Accessibility Design for Festival Settings

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MINNESOTA STATE ARTS BOARD

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

Special Thanks

Minnesota Festivals & Events Association

Minnesota Access Alliance

Overview

- Creating an accessible & inclusive festival environment
  - Foundations of philosophy and practice
  - Areas for consideration in planning, design, and implementation
  - Empowerment and Resources
- Thinking "beyond the ADA"
- Recognizing diverse entry points
- Using "Person First" language

Disability 101

- Disability
  - Includes physical, cognitive, learning, developmental, sensory, and emotional-behavioral disabilities.
  - Also may include major health conditions such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, HIV, etc.
- CDC: 1 in 4 persons in the US has a disability
  - Many of these disabilities <u>may not be visible</u>.
- Disability is the only group with "open enrollment"

Why Accessibility and Inclusion?

- It's the Law *(this is the wrong motivation…)*

- Morally/ethically "right thing to do"

- Social Justice (human and civil rights issue)

- **Good economics**

- Linked to event vision / goals

  - Celebration and sharing of community

- Accessibility and Inclusion = Great Customer Service!

Framing Accessibility and the Social Model of Disability

- Lennard J. Davis

- Three major concepts
  - Impairment
  - Disability (exclusion as a result of the impairment)
  - "Normalcy"

- Model *locates disability in societal infrastructures* (instead of *the individual*).

- Impairment + Environment = Disability
  - Environment is physical, procedural, and attitudinal.

Why it Matters...

- The way disability is framed can impact:
  - Understanding
  - Language
  - Design of built environments
  - Design of programming and engagement
  - Educational approaches
  - Expectations for participation
- Designing with the Social Model in mind assumes that visitors will navigate, communicate, process, and engage in a variety of diverse ways.

The Model of Accommodation vs. Accessibility

- Accommodation
    - Requires me to ask / explain the service
    - Possible invasion of my privacy
    - I'm "special" because I'm different
    - Out of the ordinary / Not "the norm" / Extra work
- Accessibility
    - Welcome extended
    - You've already considered me
    - I'm "special" because I'm your customer
    - Business as Usual

General Considerations for Accessibility

- Space, environment, and internal infrastructures

- Policies and Procedures

- Staff Connection / Ownership / Empowerment

- Communication / Marketing / Messaging

- Disability Community Involvement / Outreach

- Design of Programming / Intended Experience

- Disability representation within the art / programming

Festival Challenges

- Temporary Construction

- Fluidity of space and boundaries

- Challenges of ticketed / un-ticketed infrastructures

- Balancing simultaneous accessibility needs

- Supporting goals of "unexpected discovery"

- Multiple cooperating partners / organizations

- Schedule changes

- Timeline and length of event

- Mother Nature

- The Unexpected

Creating an Accessible Festival

- Think architecturally and programmatically
  - Not an "add on" or a "one and done"
  - Incorporating Universal / Inclusive Design
- Assume that visitors will navigate, communicate, process, and engage in a variety of ways.
- Think about
  - Design / Build of Space
  - Engagement Experience
  - Accessibility Services
  - Invitation

Designing / Building Space

- Getting There
  - Pathways of travel
  - Drop-Off / Pick-Up locations
  - Parking
- Spaces and Structures
  - Terrain (given and created)
  - Temporary built environment / Existing venues
  - Entrance / Approach / Internal navigation
  - Free of obstacles (built and "acquired")
  - Cane detectable

Designing / Building Space

- Performance / Presentation Spaces
  - Accessing the venue
  - Viewing / Seating areas
  - Temporary / Fluid / "designated" vs. designed
- Rest / Break areas
- Concessions and Dining Areas
- Restroom Facilities
- Shelter from Weather

Inclusive Design and Construction

Photo courtesy of Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Institution

Engagement Experience

- Booths / Tents / Activities
  - Approach / Internal navigation
  - Height of counters and tables
  - Design of display
  - Offer varied materials / Provide sample "steps" in process
  - Communication Options
- Retail / Concessions
  - Approachable / Line management & Flow
  - Menus / Price Lists (readable, accessible formats)
  - Displays (High and Low)
  - Check out (communication, purchase point, delivery)

Site Survey for Access

- ☐ Consider timeline
- ☐ **Utilize user experts**
  - ■ Multiple perspectives
- ☐ Create a triage list
- ☐ Ongoing adjustments
  - ■ Continue to improve the experience (current/future)

Photo courtesy of Diane Nutting

Accessibility Services

- Assistive Listening Systems
  - Any program area with amplified sound
  - Choosing system type (FM / Infrared / Loop)
    - Setting, Space, Community Preference
  - System for acquisition of receivers
  - Collaborate with onsite sound / tech support
- Mobility Supports
  - Assistive devices (wheelchairs, cane chairs, etc.)
  - System for acquisition / loan
  - Transport options when needed / available

Accessibility Services

- ASL Interpretation, Captioning (CART), Audio Description
  - Scheduling services with added "on demand" option
  - Location / Placement (light, sound, traffic flow, the elements)
  - Prep Materials (lyrics, set lists, curated content)
  - Cultural representation
  - Update / Communicate schedule changes
- Alternative Format Materials
  - Multiple text entry points (signs, schedules, concessions)
  - Providing Large Print, Braille, Tactile Maps
  - Utilize technology (e.g. audio schedules, QR codes, etc.)

Additional Service Considerations

- Device Charging Stations
- Service Dog areas (water and relief)
- Family / Companion Care restrooms
- Sensory Supports
  - Sensory Guide (available in advance and on-site)
  - Identified and/or designated quiet areas
- Specialized Programs
- Accessibility for Artists and Participants
- Emergency Protocols / Preparation (!!)
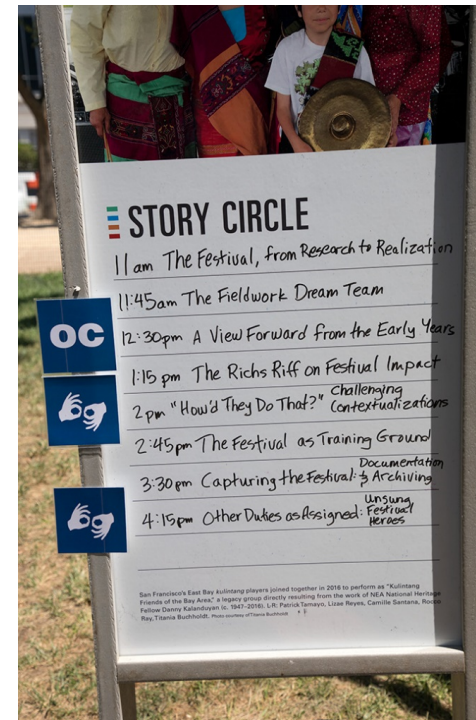
Invitation

- Outreach and Awareness
  - Make it intentional
  - Note accessibility in all messaging / materials / PR
  - Include disability access symbols
  - Reach out to list-servs and community contacts
  - <u>Engage the disability community in planning</u>
- Onsite
  - Central information location for accessibility
  - Signage / Visibility

Onsite Invitation and Visibility

Photos courtesy of Diane Nutting

Working with Others

- Agencies (local, state, law enforcement), Venues, Collaborators, Vendors, Staff / Colleagues, Volunteers, Artists, Performers
- Communicate mission and intention
- Create Connection / Buy-In
  - **"Accessibility is everyone's job!"**
- Educate / Train
- Recognize diverse entry points
- Empower for creative brainstorming
- Make it personal: Share feedback and impact stories in "real time"

Communication breakdowns...

Photos courtesy of (L) Diane Nutting / (R) The Pushy Lawyer (Facebook)

Tips for the Front Lines

- First Impressions set the tone!
  The Customer Service Lens
  - Value every visitor
  - ASK how you can help (***and listen***)
  - Offer info and options (***but don't make the decision***)
  - Remember not all disabilities are visible to you
  - Communication ≠ Cognition
- Be familiar with available services
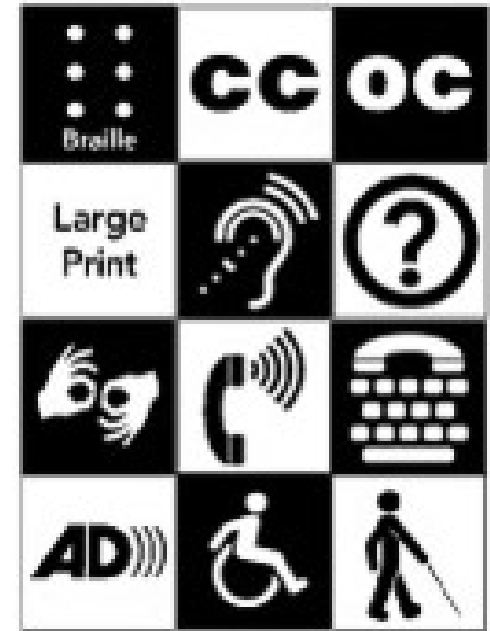
Getting Started!

- Plan for inclusion
  - Make it a core value
  - Internal and External conversations
  - Map your community (and needs)
  - Universal / Inclusive Design (not as an afterthought)
- Designate Accessibility Coordinator
  - Point Person / Liaison
- Involve Disability Community
  - Create a Task Force (user experts / advisors)
- Start where you are; set goals; dream forward!

Wise Words…

"We can't let the fact that we can't do everything be the excuse for not doing anything."

-John Waldo (Attorney / Disability Rights Advocate)

"When people don't plan, people get left out."

-Elizabeth Stoltenberg (Community Ally / Accessibility Advocate)

Resources

- Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible   (ADA National Network)
  - https://adata.org/publication/temporary-events-guide

- Accessible Temporary Events (Great Plains ADA Center)
  - https://www.gpadacenter.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/AccessibleTemporaryEvents.pdf

- Guide to Accessible Outdoor Events (Accessibility Directorate of Ontario) – *based on Ontario standards*
  - http://govdocs.ourontario.ca/node/29661

MORE Resources

- American Society of Landscape Architects Universal Design Guide
  - Focusing on permanent environments but great insight around inclusive community space
  - https://www.asla.org/universaldesign.aspx

- Leadership Exchange in Arts & Disability (LEAD)
  - Annual conference hosted by The Kennedy Center
  - https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/networks-conferences-and-research/conferences-and-events/lead-conference

- Minnesota Access Alliance www.mnaccess.org

Reflection…

- *What has resonated? What are you excited about?*
- *What changes can you make right away as you plan?*

- *Looking ahead, what changes can you make to your design and construction? To your engagement? To your invitation?*
- *Who are your internal and external resources, connections, and allies?*

- Continue the conversation!
- Recognize that accessibility and inclusion is a journey.

Questions?

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