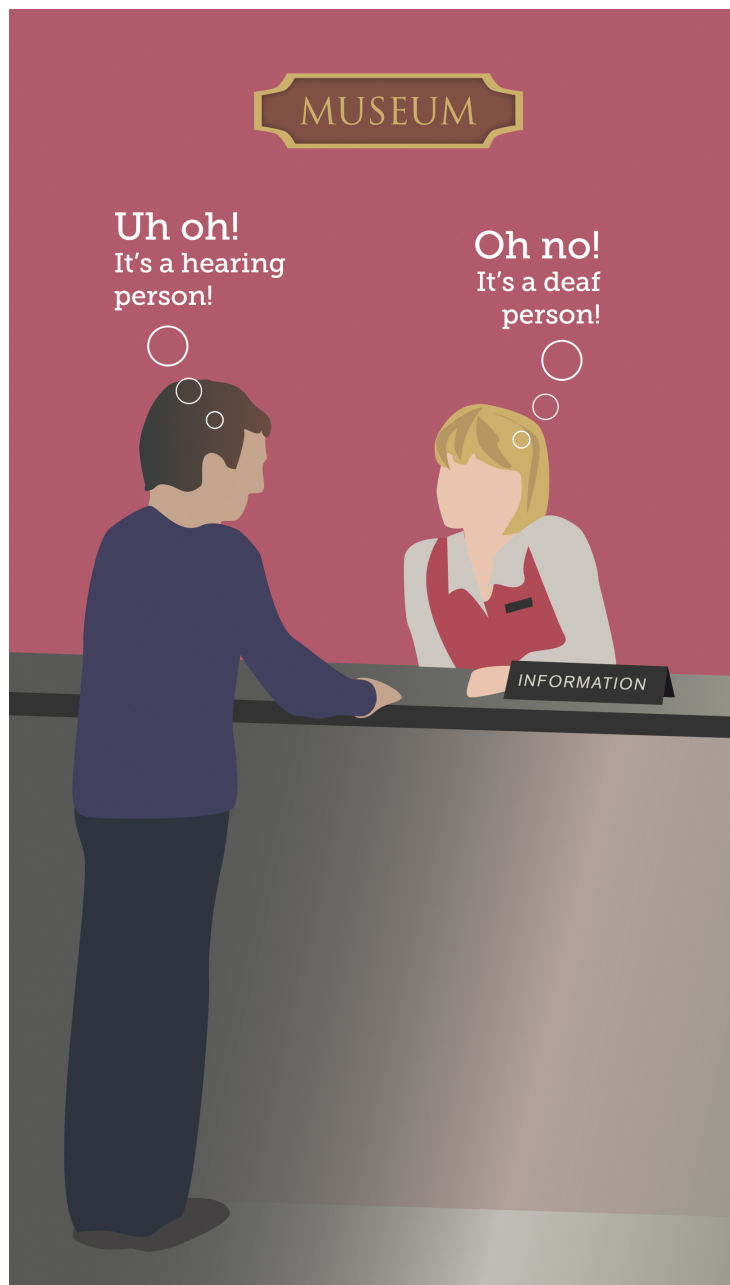


HANDBOOK OF GUIDELINES FOR MAKING YOUR MUSEUM OR VISITOR ATTRACTION DEAF-FRIENDLY

WHETHER YOU WANT TO USE ICT OR NOT!



THIS HANDBOOK IS THE RESULT OF A GRUNDTVIG PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME :

**MUSEUMS, ACCESSIBILITY AND ICT FOR DEAF PEOPLE:
FAVOURING BEST PRACTICE IN EUROPE
*AUGUST 2011 – JUNE 2013***



Lifelong
Learning
Programme



Programme d'éducation
et de formation
tout au long de la vie



Programmet
for livslang
læring

THIS GRUNDTVIG PROJECT HAS THREE PARTNERS, FROM NORWAY, THE UK AND FRANCE :

SIGNES DE SENS (FRANCE)

Signes de sens specializes in accessibility for deaf people.

Since 2003, we have developed projects and guided professionals in how to best provide the appropriate adjustments for the deaf community.

Our goal is to promote positive interactions between deaf and hearing people and help everyone live together in harmony.

<http://www.signesdesens.com/>

Contact : Aurélie Brulavoine

HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES (UNITED KINGDOM)

Historic Royal Palaces is the independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace and Kew Palace. It helps everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society in some of the greatest palaces ever built. This includes deaf visitors.

Over a number of years, British Sign Language interpreted tours have been integrated into our palace interpretation and visitor experience programmes. Each stage has evolved following feedback from the end-users - deaf visitors. But we know there is more we can do and our aim is to be as inclusive as possible.

<http://www.hrp.org.uk/>

Contact : Sue Whittaker

MUSEENE I SØR-TRØNDELAG (MIST), NORSK DØVEMUSEUM (NORWAY)

Museene i Sør-Trøndelag (MiST) consists of 8 museums in the region, covering music, art, arts and craft, railway and cultural history, in addition to The Museum of Deaf History and Culture - Norsk Døvemuseum (NDM), opened in 2009. NDM is one of very few professional museums internationally dedicated to Deaf history, sign language and Deaf culture. NDM's work with a Deaf audience has led to a greater awareness about accessibility in the other museums in the MiST organisation. Lifelong learning in museums has been our concern for a long time, and has a special strength in our pedagogic programmes, both in formal and non-formal learning.

By joining this Grundtvig project we wanted to explore the possibilities of using ICT in museums in a way that gives the best result when it comes to learning for a deaf audience. By developing our communication with the deaf audiences we hope to learn more about how to reach this particular group.

<http://www.norsk-dovemuseum.no/>

Contact : Hanna Mellemsether

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	5
WHAT IS DEAFNESS?	5
WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?	7
WHY SHOULD YOU DO ACCESSIBILITY?	7
A JOURNEY TO THE MUSEUM	8
AT THE ARRIVAL	8
<i>Pre-visit information</i>	8
<i>Staff training</i>	10
<i>Assisting aids</i>	10
<i>Don't panic!</i>	11
THE ACTUAL VISIT	12
<i>In the exhibition</i>	12
<i>Guided tours (deaf guides / interpreted tours)</i>	13
<i>Multimedia tours</i>	15
AT THE END OF THE VISIT	17

INTRODUCTION

We started out on this project focusing on the use of ICT in museums. We were eager to share our experience and craving to discover amazing multimedia projects in each other's country. It didn't take much time before we realized that most multimedia projects accessible for Deaf people in museums in Europe were either disappointing or rarely frequented by Deaf visitors.

Don't jump to the conclusion that multimedia doesn't work with Deaf visitors. Just like to any visitor, it definitely means that there's a lot to invent and create to make multimedia attracting and meaningful in the museum setting. So, instead of creating multimedia projects for distinct categories of visitors, we all came to the conclusion that the solution is think globally, think "inclusive", think "universal design".

Thus, in the course of the project, very naturally, we broadened our scope and we shared our experience about what has to be done to make a museum Deaf-friendly. We are happy to share with you this white book, which is the result of 2 years of exchanges, 3 seminars, in 3 countries, in 3 sign languages - of course including hearing and Deaf professionals or visitors.

WHAT IS DEAFNESS?

The term 'Deaf World' is often used to refer to Deaf culture that consists of Sign Language users - including people who are deaf, hard of hearing, their closest family, the interpreters, teachers and others who use Sign Language in their communication. As a cultural group, the Deaf World therefore includes more than the deaf and, as a minority culture, it is partly inside and partly outside the mainstream national culture.

Deafness and Deaf culture are not necessarily neatly aligned with each other. Within the deaf community there are different factions with different approaches to deafness - notably 'Deaf' and 'deaf'; the capital D makes a difference. Deaf mute, deaf and dumb, hearing impaired - the choices are many and not without consequences. The words used in the discourse on deafness are just as important as those within other minority discourses concerned with sexuality, ethnicity, gender, class and so on. The ill-famed 'deaf and dumb', went out of use decades ago, but still lingers on in the media. Deaf people are not dumb, in any sense of the word; neither are they 'mute'. Some deaf and hard of hearing people use the common denominator 'hearing impaired', although this is not accepted by all.

There are distinctions between people who are born deaf, those who have acquired deafness after they have learnt a language, and people who are hard of hearing. Also deaf people themselves have different views on 'deafness' as disability versus 'Deafness' as culture, and some feel caught between the expectations to be integrated into the main society and the demands from their own culture expressed through visual communication. For people who are born deaf especially, spoken language in its written form is a foreign language.

Most deaf people have some residual hearing which can be exploited by hearing aids, cochlear implants and other hearing technology. But even with residual hearing, they will often hear too poorly to function in a speech-language group, where different ambient noise is commonplace. It is usually estimated that 0.1% of any population are deaf.

KEY FIGURES¹

	UK	France	Norway
Inhabitants	63 million	65 million	5 million
People with hearing disability	10 million	4.1 million	400 000
Severely or profoundly Deaf	800 000	483 000	
Deaf (born and acquired at an early age)		120 000	4 000-5 000
Deaf SL speakers		80 000	
Sign language users (including parents & professionals)			16 500

¹ Not all statistics are available.

WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

The UN charter of Human Rights, Article 27.1 states that: “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”. Similar language appears in Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone (a) To take part in cultural life; (b) To enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications; (c) To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.”

To be able to enjoy these rights, cultural institutions must be accessible for all. States would have different legislation on this area, and the practices differ even within countries. Accessibility to museums is often used together with the term Universal Design, which refers to a spectrum of ideas that make buildings, products and environments inherently accessible to everybody, people with and without disabilities. In the typical museum, most of the ideas will be directed towards giving physical access to the buildings and exhibitions. The digital revolution has made museum collections available online, accessible for many - if not all.

But physical accessibility does not mean that everybody can participate in and enjoy the culture a museum provides. The content of the exhibitions may need some adjustment, or translation, to be accessible to all. Some deaf visitors have Sign Language as their first language. Sign language differs from spoken language when it comes to words, grammar and syntax. Also, large blocks of text may be too straining to the eyes, both because of the font size and lack of contrast. So although the deaf may have easy *physical* access to the museum, the content can be more or less inaccessible.

WHY SHOULD YOU DO ACCESSIBILITY?

In addition to the UN charter of human rights, each country might have legislation and regulations that make accessibility for all compulsory. In Norway, for example, such a law came into force in 2009, stating that public buildings must be accessibility for all. The same goes for websites.

Most museums will benefit in many ways from working with accessibility. If you make your museum attractive to a special target group, you create new groups of visitors, and thereby generate more income and more publicity. Some of the advice given in this white book will benefit other groups as well.

Accessibility is fun! Museum professionals and museum organisations can learn a lot from working with target groups. In the process you may realize that the stereotypes don't fit real life, your prejudices are challenged and you get a new perspective on your everyday work. Accessibility work makes the museum an inclusive institution, and the staff themselves more inclusive people.

A JOURNEY TO THE MUSEUM

how to prepare the museum for deaf visitors

AT THE ARRIVAL

Get it right from the start - or Deaf visitors might go no further!

Deaf people can find it very daunting visiting a museum or visitor attraction, especially a paid-for one that requires them to buy an admission ticket. Even free museums often have a set entry process - for example a bag search - or have so much to offer that it's difficult to know where to start. Just think how difficult it can be to communicate and ask for assistance if you are in a foreign country, so how much harder it will be if you can't hear the answer whatever the spoken language.

Pre-visit information

There's no point in putting lots of effort into making your venue deaf-friendly if potential deaf visitors can't find out about it!

Most museums and visitor attractions now rely on their website to let visitors know what they offer, where they are and how much it might cost to enter. This is also where access information and any special events are highlighted.


TIPS FOR YOUR WEBSITE



Access arrangements for deaf visitors needs to be obvious on your website.



Ideally you should have basic, general visitor information available in sign language.




At the very least any videos on your website should be subtitled.

TIPS FOR YOUR MUSEUM ENTRANCE



Ensure information on site is easy to spot and is clearly identified.



Don't rely on your website alone. Some people like to travel independently and either fail to use the technology successfully because the information is inappropriate and/or find out about it too late into their visit.

Staff training

Train them to be comfortable to communicate with Deaf visitors - not to be bilingual

Hearing people find it hard to communicate with a deaf person; they seem to panic! When in a deaf-awareness training situation, staff teams come up with some good ideas e.g. use pen and paper, ensure communication is 'face to face' etc. but all these ideas seem to disappear once they are back in a front-of-house position or on the desk dealing with visitors. Confidence would appear to be the issue.

Bear in mind that the same probably applies to the deaf person. They will prefer face-to-face communication so that they can lip-read but their knowledge of your spoken language may be low. And while they may also carry pen and paper with them, don't assume they can understand your written language well or easily read your writing !

Having said that, pen and paper should be your first option and you can't go wrong by offering it. Some deaf visitors may even present you with a scrap of paper that already has a few details on.

If you have staff who know some Sign Language, or some sign, use them but make the identification of staff who can provide support easy. Think about providing them with labelled jackets or tabards; a 'sign language user' name badge simply isn't big enough or visual enough.

Assisting aids

Make sure your equipment works and train your staff to use it

Many museums have installed hearing loops - but they are of no use if the staff do not know how to use them, or if they are not functioning. Have routines for checking the equipment.

Check batteries in handheld devices on a regular basis. It is such a disappointment to visitors when the expectations are not met. And honestly, it is a disappointment to the staff as well.

Front desks in the museum may be staffed by part time or temporary personnel. Make sure that ALL are informed about what you can offer; include accessibility in the training routines for museum guides as well.

Don't panic!

All organisations want to present a friendly face, be open-minded and adaptable - whoever they are dealing with and however they plan to do it.

So do what you can, ensure your staff receive some disability awareness training - and preferably some Deaf Awareness training as well - and be open to new ideas. No one will expect you to get it right first time, but they will expect you to learn from your mistakes and be open to suggestions on improvement.

If you do get it wrong, try to find out why and at what point it went wrong. Ask for ideas from the deaf person you are dealing with - if they know what the problem is they may also be able to come up with a solution. And if you are struggling to communicate with them, maybe that is the problem. If writing things down doesn't work, try drawing pictures. If you don't know any sign language but could mime something, try that. You may feel a bit of a fool and that you are spending a lot of time not getting anywhere but you are also being seen to be trying.

And remember, you can't please all of the people - deaf and/or hearing - all of the time! Some people - deaf and/or hearing - are never satisfied and are just out to find fault, so don't worry if nothing seems to please an individual. As long as you learn from the experience and are flexible, you'll be appreciated by the wider community.

THE ACTUAL VISIT

Make it meaningful, accessible and enjoyable

whether it's an individual visit or a tour, whether you use technology or not

In the exhibition

Space and lighting : Many exhibitions are dark, particularly if they contain real objects. However, sign language users need space and light to see what they are saying. If possible have at least one area of light that an interpreter could stand in. A torch, used as a spotlight, and/or white gloves are also options to consider. And if you are providing tours in sign language, remember that the group will all need to be able to see the signer so providing some areas where they can stand without blocking access to other visitors is also helpful.

Loop : Make sure your equipment works

TIPS TO MAKE INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

- 1 Provide written information, just like for any other visitor (explaining what is the point of the exhibition).
- 2 Use plain language « quick to read and easy to understand written language »
- 3 Subtitle any videos.
- 4 Add videos in sign language in the rooms (on monitors) if you can

Guided tours (deaf guides / interpreted tours)

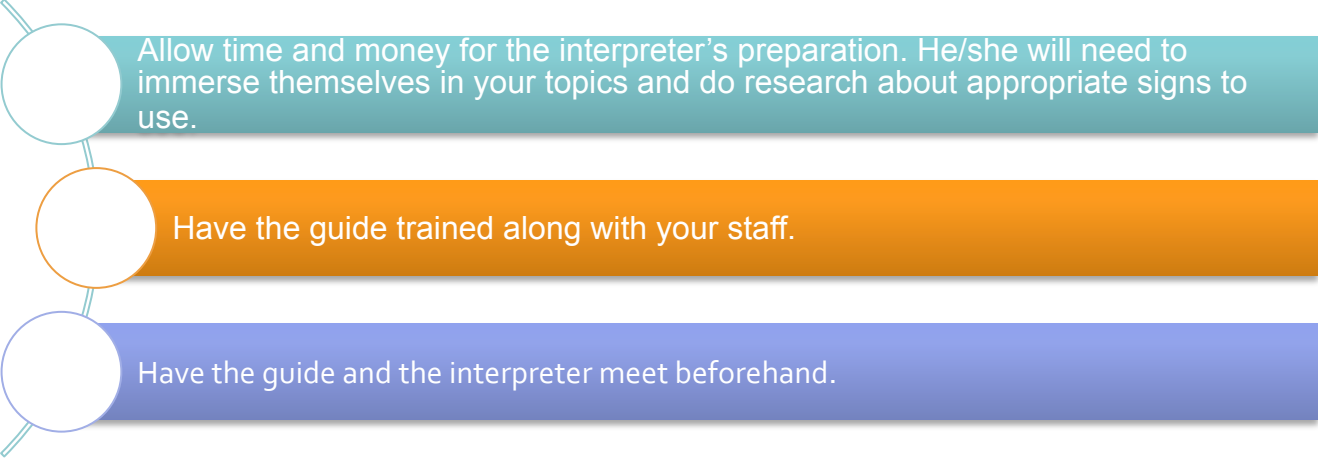
When it comes to visiting a museum, there is nothing like having a guide you can interact with. It's all the more true with Deaf visitors. All three partners have experienced it : a guided tour for Deaf visitors often is a social event. It often is considered as an opportunity to meet with other Deaf people. Don't overlook this aspect whenever you come to programming an accessible tour.

Interpreters or Deaf guides?

Whenever you ask Deaf visitors, they will mostly prefer a Deaf guide, in a sign-language only tour. Interpreted tours can sometimes be disappointing because Deaf visitors have too little time for observation, since they are focused on the signs.

However, finding a Deaf guide, with adequate training, can be difficult - if not sometimes impossible! So ask other museums who they're working with. You can also train motivated Deaf people to become guides : Tate Modern (UK) and Signes de sens (France) have experience of this.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH INTERPRETING SERVICES FOR TOURS



Allow time and money for the interpreter's preparation. He/she will need to immerse themselves in your topics and do research about appropriate signs to use.

Have the guide trained along with your staff.

Have the guide and the interpreter meet beforehand.

Historic Royal Palaces has successfully experienced a third way : an interpreter who is also an accredited guide - the tour is in sign language only.

Museums in the USA, such as the Intrepid Museum in New York, hold tours with a Deaf guide with interpreters for hearing people. What a great experience of inclusion!

Don't take for granted that the topic the guides are talking about is immediately recognized/relevant to deaf visitors. Many of the terms we use, for example, in art museums and cultural history museums do not have any specific signs - or the sign is little known in the Deaf Community. That may be caused by the generation gap: Sign Language is rarely transferred from mother to daughter and father to son, it is often among peers within the Deaf Community that SL develops and evolves so that the generation gap might be bigger than in the hearing community.

Sometimes it is necessary to explain the meaning of the term in more signs than one: does the interpreter know the meaning of *expressionism* in art history? Does the deaf visitor understand what a *milkmaid* is?

If you have a manuscript used by your guides, or a framework for your dialogue with the audience, make that available for the interpreters well ahead of the planned tour. Also, if your museum has an object or piece of art of special interest to deaf visitors, make sure to include that in the tour. That might be a painting by a deaf artist, a picture of a deaf person, an object that has been used/owned/made by a deaf person or in other ways related to 'our culture' - to deafness and deafhood.



Deaf-led tour of the King's Guard Chamber at Hampton Court Palace. (November 2012)

A British Sign Language interpreter translated the tour into spoken English which was then translated into Norwegian and French sign language by Norwegian and French interpreters.

Multimedia tours

In the last decade, many museums in Europe, and a few in North America, have engaged in buying multimedia guides in sign language. In most cases, the Deaf community was disappointed (quality of videos, of sign language, etc...) and most museums ended up disappointed because few people ever used them.

So, be smart, don't do it all over again. Instead of creating multimedia projects for distinct categories of visitors, the solution is think "inclusive", think "universal design". Think about something new, something fun, something widely accessible : that will maximize your chances to get funding and in the end to broaden your audience.

...BEFORE EVEN CHOOSING TO MAKE VIDEOS

- Make sure you know why you want to make videos
- Make sure technology is the answer to fulfill your goals
- Make sure you'll have resources for promotion and community outreach
- Translating an audioguide into sign language videos does not work!

...BEGIN

Having decided that you want to provide some sort of visual, technology-based system to make your museum more accessible to deaf visitors, don't go looking for a platform or supplier before you've worked out - and consulted on - what you want to put on your film.

Bear in mind the following three words:

- PURPOSE - who is the customer and why do they need what you are planning?
- OUTPUT - what do they expect or want at the end of it?
- PROCESS - now you can contact suppliers and start writing scripts.

It's a simple term to remember: POP!

...CHOOSE YOUR TECHNOLOGY

Technology is only a means to an end... so choosing the device must come at the end of the process.

It's all too easy to choose the device or application and then create a programme to fit it. This is unlikely to give you the best outcome, and may tie you into medium or long term contracts that are expensive or aren't appropriate. Remember that if the end result doesn't work for deaf people, they won't use it - and you may become known as the museum that tried and failed rather than the one to visit because access is good!

Keep in mind that your museum should provide the device on which to watch the videos. Studies have shown that visitors are reluctant to use their own devices (smartphones).

TIPS FOR MAKING VIDEOS

- 1. Make it short : 2 minutes per video.
- 2. Make it visual : add images or illustrations when helpful
- 3. Think about universal design : add subtitles and provide voice-over (as an option; always subtitle sign language)
- 4. Make it comfortable to watch : sober background, plain dress code that contrasts with the background
- 5. Choose a supplier who is experienced in filming sign language and who works with Deaf professionals (linguistic adviser, actor...)

AT THE END OF THE VISIT

Keep asking your audience what they think.

Regardless of how appreciative deaf visitors are of your efforts to make your museum accessible, there will always be improvements that can be made.

TIPS



If you have Visitors Books or comment cards, encourage deaf visitors to fill them in. You want their positive feedback as well as any ideas for improvement!



If you do annual or periodic visitor surveys ask deaf visitors to participate, even if you are only able to canvass them on one day when a sign language interpreter is present.



If you can, chat to them at the end of their visit or over a cup of coffee during an afternoon refreshment break in your cafe - not just to find out what could be improved but how the offer could be developed and to get ideas for the future.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

Ce projet a été financé avec le soutien de la Commission européenne.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Cette publication n'engage que son auteur et la Commission n'est pas responsable de l'usage qui pourrait être fait des informations qui y sont contenues.