Chicago Cultural Accessibility Consortium

Providing Services and Programming for Guests who are Blind or Have Low Vision
Friday, April 25, 2014

KEY RESEARCH, BEST PRACTICES, & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Two lists from the *White Paper on Museums and Visitors Who are Blind or Have Low Vision*:

TEN KEY FINDINGS REGARDING NEEDS OF MUSEUM VISITORS AND FUTURE MUSEUM VISITORS WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE LOW VISION:
1. There is considerable diversity within the population of museum visitors who are blind or have low vision.
2. Loss of vision does not equate with loss of interest in art or museums.
3. Planning a museum visit is time-consuming and often requires advance preparation.
4. Visitor-service and front-of-house staff are key in creating a welcoming environment.
5. Participants value experiences that include verbal descriptions of artworks and descriptive directional information.
6. Many negative experiences are connected with an interaction with security staff.
7. Exhibition and architectural designs can create barriers for participation.
8. Highly valued accessible programs offer multi-sensory opportunities, including tactile exploration, music, movement, reenactment, art workshops and other hands-on activities. Engaging tactile experiences include touching authentic objects as well as replicas and models were appreciated. Some visitors, when unable to have tactile experiences in the galleries, found them in the gift store, by exploring models and gift items related to the exhibit on view.
9. The social aspect of sharing a museum experience with a companion, a family, or a group was highly meaningful to most participants. Many also valued independent exploration.
10. Negative experiences lead to termination of museum memberships and decreased visitation not only by people with visual impairments, but also by their family and friends.
White Paper on Museums and Visitors Who are Blind or Have Low Vision, Art Beyond Sight 2011. http://www.artbeyondsight.org/docs/fln%20formatted%20White%20Paper.pdf

EIGHT CRITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUSEUMS AND ARTS AGENCIES:
1. Provide a variety of programs to accommodate the diverse interests and needs of visitors who are blind or have low vision.
2. Improve the visit-planning process for patrons with low vision by making detailed and

usable information available through either phone menus or accessible websites.
3. Provide Disability Awareness Training for all staff who interact directly with visitors.
4. Train museum docents and educators in verbal description.
5. Incorporate technology and universally designed museum and exhibit spaces. Museums should consider changes or additions to existing design and new exhibit design that would enable clear and safe navigation and wayfinding.
6. Create organizational change that goes beyond making one particular area accessible.
7. Involve the community and end-users in program design and outreach.
8. Create a welcoming environment and engaging learning experiences for ALL. By making your collection and spaces accessible to people with low vision, you will create a more inclusive and universally engaging environment for all.

White Paper on Museums and Visitors Who are Blind or Have Low Vision, Art Beyond Sight 2011. http://www.artbeyondsight.org/docs/fln%20formatted%20White%20Paper.pdf

Study on the Needs and Preferences of Adults who Are Blind or Have Low Vision, Art Beyond Sight, 2011. http://www.artbeyondsight.org/new/speaking-out-on-art-and-museums.shtml
- This is the full report related to the *White Paper*. **Lucas thinks pages 33-42 are particularly interesting: "Accessible Programming and Design."**

Art Beyond Sight Handbook for Museums and Educators.
http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/index.shtml
- On creating accessible programming for people with visual impairments

Writing Verbal Descriptions for Audio Guides.
http://www.artbeyondsight.org/mei/verbal-description-training/writing-verbal-description-for-audio-guides/

Additional Museum Accessibility Research.
http://www.artbeyondsight.org/mei/advisory-board-for-the-multi-site-museum-accessibility-study/

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Principles of Universal Design, Institute for Human Centered Design.
http://www.humancentereddesign.org/universal-design/principles-universal-design

State of the Art Applications of Universal Design, Institute for Human Centered Design.
http://www.humancentereddesign.org/universal-design/state-art

Kennedy Center annotated bibliography of Universal Design Resources on the Web, 2006.
https://www.kennedy-center.org/accessibility/TipSheet_Universal_Design_resources_on_the_web.pdf

Universal Design of Instruction (UDI): Definition, Principles, Guidelines, and Examples (Sheryl Burgstahler, Ph.D.), 2012. http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Strategies/Universal/
- On creating an inclusive educational environment.