



# Access Today

PARKS • RECREATION • TOURISM

Spring 2002

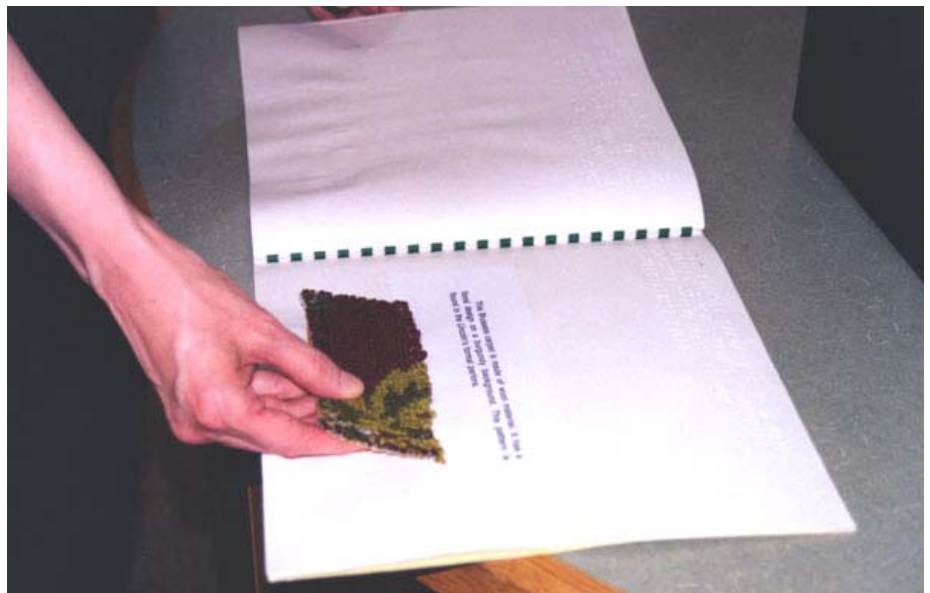
A publication of the National Center on Accessibility

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## What are Alternative Formats How Do They Apply to Programs & Services?

In addition to physical and attitudinal barriers, people with disabilities also encounter barriers in the format in which information is presented.

*Effective communication means to communicate with people with disabilities as effectively as communicating with people without disabilities.*



*An alternate brochure used at the Lincoln Home NHP is formatted with Braille at the top of the page and equivalent text in the center of the page. A swatch of tapestry used in the restoration is attached at the bottom of the page giving visitors the opportunity to feel the fabric.*

Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, federally conducted and assisted programs along with programs of state and local government are required to make their programs accessible to people with disabilities as well as provide effective

communication.

Effective communication means to communicate with people with disabilities as effectively as communicating with others. Alternative formats are auxiliary aids used to effectively communicate printed information to people who are blind or

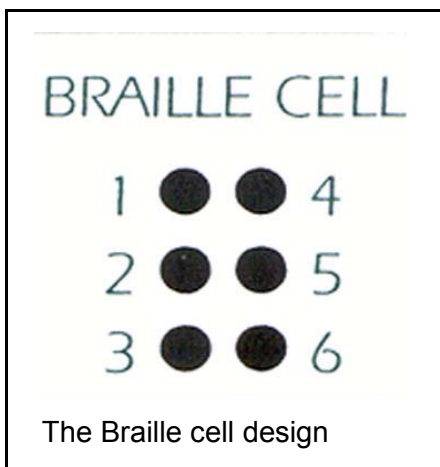
have low vision or people who have other functional impairments. Alternative formats include Braille, large print, audio, and computer disk.

Individuals with disabilities have varying needs and this should be considered while providing alternate formats. According to Title II of the

Americans with Disabilities Act (*Subpart E – Communications*), “the public entity must provide an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to request the auxiliary aids and services of their choice. This expressed choice shall be given primary consideration by the public entity.” For example, a facility may have only provided tour information in audio format. Although many Braille users can also use audio, Braille may still be the person’s expressed choice because it may be what they typically use, it needs no additional equipment and it enables a higher degree of independence. Thus the request for tour information in Braille should be given primary consideration based on the individual’s needs.

## Braille

Braille consists of cells that contain a series of raised dots that can be read with the fingertips. Letters and



numbers are represented by different numbers of raised dots in different possible areas of a Braille cell. Likewise, common contractions, such as “tion” or “ing” are represented in Braille.

## Large Print

Large print refers to the point size for font; however there are many additional considerations. The Smithsonian Institute recommends a minimum 16-point font for the best viewing by people with vision loss while maintaining a small enough point size to include a good amount of information.

The type of font is important as well. Fonts with embellishment lines and curves at the tops and bottoms of letters are difficult for a person with low vision to read and therefore should be avoided. Sans serif fonts are one of several (Bookman Old Style, Arial, News Gothic, etc.) that the Smithsonian Institute

24 point Arial  
18 point Arial  
16 point Arial  
24 point Times  
12 point Times New Roman

Font types and sizes.



The National Center on Accessibility is a program of Indiana University’s Department of

Recreation and Park Administration and is funded in part by the U.S. Congress through the National Park Service. NCA focuses primarily on accessibility as it relates to parks, recreation, and tourism industries. Major objectives include: conducting research, providing technical assistance, developing resources and training materials, and conducting educational programs.

**Access Today** is a publication of the National Center on Accessibility. As a continuing service of technical assistance, the National Center on Accessibility has published a series of tech sheets on access to outdoor recreation environments. These tech sheets are intended to be used only as a resource. They are not intended to be used as a design guide. As a result of evolving accessibility guidelines, some technical specifications presented herein may change as new accessibility guidelines are released. This publication is available in alternate format upon request.

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considers to be the most legible. By definition sans serif means "without short lines stemming from and at an angle to the upper and lower ends of the strokes of a letter."

The *Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design* and the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG A4.30.5), identifies the need for a minimum of seventy percent contrast between background and text colors. Using an eggshell or other off-white paper will reduce glare. The Smithsonian Guidelines also indicate that characters per line should be held to a maximum of 60 with consistent letter and word spacing, the margins should be flush-left and staggered right while leading, or the space between lines of print, should be at least twenty percent greater than the height of the letters.



A park visitor receives information on the wayside exhibit from a portable audio cassette.

## Computer Disc

People with visual impairments may prefer to have information available in an electronic format such as a computer disc. The computer disc may be a preferred alternative format for information designed for home review. A person with a personal computer that has screen reader software or enlarged font capability can access the information

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*To ensure effective communication, consideration to alternate formats should begin with the initial program planning process.*

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on the disc and the information can also be printed out in large print or by using a Braille. This format is for use anywhere the patron has computer access that will allow for the preferred choice of formatting.

## Audio

Audio can be offered in a variety of delivery methods including audiocassettes audio compact disks, interpretive or informational listening stations, external speakers or any additional audio technology as it



An interpretive listening station with telephone handset.

becomes available. Informational cassettes and compact disks should be accompanied by a portable player (headphones recommended) for use at the facility. Interpretive and informational listening stations offer telephone handsets or head phones for the visitors to receive audio information without disturbing others. This is useful for many types of exhibits. External speakers may also be used for the information to be available to all visitors in a particular area. The visitor can use audiocassettes and audio compact disks at the facility and then take them home for future reference. Newsletters, play bills, self-guided tour brochures and other informational brochures are ideal for this type of format. Having the material available in a format that communicates effectively with the visitor will encourage the visitor to return time and again.

## Facility Managers:

# What you can do

No matter what type of facility, alternative formats must be readily accessible to people who request them.

The facility manager and key personnel should develop accessibility policies to ensure quality service to people with and without disabilities. For example, performances are scheduled weeks in advance at performing arts venues. The venue manager or special event coordinator should assess

*Effective communication with the visitor will encourage the visitor to return time and again.*

the need for alternative formats and plan to accommodate the largest number of people.

Assessing this need may be based on the accommodations or auxiliary aids identified in the past as well as current requests for alternative formats. Ways to identify and assess these needs should be part of the facility's policies and procedures.

Facility managers should make every effort to have the information available in alternative formats at the time of a request. Information that changes frequently may cause delays in providing alternative formats for that information. If this is the case, these delays should be publicized allowing the visitor to give advance request for the information. For example, if two weeks prior notification is necessary, this information should be publicized so that a visitor requiring an alternative format has ample opportunity to request it in time for the performance.

Additionally, the accessibility of the facility and its programs should be an integral part of the publications. Include information on the availability of alternate formats in program brochures and other marketing materials. People may not know that the facility is accessible unless it is publicized as such. The availability of alternate formats is a critical component to ensure programs and facilities are accessible thus enable a greater number of people to participate and enjoy the program offerings. People with disabilities not only visit; they bring their friends and families, too!

## Additional Resources

### **American Council of the Blind**

1155 15th Street, NW,  
Suite 1004  
Washington, DC 20005  
Toll Free: (800) 424-8666  
Phone: (202) 467-5081  
[www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)

### **American Foundation for the Blind**

11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300  
New York, NY 10001  
Toll Free: (800) 232-5463  
Phone: (212) 502-7600  
[www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

### **American Printing House for the Blind**

1839 Frankfort Avenue  
P.O. Box 6085  
Louisville, Kentucky 40206  
Toll Free: (800) 223-1839  
Phone: 502-895-2405  
[www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org)

### **National Federation of the Blind**

1800 Johnson Street  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Phone: (410) 659-9314  
[www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)

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