cost; contractor (cost/hour)
Vision loss	Mini-theaters with verbal descriptions	Total cost; contractor (cost/video)	Total cost; contractor (cost/video)
Vision loss	Existing PDF verbal descriptions	Total cost; contractor (number of PDFs)	Total cost; contractor (number of PDFs)
Visitors in general	Baby changing stations	Total cost; OFMR work	N/A
Visitors in general	Access summary on website	Total cost; number of staff hours	Total cost; number of staff hours
	TOTAL	Cost	Cost

Ongoing Costs

Category	Item	Low Estimate	High Estimate
Hearing loss	“No narration” labels	Total cost; staff time	Total cost; staff time
Hearing loss	New YouTube video captions (number of hours/year on average)	Total cost/year; contractor (cost/hour)	Total cost/year; contractor (cost/hour)
Hearing loss	Assistive listening for mini-theaters	Total cost; staff time	TBD equipment cost
Vision loss	Website compliance	Total cost; staff time (number of hours/year)	Total cost; staff time (number of hours/year)
Vision loss	New YouTube verbal descriptions (number of hours/year on average)	Total cost; contractor (cost/hour)	Total cost; contractor (cost/hour)
Vision loss	Large print labels	Total cost; staff time (cost/exhibition, number of galleries)	Total cost; staff time (cost/exhibition, number of galleries)
Vision loss	PDF verbal description creation and training	Total cost; staff time	Cost/PDF; staff time
Visitors in general	Stools for checkout	Total cost; staff time	Cost per stool; staff time (Replace number/year)
Visitors in general	SI Access assessment/training	Total cost; staff time	Total cost; staff time
Visitors in general	SI Accessibility liaison	Total cost; staff time	Total cost; staff time
Visitors in general	F S Access group	Total cost; staff time	Total cost; staff time
	TOTAL	Cost	Cost

Already Implemented

Category	Item	Cost
Limited mobility	Accessible interior map, tactile and braille	Total cost
Vision loss	Large print labels	Total cost; staff time
Visitors in general	F S Access group trip to AAM (number of staff)	Total cost
	TOTAL	Cost

VAT Accessibility Taskforce: Status Report

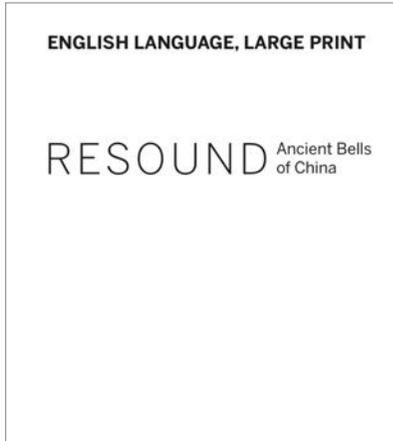
Project Title: Next steps for VAT Accessibility Taskforce				
Project Manager: VAT Accessibility Taskforce			Last Updated: 11/17/17	
Status Report				
Task	Task Owner	Task Status	Completion Rate	Proposed Date of Completion
Access offerings on F S webpage	Group	Complete	100%	10/16/17
Mini- written description and label about the ambient noise	RK	Complete	100%	10/16/17
Tactile map	BR	Complete	100%	10/16/17
Large print labels throughout museum galleries	ML	Complete	100%	11/1/17
Large print labels in selected exhibition (Buddhism)	ML	Complete	100%	11/1/17
Blog post about work	Group	Not started	0%	2/1/18
Large print labels in selected exhibition (ancient Chinese bells)	KT and BR	In progress	90%	1/1/18
Morning at the Museum	KT and ML	In progress; date for Freer	10%; ML got area funds and will have funding	Freer date is April 7
Social story for the Freer	AG	In progress	10%	4/7/18

See Me at Freer Sackler	BR	In progress	10%	6/1/18
Social story for the Sackler	AG	Not started	0%	11/1/18
Visitor map	BR	In progress	80%; edit to include short flight of steps in Freer 1. Next map reprint to include this flight of steps. Map on website under "Find your way"	1/30/18
Wheelchair route	BR	In progress	70%; needs to be user tested	1/30/18
ASL interpretation and assistive listening for Nowruz	KT and CUR	In progress	0%. KT to follow up	3/11/18
ASL interpretation and assistive listening for Lunar New Year events	ML	Not started	0%	
App added to the accessibility page	RK	Not started	0%	2/28/18

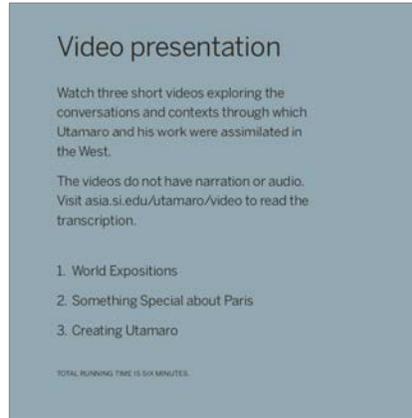
Published Materials

View and download examples: www.freersackler.si.edu/access-toolkit

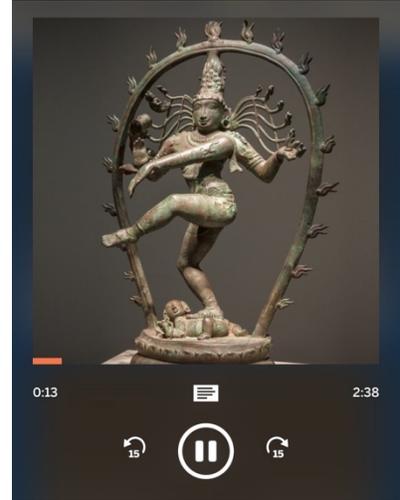
Large print labels



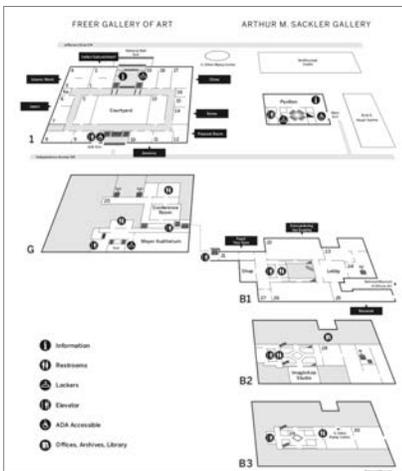
Video transcripts



Audio app transcripts



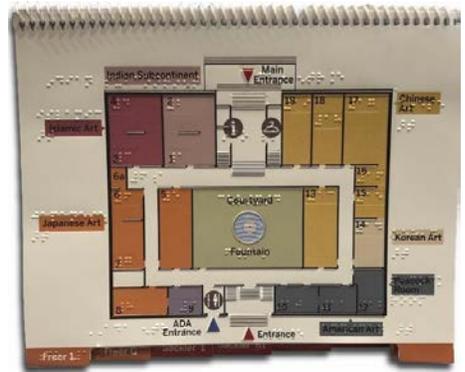
Visual floor plan



Text directions



Tactile map



Templates

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Key Strengths

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Key Weaknesses

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Key Opportunities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Key Threats

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Which actions do we need to take now to ensure our future success?

Estimated Budget Template for Accessibility Proposal

One-time Costs

Category	Item	Low Estimate	High Estimate
	TOTAL	Cost	Cost

Ongoing Costs

Category	Item	Low Estimate	High Estimate
	TOTAL	Cost	Cost

Already Implemented

Category	Item	Cost
	TOTAL	Cost

Accessibility Taskforce: Status Report

Project Title:				
Project Manager:			Last Updated:	
Status Report				
Task	Task Owner	Task Status	Completion Rate	Proposed Date of Completion

Resources

Resources and Articles

General

Smithsonian Accessibility Program

<https://www.si.edu/Accessibility>

Smithsonian Cooper Hewitt Design Access

<https://www.cooperhewitt.org/design-access/>

Kennedy Center Accessibility Program

<http://www.kennedy-center.org/pages/accessibility/>

Canadian Museum for Human Rights Accessibility Program

<https://humanrights.ca/visit/accessibility>

Institute of Museum and Library Services Accessibility Resources

<https://www.ims.gov/issues/national-issues-priorities/accessibility-resources-museums-and-libraries>

Museum of Science Universal Design for Museum Learning Experiences

<https://www.mos.org/UniversalDesign>

Large Print Labels

American Council of the Blind: Guidelines for Large Print Documents

<http://www.acb.org/large-print-guidelines>

Freer | Sackler large print label examples

<https://www.freersackler.si.edu/visit/accessibility#large-print>

Verbal Descriptions

Art Beyond Sight (learning tool)

<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-verbal.shtml>

Coyote (open-source long-form annotation and description platform)

<https://coyote-team.github.io/coyote/>

Cooper Hewitt (exhibition)

<https://www.cooperhewitt.org/2018/04/11/cooper-hewitt-takes-on-verbal-description/>

Guggenheim (example)

<https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/playlist/verbal-descriptions-for-giacometti>

Rubin Museum (verbal description and sensory tours with in-person tour example)

<http://rubinmuseum.org/events/series/verbal-description-and-sensory-tours>

Programming

Smithsonian Morning at the Museum (family programs for visitors with cognitive and sensory processing disabilities)

<https://www.si.edu/Accessibility/MATM>

See Me at Smithsonian (a program for adults with dementia and their care-partners)

<https://africa.si.edu/?s=see+me> (example at National Museum of African Art)

Smithsonian American Art Museum (gallery talks in ASL)

<https://americanart.si.edu/education/adult/asl>

Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) (planning accessible meetings and events)

<https://www.arts.wa.gov/media/dynamic/docs/Planning%20Accessible%20Events.pdf>

Testing / Evaluation

Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) – Evaluation Guide

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Step6.pdf>

Design Accessibility (Website, Exhibitions, Graphics, etc.)

Downloadable Disability Access Symbols

<https://graphicartistsguild.org/downloadable-disability-access-symbols/>

Smithsonian Exhibition Design Guidelines

<https://www.si.edu/Accessibility/SGAED>

Smithsonian Publication Design Guidelines

<https://www.si.edu/Content/Accessibility/Publication-Guidelines.pdf>

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) – Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook

<https://www.arts.gov/publications/design-accessibility-cultural-administrators-handbook>

Website Accessibility Checker and Validator

<https://www.powermapper.com/products/sortsite/checks/accessibility-checks/>

WCAG 2.0 Checklist

<https://webaim.org/standards/wcag/checklist>

The A11Y Project Checklist - A Beginner's Guide to Web Accessibility

<https://a11yproject.com/checklist>

Contrast Checker

<https://contrastchecker.com>

Accessible Color Palette Builder

<https://toolness.github.io/accessible-color-matrix/>

Color Blindness Simulator

<http://www.color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator/>

Theme Design and Development Tools:

<https://make.wordpress.org/accessibility/handbook/which-tools-can-i-use/useful-tools/>

Hardware and Tools

Aira

<https://aira.io>

iPhone/iOS

<https://www.apple.com/accessibility/iphone/>

Android

<https://support.google.com/accessibility/android/answer/6006564>

Legal Compliance

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - Regulations

https://www.ada.gov/2010_regs.htm

ADA National Network

<https://adata.org/>

ADA Standards for Accessible Design

https://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards_index.htm

Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) – Accessibility Standards

<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-aba-standards/aba-standards>

Articles and Additional Reading

A New Way to See: Looking at Museums through the Eyes of the Blind

<https://www.aam-us.org/2019/01/28/a-new-way-to-see-looking-at-museums-through-the-eyes-of-the-blind/>

Beyond Accessibility to Universal Design

<https://www.wbdg.org/design-objectives/accessible/beyond-accessibility-universal-design>

Embracing Inclusive Design in Multitouch Exhibit Development

<https://ideum.com/spec-sheets/Embracing-Inclusive-Design.pdf>

Welcoming All Visitors: Museums, Accessibility, and Visitors with Disabilities

<http://ummsp.rackham.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Braden-working-paper-FINAL-pdf.pdf>

Feedback

Please email fs-accessibility@si.edu

Download

www.freersackler.si.edu/access-toolkit