



What is access?

Key concepts and frameworks

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What do we mean by access?

Classic Definitions

- A way of approaching, or reaching, or entering
- The right or opportunity to reach, or use, or visit
- To allow a minority or special interest group (in)
 - Oxford English Dictionary



What is a museum?

- According to ICOM, a museum is
 - *A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.*
- ([ICOM Statutes art.3 para.1](#))



Human Rights

'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'

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 27



The access revolution

- Access has become a 'buzzword' in museum practice in recent years
 - Audience development
 - New funding streams
 - Learning
 - Legislation
 - Professional development
 - Research and knowledge



Cultural exclusion in the EU

- The three groups with the highest risk of exclusion from cultural activity
 - Long term & young unemployed
 - Disabled people
 - Refugees & immigrants

- Increasingly, the elderly, especially the frail elderly

• European Union Report, 2005



What is causing this?

- Lack of knowledge & limited access to information
- Charges, especially at museums
- Limited time & energy due to immediate social pressures
- Rural areas suffer low levels of communication
- Disabled people face specific barriers
- Ethnic minorities have lack of cultural services in their native cultures and limited mechanisms to participate in host cultures
- Fear of integration
- Sub and counter cultures are rarely supported, creating barriers for young people
- Lack of services for marginalised groups such as ex-offenders, drug misusers



The 'Great Museum Conspiracy'

- **Four main reasons why museums are not positioned to embrace inclusive practice**
 - Who has run them
 - What they contain
 - The way they have been run
 - For whom they have been run

• David Fleming (2001)



Swedish cultural sector

- Less than 2% of executives in the cultural sector have a foreign background
- Recruitment is based on 'networking' and is not an open / democratic process
- Lack of interest in multicultural perspectives across the cultural industries
- Non-Swedes are not seen as a 'natural part of cultural life'

• Pripp, 2004



Social model thinking

Medical	Social
Individual	Environment
What's wrong with you?	Where are the barriers here?
Justification	Information on a need to know basis



Social Model approach

Empowers the organisation who can change the environment

This means looking for *barriers*
And then seeking creative solutions



Identifying barriers

- Main areas where access can be widened
 - Physical access
 - Sensory access
 - Intellectual access
 - Cultural access
 - Economic access
 - Attitudinal access



Physical barriers

- For example
 - Has an audit been done of public and working space in the building?
 - Who did the audit? What was done? When is it reviewed?
 - How much of the collection is on open display? How often is that changed? Do you open the stores?



Sensory Barriers

- for example
 - Are there touch tours of the collection? Or a handling collection? Is it changed? Do you say what it is and why?
 - Is information available in other formats – tactile, Braille, audio, MP3, large print? Re these free?
 - Do you have accessible software and websites? What standards are you working to?



Intellectual barriers

- for example
 - Do you use clear accessible language? How many languages do you work with?
 - Do you use symbols?
 - Do you welcome new knowledge and views about the collection? How do you get them?
 - What types of publications do you produce? For children? In several languages?



Cultural barriers

- for example
 - Do you research hidden and buried histories?
 - How much do you work with intangible heritage?
 - Are you doing any contemporary collecting?
 - How is 'national history and culture' defined?
 - Have you revised the language and documentation methods in your databases? For example, to revise / explain archaic use of language?



Economic barriers

- For example
 - Do you have concession rates for disabled people and other people who may have low incomes? How do people get those?
 - Do you go out of the museum and into institutions?
 - Do you have designated free parking? Do you advertise that?
 - Do you have free nights? Or singles nights?



Attitudinal barriers

- For example
 - Do you have equality and access training for all your staff? Who does this? How often?
 - Do you have open and transparent recruitment? Do you support diversity in the workplace?
 - Is access part of everyone's job, or just a few people's?
 - Does the museum really want to move into a shared space? Can it share its power?



Expelling the myths

- Access can be done by the people who work directly with the public ..
 - No, access is a process that is strategic and is the responsibility of the whole museum profession
- Access is just about removing barriers ..
 - No, access can start with removing barriers, but it is how this is done and what happens afterwards that matters
- Access and conservation are opposites ..
 - No, access and conservation are both standards of excellence that underpin our profession and give us quality .. They compliment each other



What is an inclusive museum?

Standard Museum	Inclusive Museum
A separate function	Strategically integrated
The responsibility of specific staff	Responsibility of all staff
Add on activity	Core activity



Thank you!

- Please feel free to contact me anytime

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