

New Accessibility Symbol Unveiled

A new international symbol of accessibility, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and developed by the Graphic Artists Guild has been unveiled as part of a series of 12 symbols that can be used to promote and publicize accessibility of places, programs and other activities for people with various disabilities. This new symbol depicts a person leaning forward in a wheelchair with arms poised to push the wheels.

“The new wheelchair symbol has a high energy look and a little attitude – I like it,” said Elaine Ostroff, founding director of the Adaptive Environments Center. “It’s much better than the passive stuck hospital chair in the standard symbol. I look forward to when we don’t need any symbols...”

The guild reports that the new symbol of accessibility has been accepted by the Department of Justice as providing “equivalent facilitation” to the “old” symbol in the Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Guidelines. The symbol can be downloaded or copied off the Graphic Artists Guilds website, www.gag.org/resources/das.html.



New symbol of accessibility.

Promoting Accessible Pools

A Review of the New Design Guidelines

Guest Analysis by John Paul Scott, AIA

In September, the US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) completed a large portion of an eight-year effort to develop accessibility guidelines for recreation facilities. In addition to the play area guidelines published in 2000, the new rule provides accessibility guidelines for amusement rides, swimming pools, golf and miniature golf, boating and fishing docks, and sports facilities and equipment. By utilizing input from groups that represented people with disabilities, businesses and government, the Access Board developed collaborative accessibility guidelines that are both functional and achievable. The Access Board staff, especially Project Coordinator Peggy Greenwell, should be applauded for its diligence and patience in developing this project.

The guideline’s swimming pool section has excellent potential for promoting access and universal design in aquatic recreation. Many of the accessibility methods lend themselves to cross utilization and benefit people of differing abilities, especially older people and people with temporary injuries. When designed and positioned properly in the aquatic environment, these forms of access should provide an additional layer of safety for swimming pool and aquatic recreation.

The Basic Requirements

The guideline contains five forms of pool access – each having specific dimensional and technical detail. Each swimming pool is to

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The Poignant Peachtree Visit

By Shoshana Shamberg, OTR/L, MS

Although the concept is just more than a decade old, people around the country have been making important contributions that have led to the implementation and acceptance of universal design and accessibility as part of our daily lives.

In 1996, Eleanor Smith, the founder of Concrete Change, was a little known pioneer who was already quietly impacting the design of environments for all people, including people with disabilities, with her concept of Visitability. The concept was known by only a few at the time, but its impact is now being felt by millions. Her then quiet advocacy and present international fame came about through strong personal conviction. She believed that by enabling people with disabilities to “visit” their friends, relatives, and neighbors, Visitability would eventually become a basic standard for creating access in all communities. I was amazed, back then, how simple and doable “Visitability” was and I wanted to learn more about the woman who had conceived it.

Several years ago, my designer husband and I traveled to Atlanta to present a two-day seminar on universal design and accessibility consultation to medical and building professionals. Eleanor was our guest speaker. She wanted to show us some interesting ways the City of Atlanta has used “Visitability” in housing projects. Eleanor and her group of Concrete Change advocates had influenced the city government to create an ordinance requiring all publicly funded housing projects to be Visitable. The concept is both beautiful and simple, and in most cases can be accomplished at the same or with a small increase in costs as a traditionally designed home. It requires one no-step entrance; wide enough doorways on the main floor so a person using a wheelchair can access such areas as the living room, dining room; and one bathroom with an accessible toilet and sink and enough room to close the door safely for privacy. Simple. Easy.

During our visit, we were able to see first-hand how Eleanor impacted the community and residents of the Peachtree Housing Development, a large community of Section 8 single-family homes built by the City of Atlanta.

We drove with Eleanor to a project in the heart of the city, the historic area where Martin Luther King’s birthplace is located. In his honor, the homes surrounding what is now a museum, were renovated and “Visitability” was a requirement by city ordinance. This was part of the inner city revitalization plan. In this project, each home was outfitted with at least one no-step entrance.

You could barely see how it was accomplished. The design of the one no-step entrance was beautifully integrated into each home, either through a ramp on the side, front or back porch entrance. Many residents reported using the ramps instead of the stairs since it felt safer and easier. The ramp could be used to bring in packages without the danger of tripping on stairs, wheel in a bicycle for security and a baby carriage (instead of carrying it) to save the parent’s back from injury and strain. Heavy furniture and appliances are moved into the home with ease using a dolly and the ramped entrance. And of course, adults and children who use wheelchairs could visit one another easily, just like everyone else. Elderly residents, although ambulatory, found themselves using the ramps instead of stairs on a regular basis. The elegant wooden ramps blended in beautifully.

Eleanor drove to the Peachtree Community and asked us to point out the differences in this community over familiar ones. The single-family homes did not have any obviously unusual features and looked like any other new homes. My husband was the first to notice that most of the front entrances were at grade level with the side walks gently sloping down to the street or driveway, similar to a ramp. The homes were built up on the high side of the slope with all drainage away from the homes down into the gutters in the street. There were curb cuts everywhere.

As we were slowly driving around and taking pictures, an angry looking man approached the van. We stood out as we drove slowly around his neighborhood, stopping occasionally to take pictures. He said, “What the heck are you strangers doing snooping in my neighborhood. Why don’t

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Reg/ LegWATCH



Court Says Airline Web Site Doesn't Have to be Accessible

In October a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit against Southwest Airlines affirming that the company does not have to revamp its website to make it more accessible to people with visual impairments.

In the suit, the plaintiffs, Access Now Inc. and Robert Gumson, contended that Southwest's website with its "virtual ticket counter" is inaccessible to people with visual impairments and thus violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The plaintiffs maintained that the website failed to provide "alternative text" which would provide a "screen reader" program the ability to communicate, via synthesized speech, what is visually displayed on the website. The plaintiffs noted that the site failed to provide accessible online forms and a link that would allow consumers to bypass the navigation bars on the website and proceed to the main content.

In an opinion issued Oct. 18, Judge Patricia A. Seitz noted, "To expand the ADA to cover 'virtual' spaces would be to create new rights without well-defined standards. ...the plain and unambiguous language of the statute and relevant regulations does not include Internet website among the definitions of 'places of public accommodation.'"

National Visitability Bill to be Introduced

A bill addressing Visitability on the federal level, the Inclusive Home Design Act, was introduced during the closing days of the 107th Congress. The bill would require all newly constructed, federally assisted single-family houses and town houses to meet minimum standards of Visitability for persons with disabilities. The required features include: at least one step-free entrance, 32-inch wide interior doors, environmental controls no

higher than 48 inches, and at least one bathroom with reinforced walls.

According to the bill's sponsor, Rep. Jan Shakowsky (D-Ill.), "It defies logic to build new homes that block people out when it's so easy and cheap to build new homes that let people in." The bill, HR 5683, is expected to be re-introduced when the new Congress convenes this month.

Board Holds Public Forum in Portland on Rights-of-Way Guidelines

In October, more than 100 people attended a public meeting addressing public rights-of-way conducted by the US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) in Portland, OR.

The Access Board heard testimony from approximately 40 people, including civil engineers, persons with disabilities, and government representatives. Of concern to many participants were provisions addressing access for persons with vision impairments at street crossings. The draft guidelines include requirements for audible and vibrating cues at walk signals. There was a divergence of opinion on this requirement among people with vision impairments and organizations representing them. Some considered audible and tactile signals essential for safe street crossing. Others argued that proper wayfinding techniques and other available cues, including the sound of passing traffic, make these signals an unnecessary and costly burden in the design of pedestrian crossings. Outside the meeting site, several dozen persons with vision impairments organized a protest against the requirement.

Participants were similarly divided on the issue of detectable warnings at curb ramps. Detectable warnings provide a distinctive surface of truncated domes detectable by cane or underfoot to alert people with vision impairments of the transition to vehicular ways. These warnings are intended to compensate for the sloped surfaces of curb ramps that remove a tactile cue provided by curb faces. The draft guidelines include a requirement for a detectable warning surface on curb ramps and blended transitions that connect to crosswalks.

Comments received by the Board on this subject are posted on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/prowac/comments/index.htm. 

"It defies logic to build new homes that block people out when it's so easy and cheap to build new homes that let people in."

Rep. Jan Shakowsky (D-Ill.)



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Swimming Pools, *from page 1*

have either a chair lift or a sloped ramped means of entry. If the pool has more than 300 lineal feet of perimeter, two means are required. The second means can be a chair lift, sloped ramped entry, accessible stair, transfer tier system or a transfer wall. In the advisory appendix to the rule, the Access Board recommends when two means of access are required they not be the same and they not be located in the same general area.

The guidelines also address accessibility for specialty pools as follows:

- Spas – 5% or a minimum of one is required to have at least one swimming pool lift, transfer wall or transfer system.
- Wading Pools - at least one sloped entry at each wading pool.
- Wave action pools, leisure rivers, sand bottom pools, and other pools where user access is limited to one area - at least one swimming pool lift, sloped entry, or transfer system.
- Water slide catch pools - to be served by an accessible route that connects to the pool edge.

The five forms of swimming pool and aquatic

recreation access (chair lift, sloped entry, transfer tier, transfer wall and pool stair) tend to serve needs of different populations.

n Chair lifts are most usable by people who use wheelchairs and people with ambulatory disabilities.

n Sloped entries and accessible pool stairs are most usable by people with ambulatory disabilities. Depending on the nature of the pool and the provision of an aquatic wheelchair, a sloped entry may be usable by a person in a wheelchair who has sufficient upper body strength.

n Transfer tiers and transfer walls are the least developed means of access in the Access Board's guidelines. These two items may not be functionally and safely usable by some people with significant mobility disabilities.

The Access Board's final rule for recreation addresses beach access and water play components. The water play components are tied to the design guidelines for play area settings. There are some difficulties of integration between the two guidelines that require some further polish to promote usability and safety.

Also the Board's guidelines do not address the conditions where an accessible water play component could function as an accessible means of access to and from the pool.

The Accessible Pool. A likely combination of access for swimming pools over 300 lineal feet will be the pool chair lift and the accessible stair.

In general, chair lifts provide access to a maximum water depth of 48 inches. The chair lift can be an effective means of access to a smaller pool or spa. There are a host of competitive products readily available on the market. Specifiers and buyers should be careful when evaluating pool chair lifts, because many companies make claims of being "ADA-Approved" -- there is no such "approval" available.

Accessible pool stairs are specifically configured for

See Swimming Pools, page 6

There are some difficulties of integration between the two guidelines that require some further polish to promote usability and safety.

Access to Pools

	Pool with less than 300 l.f. (1)	Pool with more than 300 l.f. & Pool Lift (2)	Pool with more than 300 l.f. & sloped entry	Pool with access limited to one area	Spas (3,4)	Wading Pools	Water Slide Catch Pools (5)
Pool Lift	X	X	X	X	X 4		
<i>or</i>							
Sloped Entry	X	X	X	X		X	
Transfer Tier		X	X	X	X		
Transfer Wall		X	X		X		
Pool Stair		X	X				

Note 1: Pool walls at diving areas and areas along pool walls where there is no pool entry because of landscaping or adjacent structures should be counted when determining the number of accessible means of entry required.

Note 2: Where multiple pool lifts are provided, only one lift is required to be located in an area where the water level does not exceed 48 inches.

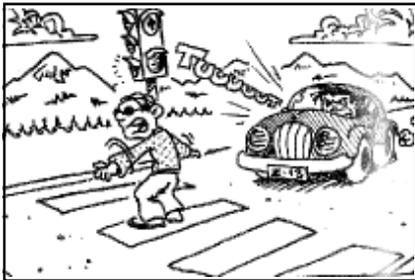
Note 3: Where spas are provided in clusters, 5% but not less than one shall be accessible.

Note 4: Footrests are not required on spa pool lifts.

Note 5: Access is only required to the edge.

Norway

The Norwegian State Housing Bank has recently completed a far-reaching four-year pilot project in universal design education. In cooperation with many consumer and other organizations, the Housing Bank systematically worked with universities and secondary schools across the country, building on the experience of the US Universal Design Education Project. The intent was to make universal design an integral part of the curriculum in most schools and universities that educate architects, planners, designers, engineers, occupational therapists and craftsmen. The project coincided with a parallel national effort headed by the Ministry on the Environment to



Student drawing after experiential exercise in an interdisciplinary seminar organized by the Occupational Therapy Department in Trondheim.

evaluate accessibility from a low-level fragmented technical process to the policy and planning level. The project created a working structure that proved to be successful,” said Tone Ronnevig, Norwegian State Housing bank and project coordinator. “There were planning groups in each discipline, to establish the criteria and priorities for funding and technical assistance, as well as an overall advisory group representing the central government and national disability organizations,” she said. The underlying strategy was to offer schools support for creative initiatives based on their own identities, professional orientation and community context. The discipline-based groups have documented their experiments and created materials that illustrate new user-centered models of teaching and learning.

Ronnevig and project leaders describe their

“World Update” is written by Elaine Ostroff, founding director of the Adaptive Environments Center. If you have information about international universal design efforts that you would like to see published in Universal Design Newsletter, write to us at: 6 Grant Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912; or contact publisher@universaldesign.com.

work in the international compendium produced by the project, Universal Design – 17 Ways of Thinking and Teaching (see New Media, page 11).

Over the four years there are significant achievements in many of the participating schools. Student work is beginning to reflect the project goals. In the words of one student, “The solution is intended to integrate use for all; if adaptations are needed, we have done a bad job.”

United States

Dichotomy: Critical Dialogues

Dichotomy, a student-run and student-funded critical journal in architecture from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture, invites papers and projects that explore and examine the issues of accessibility and approaches positioned outside the traditional limits and definitions of “barrier-free.”

“Everyone - practitioners, faculty, students, and advocates - is welcome to submit,” said co-editor Graig Donnelly. The editors challenge authors to submit materials that consider what it means to truly design accessible architecture. The invitation states, “Is it enough to simply meet the minimum standards established by a governing body? How can we begin to challenge the way we both practice and teach design to offer a more accessible and approachable architecture(al) design, profession, pedagogy?”

To be considered, paper submissions: 1) must report on recent work and/or research; and 2) must be written in English. Selection criteria are based on innovation, contribution to the discipline of architecture, clarity and relevance to journal theme. Both a concise 250-word abstract and a complete draft paper [2,000 – 4,000 words] must be submitted as an electronic document. Submittals for consideration must be received no later than March 1, 2003. For more information, see www.arch.udmercy.edu/dichotomy.htm, or contact editors by email: dichotomy@ware-house.com.

International Network of Designers with Disabilities, E-Mentoring

Access to Design Professions invites design students and design professionals with disabilities to join the growing international network that includes designers from eight countries – Australia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Portugal, United Kingdom, United States and Turkey. The designers work in architectural, ecological, engineering, fashion, graphic, industrial, interior, landscape and web design and

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“The solution is intended to integrate use for all; if adaptations are needed, we have done a bad job.”

Student, Norway

Swimming Pools, *from page 4*

people with an ambulatory disability. Pool stairs would tend to provide access to shallow areas in the pool. The handrails are intentionally positioned close together like the handles of a walker.

Sloped access may be helpful for somebody with an ambulatory disability, but imposes some challenges on a person using a wheelchair. Aside from the safety issues, the amount of construction effort and real-estate required for a sloped entry may cause these to be cost prohibitive and infeasible for some swimming pools.

Sloped access is commonly used for wading pools, wave pools and lazy rivers in water parks. Care needs to be exercised when locating sloped entries and their handrails in pools with wave generation, so that users are not pushed up into the handrails.

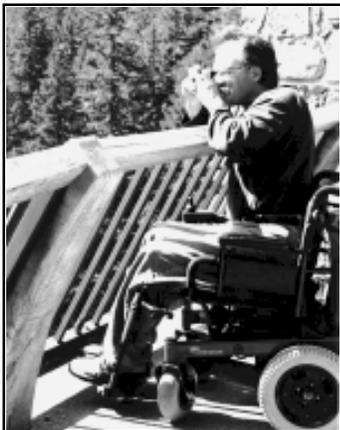
Transfer walls first appeared as a novel means of access to spas, but they have an unsolvable problem for what is on the pool side of the wall. Water does not provide for much fall protection onto a submerged bench or shallow pool floor. Also, transfer walls require sufficient strength for egress.

In my opinion, the technical specifications for transfer tiers make them oversized and clumsy.

John Paul Scott

World Update, *from page 5*

share their interests and concerns through an email list.



Daniel G. Hunter, ASLA, Access to Design Professions, Coordinator of International Network and E-Mentoring

E-Mentoring is another opportunity for both designers and young people who are interested in design as well as people who are considering design as they change careers. Both the network and the mentoring are part of Access to Design Professions, a program of the Adaptive Environments Center, Boston, MA, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. The project is a living memorial to the late Ron Mace, FAIA. For more information, visit: www.AdaptiveEnvironments.org/accessdesign. Daniel Hunter coordinates both programs and can be reached at:

dghunter22@earthlink.net.

My Opinion

In my opinion, the technical specifications for transfer tiers make them oversized and clumsy. I believe there is a need for biomechanical study to further refine the dimensions and configuration of



Pool lift

transfer tiers. The Board's final guideline seeks to provide a conventional side transfer, but the transfer space and grab bars are awkwardly positioned. The platform and steps are too wide for sidesaddle seating, and the grab bars are insufficient for seated postural support. Also a maximum of an 8-inch transfer height is permitted, which makes these physically challenging for most adults and children.

Missing in the guidelines are provisions for people with vision impairments. Attempting to gauge the location and depth of steps and other underwater features is difficult enough under normal conditions. Contrasting striping on accessible stairs treads, transfer tier steps and perimeters of sloped entry middle and lower landings would benefit all users. 

John Paul Scott, AIA, is architect and owner of Create Access, Architects/Consultants.

Access to Indian Latrines Studied

Indian latrines are toilets that require people to squat to use. Unfortunately there are no accessible standards for Indian latrines and older people and people with disabilities are greatly handicapped by their design. While on academic sabbatical in India, Abir Mullick, a Project Director with the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Universal Design at Buffalo and a professor of architecture, addressed the issue of access to Indian latrines as one of his projects.

Squat toilets are not unique to India. They exist in Asian countries, from Turkey to Japan. These toilets pre-date biblical times and existed in the Indus Valley civilization, home to the largest of the four ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China.

While there is no collected data as to how many people use these latrines, it can be estimated that more than 800 million Indians who practice a traditional way of life use them.

A Typical Indian Latrine

A typical Indian latrine is a small, enclosed space with an in-ground ceramic bowl and two footprints. The ceramic bowl drains into a water trough which collects fecal matter prior to being flushed out. A water source is usually located within easy reach, as it is customary to use water in place of toilet paper.

Latrine use requires entering, turning around, positioning feet on footprints and taking a squat position. Older users and people with disabilities are seriously challenged by the design of the latrine because they do not have any supportive features. People who have arthritis of the knees or hip are inconvenienced by the latrine design and must try to use the wall for support to squat and get up. Cane and crutch users experience similar hardships. People who use wheelchairs, however, do not experience the same problems. Inside the

The contents of this insert are provided by the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Universal Design at Buffalo, which is sponsored by a grant from the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) U.S. Department of Education (DOE). These contents, however, do not necessarily represent the policy of DOE. Readers should not assume an endorsement by the federal government.

home, they move around in a seated position close to the ground with the help of a pair of upside down wooden handles. In the latrine, they simply slide their body latterly over the ceramic bowl and use their arms to maintain a position for using the latrine.

In his approach to solving this dilemma, Mullick chose not to redesign the bowl since it is nearly impossible to specify a single design for everyone. Instead, he pursued the development of environmental standards to provide access to everyone. The standards include stall size, bowl location, faucet position, and grab bar design and location.

Sulabh International, a non governmental organization, was the RERC on UD at Buffalo's primary partner for this project. With more than 50,000 staff, it is one of the largest social service organizations, dedicated to promote human rights, environmental sanitation, health and hygiene, non-conventional sources of energy, waste management and social reforms through education, training and awareness campaign. In addition to managing many social programs, Sulabh constructs and maintains numerous pay-and-use public toilets with bath, laundry and urinal facilities used by about 10 million people every day.

The Study

The latrine access study employed two types of users — older people and people with disabilities. The study addressed: 1) stall size and space adequacy, 2) door size and entering/exiting problems, 3) need for support when sitting down and getting up, and 4) access to the water source.

The first stage of the study examined a newly constructed public latrine block for how well it met the stated objectives. Ten users, five older users and five users with disabilities, simulated use of the latrine. They followed a predetermined protocol and were asked to indicate location of support and water that would help them to use the latrine. Users were photographed to identify environmental barriers and data was recorded graphically to make judgments about distances and space adequacy. Every user was interviewed to document

See Indian Latrines, page 10

Rather than adding accessible building features for the minority of people with disabilities, the design uses accessibility as the focus for beautiful form making for everyone.



An Indian latrine

UD Case Study: Central Museum, Utrecht, Netherlands

By Edward Steinfeld

What makes the project so interesting is that the achievement of this continuity was accomplished with great grace and dignity.

The Central Museum in Utrecht, Netherlands demonstrates great creativity in adding new universal design features to a facility to meet programmatic and accessibility goals, while still respecting the historic character of the original buildings and site.

The architects for the project were Stephane Beel, Levien Achtergael and Peter Versseput who won a competition to obtain the commission. The museum, originally a medieval cloister with stables, had been turned into a series of galleries. Prior to the renovation, the building had many confusing circulation links, including some that required going outside and negotiating stairways. The newly renovated complex has a well-defined circulation system with a continuous interior accessible path of travel. What makes the project so interesting is that the achievement of this continuity was accomplished with great grace and dignity.

Circulation

In order to create this new circulation system, the main entry was strategically relocated close to the center of the site, which provided two benefits. First, it provided the space to build an entry plaza with a gradually sloping sidewalk to the new grade level entry. Second, it allowed the architects to connect the entry with circulation links to all the gallery spaces. An elevator was added to create a circulation hub with “spokes.” So rather than a long meandering set of linear elements with a beginning and an end, the building now has a circulation pattern that is like a web with two hubs. Although it looks complex, the circulation is designed to lead visitors through the exhibits naturally and is surprisingly effective.

To avoid cutting the courtyard with building elements above ground, underground links were used to connect to the galleries in the old stables on the far side of the courtyard. The circulation spokes are also exhibit spaces. Each connection has exhibits along at least one side. There are also overlooks into two-story spaces such as the entry, the chapel and the café areas which help to provide visual orientation.

Perhaps the most interesting example of circulation space as exhibit space is an underground area that contains one of the most precious artifacts in the permanent collection, an ancient wooden boat called the Utrecht Ship that was dis-

covered in a preserved state. To preserve this boat, it has to be kept in a protected room with humidity control and as little light as possible. So, the architects created an exciting space in the middle of an underground link from one part of the complex to another. At each end, there are airlocks with automated sliding doors. The walls and doors are completely glazed. The lights are generally kept so low they appear to be completely off until visitors enter into the airlocks. When



The entry into the museum.

sensors detect the presence of people, the light level gradually rises and, as the visitor leaves the airlock and enters the main display area, the boat literally emerges from the gloom. This gallery has a distinct aroma and humidity so the exhibit provides a natural multi-sensory experience.

Automation

The building has many high-tech details with automated moving parts, including the impressive glass sliding doors and the huge main elevator. Another example is a lift that marks the main entry into the galleries from the entry lobby. Due to the new grade level entry, there is a half level change between the entry level to the first floor level of gallery spaces. The level change is accomplished by a stairway that is also a platform lift (see photo). A landing in the center of the stairway is actually the platform of the lift and the stair treads on either end are hinged. As the lift is activated, the treads and risers collapse, allowing the lift to ascend or descend to pick up passengers. After the lift is used, it is put back into the mid-level position and the hinged stairs reform. The railings are made of metal and are also hinged so that they can move along with the lift.

Function and Form

Perhaps one of the most important features of the building is the integration of function and

See Museum, page 10

Building VISIBLE Homes

A Listserv Discussion

The following is a series of excerpts from the Visitability Listserv managed by the RERC on Universal Design at Buffalo. The discussion is centered on the topic of promoting Visitability concepts through incentive programs. An edited version of the conversation is presented here.

Tom Wenner:

Back in May, I submitted a proposal to [Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency's] Special Initiatives Program to promote Visitability. Here's the description:

"VIP wants to partner with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to promote the building of homes that are VISIBLE. VIP asks that PHFA fund an incentive program similar to one designed by the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) that pays builders to make homes VISIBLE. Attached is information on the IHDA program.

"While this program is not a development in the conventional sense, it will produce accessible units if implemented. Also, as builders seek to maximize their profit, they will discover ways to implement Visitability in more cost-effective ways. This could influence them to incorporate VISIBLE design in more of their projects. It should be noted that while IHDA has set aside \$1 million for the program, PHFA's version could start with substantially less, possibly as little as \$100,000. Also, builders might participate for less than \$5,000 per home. VIP hopes that PHFA grants this program enough funds to provide Visitability to 100 homes."

We asked for \$550,000; PHFA has decided to give us \$325,000! I must put together a revised budget, etc., and would appreciate your input. My idea is to reward contractors and developers who build VISIBLE spec homes, averaging \$4,000 per home for as many as five homes per contractor. Half will be homes on a slab that will receive \$3,000, the other half to have basements and receiving \$5,000. I think that's enough for 70 homes, plus program costs. What do you think? Is this enough incentive? Will contractors work for less? How should we announce/get the word out? What other input do you have? What am I forgetting? I'll greatly appreciate your help.

Eleanor Smith:

Tom, ... Yes, we do need to be creative in getting Visitability implemented. And certain types of incentives may be appropriate. But the form and amount of incentives currently proposed are to me both philosophically unpalatable and, in practical terms, harmful to the movement. Basic access to all new homes is a civil and human right, not just a design or an education issue. Two simple truths form that bedrock: First, lack of basic home access causes dire consequences, not mere inconvenience, for people with disabilities—segregation, isolation, health and safety threat, and forced displacement from one's home. Second, building without these gross barriers is in most situations both easy and inexpensive. Therefore, it is not merely poor policy, but a violation of justice when builders choose to continue constructing gross barriers in new homes, and public policy continues to permit it. It is way outside the heart of the matter to pay builders far above costs simply to stop harsh practices...

Additionally, the proposed \$3,000 per house for slab construction and \$5,000 for construction with basement inevitably convey that that is roughly the actual typical cost of the Visitability features, when in fact the first is 30 times as much as cost and the latter at least 5 times as much. Granted, there may be some start-up costs but there is much evidence that these are minimal. (By the way, it is my understanding that although the Illinois law was passed at least three years ago, zero houses have been built to date in that program. I believe they are still hung up in formulating regulations such as how the state will know the builders put in the required features, etc.)

Tom Wenner:

Eleanor, ... The program will be just a short (approx. 1 year), limited experiment, designed not only to get builders to build VISIBLE, but also to document costs and give positive publicity to Visitability in the state. I disagree that the incentive program will imply great costs to Visitability; I think that builders, looking to maximize their profits, will find creative ways to keep the costs to a minimum. The \$3,000-\$5,000 (which was

See Visitability Listserv, page 10

"Therefore, it is not merely poor policy, but a violation of justice when builders choose to continue constructing gross barriers in new homes, and public policy continues to permit it."

Eleanor Smith,
Concrete Change

Museum, *from page 8*

form. Ramps are kept to minimal slopes and always run in the direction of origin to destination, integrating them into the circulation system for all visitors. Rather than adding accessible building features for the minority of people with disabilities, the design uses accessibility as the focus for beautiful form making for everyone.

There are some features that the Central Museum of Utrecht that do not live up to the ideals of universal design. The most obvious are the information systems. For example, a computer information terminal in the lobby is not accessible to people who use wheelchairs or people of small stature. But, this building does in many ways what many fully American with Disabilities Act-compliant buildings in the US do not accomplish. It makes usability

and accessibility a part of the creative art of architecture rather than simply a regulatory exercise. 



The museum courtyard.

Indian Latrines, *from page 7*

unmet needs. In the second stage, a full-scale latrine mock-up was constructed using the information collected. This mock-up model offered choices of stall size, support and water source location. The users evaluated the mock-up for safety, convenience and functional independence. They followed the same protocol that had been observed earlier. Every participant was interviewed for improvements and remaining unmet needs.

The RERC on UD at Buffalo is analyzing the data from the second stage so preliminary standards can be developed. Sulabh International has agreed to construct a working latrine prototype and test the standards with a wide range of users. This will help to fine-tune the standards and revise them. India's Central Public Works Department, responsible for enforcing building standards, has agreed to promote the revised standards in new and existing construction. Sulabh International has committed to implement these standards in all new construction. 

Visitability Listserv, *from page 7*

based solely on the Illinois program) might be too high (I am looking for input on that number). But the common perception about Visitability among builders is that it costs too much and/or it is very complicated and I think that a number that is well above costs is necessary to grab the builders. I have been advocating and educating with others around the state, for a long time; for-profit builders always say "good idea" and then almost always don't do it without incentive. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) has some incentives in its multi-family division and is seeing success. There are few incentives, outside of social conscience, for builders to spend the perceived toil they think it would take to embrace Visitability. There is also the fear of "call backs" – warranty work due to water infiltration from the zero-step entrance. For a long time, a step has been the accepted method of preventing water and wind blown debris from entering a home. To abandon this for newer technology is a serious concern; it was the only cogent argument (in my opinion) that the National Association of Home Builders had when they successfully lobbied to remove the requirement for a zero step landing from the International Residential Code.

Phil Dommer:

Instead of an incentive to contractors, please consider a financial incentive to the home buyer. First, most builders are not active in the spec home business and, therefore, you may only reach a small segment of builders who do that routinely. And for the builders who do participate, their motivation will end after the incentive expires.

Second, an incentive to consumers will better motivate both consumers and mainstream contractors. If builders receive the grant, only those who have some interest and are willing to put forth the effort will step up. They are not the hard sell group...

For the rest of the discussion, visit the online archive at listserv.buffalo.edu/archives/visitability-list.html. To join the conversation, or to introduce a topic of your own, join the Visitability Listserv. There is no charge. For more information, visit www.ap.buffalo.edu/lercud. 



Website Spotlight: WorldEnable

Designed as a discussion and information forum on Internet accessibility, www.worldenable.com is supported by an international consortium of experts in various fields who provide advocacy and training to equalize opportunities for people with disabilities.

Co-developed by Vision Office Support Services Ltd. in Canada and Associates for International Management Services in the United States, the site features papers and presenta-

tions, web accessibility resources, highlights on past seminars and discussion groups. The home page displays links to current articles, issues, guides and events related to Internet accessibility, as well as concerns for women with disabilities, standard rules, program monitoring and evaluation, international policies and perspectives, and website design. Also available on the site are downloadable audio versions of presentations, such as Lobbying for Women with Disabilities.

Universal Design: 17 Ways of Thinking and Teaching

The Norwegian State Housing Bank, the sponsor of the four-year universal design education project in Norway (see World Update, page 5), published "Universal Design: 17 Ways of Thinking and Teaching, an international collection of teaching experiences.

Edited by Jon Christophersen, the 385-page book is an engaging compendium that illustrates recent work in higher education from four continents – Asia, Australia, Europe and North America.

Each of the 17 chapters provides a deep level of content, revealing different cultures, social concerns, personalities, and approaches. Leading off with the background of the Norwegian experience, along with detailed examples in architecture, urban design and occupational therapy, the book includes critical theory as well as curriculum.

For example, Balaram of India explains the characteristics of developing economies and the implications for universal design education; Ostergaard highlights accessibility and architectural education in Denmark, with its high level of regulation; and Walker describes the political challenges in the development of a multi-disciplinary environmental access program at a traditional architectural school in the United Kingdom. Steinfeld and Tauke, from the United States, emphasize social justice along with the need for critical reflection; Yanagisawa details a collaborative design studio and Shimizu describes a highly suc-

cessful student design competition – both from Japan. The book is free; pay only packing and shipping costs. Contact: firmapost.oslo@husbanken.no.

Accessible Temporary Events: A Planning Guide

Produced by The Center for Universal Design, College of Design, North Carolina State University for the Southeast Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center, Accessible Temporary Events: A Planning Guide provides information to assist planners, managers, operators, building owners and participants in making temporary events—such as street festivals, craft fairs, music events, air shows, sports tournaments, parades and political rallies—accessible to people with disabilities.

Using detailed, clearly marked black and white illustrations, the 103-page guide introduces readers to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and the value of making temporary events accessible; offers strategies to help prevent discrimination; and explains typical barriers and methods of locating and coordinating available resources. The six chapters outline disability awareness, advanced planning, accessibility to and around the event site, service and support facilities, and a comprehensive resource guide of federal and state agencies, national organizations, centers for independent living, books, articles and checklists. For more information, contact 800.949.4232 (v/tty). 

Each of the 17 chapters provides a deep level of content, revealing different cultures, social concerns, personalities, and approaches.

Universal Design: 17 Ways of Thinking & Teaching

Shortfalls at Performance/Sports Venues Revealed

NCA Survey Shows Lack of Accessibility

Performance venues, theaters and sports arenas across the country still lack accessibility basics according to a recent survey by the National Center for Accessibility (NCA).

The web-based survey was conducted by NCA in February 2002 in partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Americans with Disabilities Act/504 Coordinators for the Arts and the Indiana Institute for Community and Disability. Designed to identify policies and procedures common to accommodating patrons with disabilities as well as exemplary practices, the survey was summarized by the NCA in July 2002 and forwarded to the Department of Justice for formal review.

Among the survey respondents, only 45 percent reported having a written policy statement welcoming patrons with disabilities, and while all the venues have wheelchair accessible seating, 30 percent do not have enough seats to meet the new construction criteria of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). In addition, while 70 percent of the respondents reported that their wheelchair accessible seating policy allows for a companion seat, industry organizations such as the International Ticketing Association have found that the average group size ranges from 2.2 to 3.4 people.

Only 39 percent of the survey respondents reported actively marketing to people with disabilities, and 48 percent reported including disability awareness in their existing training programs.

“There were a number of responses on issues

of providing access for service animals, sign language interpreters and auxiliary aids that illustrate the lack of knowledge of the ADA and Section 504 requirements among venue operators,” said Jennifer K. Skulski, Director of Marketing and Special Projects for the National Center on Accessibility. According to the executive summary, which can be found on the NCA website at ncaonline.org, responses varied greatly on the length of time a venue should hold wheelchair accessible seats before releasing them for general public sale as well as the advance notice time for requesting a sign language interpreter. Therefore, one of the NCA’s primary recommendations is that venue operators develop policies and procedures that include patrons with disabilities.

“From providing information via TTY to selling tickets for wheelchair accessible seating to providing a sign language interpreter or audio description,” the report states,

“all staff should be trained on the venue policies and procedures for selling tickets and accommodating patrons with disabilities.” Other recommendations include writing a welcome statement; designating an accessibility coordinator to ensure ADA compliance; and identifying architectural and programmatic barriers and designing plans for barrier removal.

“We’d also like to see a national dialogue established among the industry, enforcement agencies and people with disabilities,” added Skulski, “so that we can continue to move toward full inclusion of people with disabilities in the performing arts and sports entertainment communities.”

The survey was posted for four months on the Indiana Institute for Community and Disability website. Roughly 114 professionals—including directors, facility and box office managers, administrators, designers and accessibility coordinators—from venues ranging in capacity from 95 to 65,000 seats responded to questions about the size and nature and specific accessibility policies of their venue.

□

“There were a number of responses on issues... that illustrate the lack of knowledge of the ADA and Section 504 requirements among venue operators”

Jennifer K. Skulski,
Director of Marketing
and Special Projects,
National Center on
Accessibility



An accessible ticket window.



Companion seating that allows for more than just one companion.

Accessible Apartment Door Entry System

Viking Electronics and the City of San Francisco recently introduced the AES-2000 apartment door entry system, which incorporates both text and verbal operating instructions and tenant directories. In addition to being fully text tty-compatible, allowing visitors to communicate with tenants via standard tty keyboard entries, the unit incorporates the familiar etched tactile, diamond-shaped EZ Help system developed by the University of Wisconsin TRACE Center. The button provides easy-to-understand verbal instructions that guide visitors through using the tenant directory, volume button and keypad, and the visual display uses ½ -inch black characters against a backlit green background for easy readability.



Aquatic Lifts

RMT Aquatics has launched two aquatic lifts designed for use in pools: the PAL-1000 portable lift and the Splash! semi-portable lift. The PAL-1000 requires no mounting, is easily rolled to the edge of the pool to assist guests into the water, and provides a 240-degree turning radius for safe transfers. The removable, deck-mounted Splash! is easily installed using standard anchors and provides a 359-degree turning radius. Both lifts are manufactured with corrosion-proof materials and feature a screw-driven lifting actuator, which is powered by a 24-volt rechargeable battery. The lifts can be operated with waterproof hand controls by either users or attendants; and can lift up to 300 pounds (375 pounds for Splash! Heavy Duty).



Full-Sized Dishwasher That Fits Under ADA-Compliant Counters

The Equator, available through Dynamic Living, is a full-sized, 32-inch high dishwasher ideal for use in homes with accessible counters. It features easy-to-operate controls, silent operation, and a sleek contemporary design. The Equator is available in white, black or stainless steel. It features six wash cycles and uses only 4.5 gallons of water—sprayed in five directions by three levels of spraying arms—in its Normal setting. The upper and lower racks are adjustable, with collapsible tines and moveable supports, allowing for greater loading flexibility. The legs are adjustable, from 32 to 34 inches, to ensure perfect counter alignment and leveling.



Viking Electronics Inc.

(Accessible Entry System)
1531 Industrial Street
Hudson, WI 54016
Phone: 715.386.8861
www.vikingelectronics.com

RMT Aquatics

(Aquatic Pool Lifts)
14008 S.W. 140 St.
Miami, FL 33186
Phone: 800.577.4424
www.poollifts.com

Dynamic Living Inc.

(Dishwasher & Low Vision Thermostats)
428 Hayden Station Road
Windsor, CT 06095-1302
Phone: 888.940.0605
www.dynamic-living.com

Low Vision Thermostats

Dynamic Living offers two thermostat models for gas, oil or electric heating systems specifically designed for people with decreased vision, blindness or limited hand strength.

The simple-to-install Digital Thermostat by Lux features ½ -inch high bold numbers to display Fahrenheit or Celsius readings and four large buttons for easy operation. It maintains highly accurate temperature control, requires two AA batteries and will replace most round, square or rectangular thermostats.

Honeywell's Easy-to-See^a Thermostat—with its high-contrast, low-glare design—features ½ - inch, raised black numbers identifying the 50, 60, 70 and 80 degree F points for easy recognition by sight or touch. Users will hear an audible click and feel an indent every two degrees, with deeper indents at the 10 degree increment marks. Both are available in white. 



Location, Location, Location

Nearly empty-nesters and approaching age 50 with the rest of the baby boomers, my wife, Ann, and I have designed and built our new “Home for the Next 50 Years.” In doing this add on to a historic building, we have attempted to carefully consider the universal design implications of every element and space while keeping in mind the actual users – our family and friends. This is an excerpt from my continuing journal investigating issues of universal design in the “Home for the Next 50 Years.”

John P. S. Salmen, AIA

When it came to finding the site for “Our Home for the Next 50 Years” and in the absence of significant materials discussing where universally designed buildings should be located, we determined that the house and lot we were looking for needed to meet the following criteria:

- 1) Be in a community where there is a real sense of neighborhood, rather than an anonymous suburban tract, so that we would be able to know, give and receive support from our neighbors as we aged;
- 2) Be located where the pedestrian paths leading to and from the house could avoid steep hills that would be difficult or impossible for an aging person or a person in a wheelchair;



The southeast corner of the house prior to the start of the renovation.

3) Be within walking distance to the Universal Designers & Consultants Inc. office;

2) Be within walking distance to the Washington Metro Transit System and basic commercial services such as grocery store, pharmacy, etc.;

3) Be located on a lot that was small (so that it would not require a lot of maintenance), yet with enough space for the house, garage and workshop;

4) Be in poor condition that justified the radical renovation that would be necessary to make an old inaccessible house into a truly accessible home; and last but most importantly,

5) Be located at an elevation where one floor of the house was within a couple feet vertically of the grade

of the public sidewalk, allowing the development of an accessible route (no steps) from the sidewalk to the entry.

We estimated that because of the hilly terrain around Washington DC, less than half the homes in the community have a floor level close to the sidewalk level, and that only a small percentage of those are up for sale at any time. When you factor in location and condition, there was actually a very small selection of homes that would meet all the criteria.

It should come as little surprise to learn that we searched for more than two years, before we found a location meeting all the criteria, and then spent another three years designing and building our “Home for the Next 50 Years.”

...there was actually a very small selection of homes that would meet all the criteria.



The southeast corner of the house after renovation -- showing the ground floor elevation change.





Printed on recycled paper with vegetable inks.

Jan. 13-15, 2003: *The US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board* will hold its bi-monthly meeting in Washington, DC. Contact: 202.272.5434(v), 800.872.2253(v), 202.272.5449 (tty) or www.access-board.gov.

Jan. 17-18, 2003: *International Conference on the Elimination of Architectural Barriers, Pamplona, Spain.* Sponsored by the Technical Secretariat, Congresos Navarra. Presenters are experts from Finland, France, Japan, Spain, United Kingdom and United States. Contact: www.acodifna.org/indiceingles.htm.

Jan. 22, 2003: *Americans with Disabilities Act Update, Colorado Springs, CO.* This two-hour training program is sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Disability & Business Technical Assistance Center. Contact: www.ada-infonet.org.

Feb. 12, 2003: *Caring Communities for 21st Century: Imagining the Possible, United National Headquarters, New York, NY.* This international conference, sponsored by the International Council for Caring Communities, will address the "Age of Connectivity." Contact: icccworld@earthlink.net.

Feb. 27-28, 2003: *Communicating Through Assistive Technology, Sacramento, CA.* Sponsored by Supported Life Institute and Area Board

III, this two-day workshop will cover augmentative, alternative and facilitated approaches to communication. Contact: www.supportedlife.org.

March 10-12, 2003: *The US Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board* will hold its bi-monthly meeting in Washington, DC. Contact: 202.272.5434(v), 800.872.2253(v), 202.272.5449 (tty) or www.access-board.gov.

March 19, 2003: *Non-Profit Organizations and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Colorado Springs, CO.* This two-hour ADA training session is sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Disability & Business Technical Assistance Center. Contact: www.ada-infonet.org.

March 25-28, 2003: *INCLUDE 2003, Royal College of Art, London, UK.* The second inclusive design conference, this event presents the world's leading figures in inclusive design on topics ranging from fashion to workplace design, from transport to domestic interiors. Contact: include@rca.ac.uk and see highlights of INCLUDE 2001 at: www.hhrc.rca.ac.uk/plain/events/include/report.html.

April 15-16, 2003: *Multiple Perspectives on Access, Inclusion & Disability, Columbus, OH.* A two-day conference on disability issues, rights and experiences, sponsored by Ohio State. Contact: <http://ada.osu.edu>.

Events to be placed in the UDN Calendar must be submitted to the editor two months before the publication date.

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Address Correction Requested

