Report of the ASA Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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Introduction

The ASA Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities was established in 1981 as an *ad hoc* committee, charged with ascertaining if and how the ASA meetings met the accessibility needs of members with disabilities and recommending changes, if needed, to enhance accessibility. In 1987 it was made a standing committee. In 1999, Council set forth the following two charges for the committee: to ensure the full participation of sociologists with disabilities in the life of the Association, and to encourage sociological scholarship on disability issues (Howery 2007).

This committee has a 30 year history during which it has raised awareness of disability issues in the field of sociology, recommended actions designed to improve the accessibility of ASA meeting, and encouraged the growth of disability scholarship. For example, in the 2005 committee report, Sharon Barnartt discussed changes resulting from the passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and suggested that ASA could use these legal expectations to better ensure accessible housing and meeting spaces for its members. She also commended the important step made by ASA of creating a line item in its budget for accessibility services.

ASA has already made many significant improvements toward accessibility; however, the task is not complete and will not ever be, as accessibility standards and strategies evolve. Legal and normative guidelines about accessibility, the conceptual understanding of disability, and techniques for meeting disability challenges are ever-evolving, making the charge to consider accessibility a long-term process rather than a task that can be complete. For example, recent disputes and court decisions regarding accessibility in electronic texts and learning platforms are shaping the future of the discipline, and ASA needs to be both aware of and proactive in these discussions and decisions. Thus, this committee remains a vital part of the mission of ASA, and Council is encouraged to continue its support of this committee.

Recommendation #1
Continue to support the Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. As a result of ever-evolving technology and practices in the field, as well as conceptualizations of disability, ASA will need to continue considering accessibility issues.

What is disability?

Disability is a complex and contested concept, and is defined in numerous ways depending upon the purpose of identification and who is doing the identification. For example, the Social Security Administration offers a narrow definition to determine eligibility for disability insurance that is limited to those who are unable to work. On the other hand, the ADA offers a broader definition to protect a category of persons from discrimination. Disability under the ADA includes having an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a

record of such impairment, or the experience of being regarded as having such an impairment. Definitions used in the fields of health and medicine tend to rely on measures of functionality in the roles and activities of daily life that are expected based on age and other factors. Recent scholarship has focused increasingly on the fluidity of disability, namely that specific environments, social roles, relationships, and other factors affect the degree to which a person is disabled. Disability, therefore, is a result of body-environment interaction rather than a fixed, biological state (Barnartt 2010). Related to the concept of fluidity is the shifts overtime in people's abilities and disabilities. With the graying of America, more people will benefit from accessibility features, whether or not they identify or are identified as disabled.

To address both the concept and reality of disabilities' ambiguity and fluidity, ASA does not depend upon a specific definition on disability, but allows its members to request accommodations according to self-perceived need. The task for ASA, guided by the status committee, is not to determine who is disabled, but to address ways of meeting the needs of a diverse membership.

Disability among sociologists:
What can we learn from ASA data?

As will be noted below, ASA has begun recently begun to gather data regarding members' expressed interest in accommodations related to disabilities. ASA does not ask members to identify whether or not they have a disability; instead, when members join or renew their membership, they are asked whether they would like information on disability services. ASA has also begun systematically tracking requests for accessible rooms at the Annual Meetings. Both data sources provide insight into the value and use of ASA accessibility services, and suggest that these efforts need to continue.

Check box for Disability Services Information

In 2008 the ASA member renewal form was modified to include a checkbox item: "Check here to receive information on disability services at the Annual Meeting and other ASA events." The wording on this item was chosen with care, because disability is often a socially stigmatized identity category and individuals may prefer to keep their disability status private. Also, identification as a person with a disability tells the organization nothing about whether or not its members would benefit from specific accommodations. Checking the box thus indicates a desire for information, rather than a statement of identification or condition. Individuals who check the box may be persons with disabilities, but may also include caregivers, partners, and family members, as well as individuals who have a professional interest in such matters.

Between 2008 and February of 2011 the box requesting information on accessibility services was checked a total of 680 times. In 2010, 236 renewing members requested accessibility information, 112 of whom became members under regular membership categories. The other 124 people requesting information on accessibility services were students (90), emeritus members (16), associate members (17), and an international associate member (1). In the analysis below, based on the 2010 data, regular ASA members requesting information about disability services are compared to regular members overall. Information on regular members overall is drawn from the recently released ASA Research Department Brief "A Decade of Change: ASA Membership from 2000 – 2010" (Scelza, Spalter-Roth, Mayorova 2011). Regular members who requested information on ASA accessibility services differed from those who did not in terms of income, age, and employment status.

Income
Regular members who requested information about disability services had income levels substantially below those of regular members overall. More reported incomes in the lowest category (8.8 percent compared to 21.4 percent) and fewer reported incomes in the two highest categories of $55,000 and above (31.3 percent compared to 52.9 percent of regular members overall).
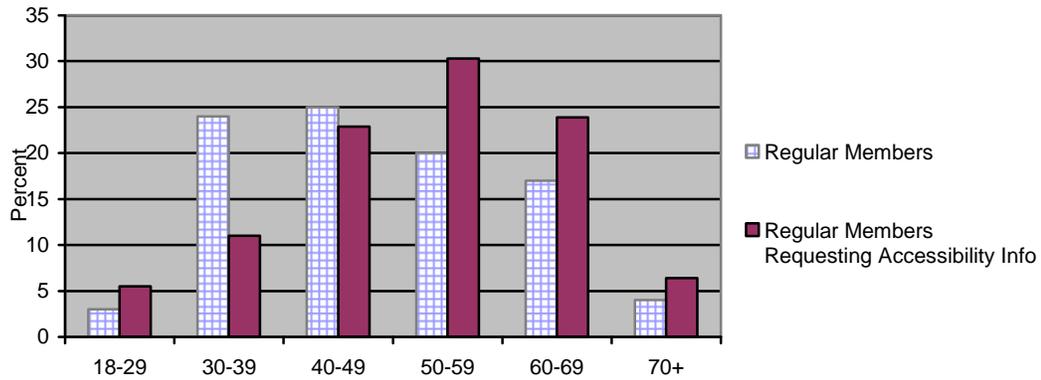
TABLE 1: 2010 Incomes of Regular Members Overall, and Those Requesting Information on Disability Services

Category of Income	Regular membership (percent)	Regular membership requesting accessibility info (percent)
Under $20,000	8.8	21.4
$20,000 - $29,999	9.9	18.8
$30,000 - $39,999	8.8	5.4
$40,000 - $54,999	19.6	23.2
$55,000 - $69,999	16.4	6.3
$70,000 +	36.5	25.0
	100.0%	100.1%
(N)	(7,337)	(112)

Age
Among regular members, individuals who requested information on disability services were far more likely to be age 50 or older. (Excluded from the analysis are the 16 members of the 236 who requested information on accessibility services in 2010 and renewed as *emeritus* members rather than regular members.)

FIGURE 1: Age Categories for Regular Members Overall, and Those Requesting Information on Disability Services

Employment Status

Among regular members who requested information on accessibility services, 69.9 percent were working full time. Among regular membership overall, 80.6 percent reported working full time. However, the proportion of individuals who said they were not working either full- or part-time, (or who chose not to report their employment status) was nearly twice as large among those requesting information on disability services as compared to regular members overall (Table 2). This is consistent with the much lower incomes seen in Table 1.

TABLE 2: 2010 Employment Status of Regular Members Overall, and Those Requesting Information on Disability Services

	Regular membership (percent)	Regular membership requesting disability info (percent)
Employed full-time	80.6	69.9
Employed part-time	6.6	7.1
Not employed full-time or part-time , or did not report status	12.8	23.3
(N)	100.0% (7337)	100.3% (112)

These data reflect considerable interest among members in learning about ASA disability services, and, based on lower income, employment status, and age, an expectation that disability services are needed by those requesting information compared to those in the general regular membership. It is critical to membership retention in ASA that the Association offer services that enable all members to participate in ASA meetings as they age and as their needs shift.

<u>Requests for ADA Compliant Guest Rooms at the Annual Meeting</u>

The ASA includes ADA compliant hotel rooms in its housing block for Annual Meetings. The total number of ADA compliant rooms that were requested over the past three years is shown in Table 3 below. Looking at 2010, there is a large disparity between the number of ADA compliant rooms requested (23), and the number of individuals who requested information on disability services for that Annual Meeting when they renewed their membership (236). This disparity could reflect either that individuals who are interested in disability services are less likely to have the financial means to attend the Annual Meeting, or that the accommodations they need do not include an accessible hotel room. It also raises the question of whether the ASA Annual Meetings are sufficiently accessible for those in need of accommodations to attend.

**TABLE 3: ADA Compliant Rooms Requested
for the Annual Meeting**

Year	Number of ADA Rooms Requested
2010	23
2009	26
2008	20

As sociologists, we are thrilled to have some data that enables us to examine the interest and use of these services. The committee puts forth several recommendations regarding data:

Recommendation #2
Continuation of these data collection efforts. Asking members if they want information on disability services is important as a form of outreach and information dissemination for the Association, and as a source of data. Therefore, we encourage ASA to keep the checkbox (Do you wish to receive information on disability services?) on its membership renewal form, as well as to continue to track requests for ADA compliant rooms.

Recommendation #3
Fully institute ASA data collection efforts regarding reports and resolution of accessibility concerns. The ASA has long engaged in other accessibility related efforts about which we do not have data because they are not tracked systematically. For example, there has not been a single shared location for tracking accessibility concerns that arise at the Annual Meeting. The committee has worked with ASA Meeting Services to create an "ASA Annual Meeting Accessibility Concern Report" (see Appendix A). Starting at the 2011 Annual Meeting, this form will be kept in a special binder at the Housing and Information Desk, and will provide a centralized process by which members can report accessibility concerns. All members who check the box indicating they are interested in receiving information about accessibility services have been informed by the ASA that they should go to the Information Desk if they have any

issues about accessibility during the Annual Meeting. We recommend that the data from this form be tracked regarding the number of concerns reported and whether they were successfully resolved. This information will indicate if there are patterns regarding accessibility concerns that can be better and more proactively addressed.

Accomplishments of the Committee
since the Last Report to Council

The Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities has been active and is proud to have participated in several important recent changes.

Formation of Disability and Society Section: In the past, this standing committee has expressed considerable concern about the lack of opportunities to develop disability scholarship. It has recommended changes such as an expansion of sessions devoted to disability and an exploration of ways to raise the visibility of work in disability. We are pleased to report that the work of sociologists in this area has led to the recent creation of a new ASA section on Disability and Society. After two years as a provisional section, in 2010 the section-in-formation attained the 300 members needed to become a permanent section. According to the 2009 By-Laws of the Section:

> *"The goal of the Section on Disability and Society is to foster the development of sociology of disability through the organized interchange of ideas, teaching experiences, research programs, and results. Encouragement shall be given to the achievement of the general purpose through organized meetings and conferences, publication, and such other means as are deemed appropriate by the Section Officers and Members of Council."*

The concurrent formation of the Section on the Body and Embodiment has also served to increase interest in disability.

Expansion of Disability-Related Scholarship at ASA Annual Meetings: Closely related to the energy created by the formation of the Section on Disability and Society and organizational resources secured from the ASA, the number of sessions and papers related to disability at the ASA Annual Meetings has increased. In the 2005 committee report, Barnartt found four papers listed in the index of the 2003 Annual Meeting program under "disability" that were presented in one session (Disability and Social Life). There was also an Author Meets Critics session for a book on the Chicago heat wave listed under "disabilities". She recorded 13 papers in 2004 listed under Disabilities in the index. One was an Academic Workshop on *Creating an Inclusive Climate for Persons with Disabilities*; seven were papers in two Sessions on Disability and

Social Life; and four were papers on *Disabilities and Chronic Illness* in the Section of Mental Health Referred Roundtable Session.

In comparison, in 2009, there were 23 listings under "disabilities" in the Annual Meeting program index. These contributions included the following:

- Thematic Session on *Disability, Politics and Community* (four presenters);
- Regular Session on *Health Status and Disabilities in Later Life;*
- Regular Session on the Welfare State had one or more papers on disabilities as did the Regular Sessions on Homelessness and on Identity and Categorization;
- Disability and Society Section-in-Formation had one session (3 papers);
- Regular Session on Disability and Social Life (4 papers);
- Department Workshop on *Learning Disabilities;*
- Roundtable discussion by the Section on Ageing and the Life Course's Research Group on Disability during the section's roundtable session;
- Roundtable discussions in Section Roundtable Sessions: on *special education* in the Section on the Sociology of Education's roundtable session; on *disability hate crimes* in the roundtable session of the Section on Crime, Law and Deviance; and one or more disability-related papers in the roundtable sessions of the Sections on Mental Health, Children and Youth, Latino(a) Sociology, Collective Behavior and Social Movements, and the Family;
- Paper Sessions of the Sections on Medial Sociology, Sociology of Mental Health, Sociology of the Body, and Sex and Gender all had at least one paper on disabilities;
- Research Poster Session had a poster on *politics, community and life satisfaction of person with disabilities;* and
- Student Form paper session had a paper on *disability and successful labor market participation.*

The 2010 Annual Meeting continued this trend toward more contributions from the sociology of disability. There were 20 entries under "disabilities" in the index including:

- Thematic Session on Citizenship and Disabilities (4 presenters);
- Regular Paper Sessions on Health Care and Care Delivery and on Mental Health contained one or more papers on disabilities;
- Paper Session of the Sections on Body and Embodiment, Aging and the Life Course, Sociology of Population, and Latinos(as) had one or more papers on disabilities; as did the
- Roundtable Sessions of the Sections on the Sociology of the Family, Medical Sociology, Body and Embodiment, Aging and the Life Course, and Mental Health;
- Two Open Refereed Round Table Sessions had disability-related papers..

This indicates a dramatic increase in research in this area presented at the ASA Annual Meetings. Whereas Barnartt did not document any thematic sessions that included disability, sociologists have organized thematic sessions focused on disability for the 2009, 2010, and 2011 meetings.

Inclusion of "people with disabilities" within ASA's diversity statement: In 2010 this committee, in cooperation with the Section-in-Formation on Disability and Society, recommended that the ASA Diversity Statement be changed to include "persons with disabilities." Council approved this change.

Information dissemination in *Footnotes* on accessibility issues: Margaret Weigers Vitullo, Director of Academic and Professional Affairs and Staff Liaison to the committee, published "Universal Design: Creating Presentations that Speak to All" in the July/August 2008 issue of *Footnotes*, thereby raising awareness of this important aspect of accessibility. As Associate Editor of *Footnotes,* Vitullo also encouraged an ASA member to write an article raising awareness of the use of service animals to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities titled "Yes my Chihuahua is a Service Dog… and a Reasonable Accommodation" that appeared in the April 2011 issue of *Footnotes*.

Continued improvements in meeting accessibility: The ASA has shown its responsiveness to the status committee and its commitment to accessibility in a variety ways, including the following examples:

- ASA offers a number of accommodations including sign language interpretation (the person must request specific sessions ahead of time), captioning upon request, rental wheelchairs and scooters, and a comfort room.
- As suggested at the 2010 meeting of the status committee, 2011 conference attendees will have the option of receiving their program in an accessible electronic format, providing access to people with visual disabilities in particular; this is currently a pilot program.
- The ASA has been proactive in recent years in disseminating information regarding accessibility. In April 2007 *Footnotes* published an article, "Committee and Executive Office Collaborate to Make Annual Meeting Accessible," (Howery) and in 2008 *Footnotes* included an article, "Universal Design: Creating Presentations that Speak to All," (Vitullo) thereby raising awareness of this important aspect of accessibility. Additionally, the website now has accessibility information as a standard part of meeting information at http://www.asanet.org/meetings/accessibility.cfm.
- As part of information dissemination efforts, ASA now asks members as part of the membership renewal process to "Check here to receive information on disability services at the Annual Meeting and other ASA events." All individuals who check this box receive a detailed letter (Appendix B) that explains the process of requesting

accommodations and the types of accommodations available to them. Feedback on this letter has been very positive.

- ASA staff continues to work with hotels and other providers to ensure improved accessibility. In preparation for the 2011 Annual Meeting, ASA established a form, the "ASA Annual Meeting Accessibility Concern Report", to improve efficient handling of accessibility concerns and complaints.

Recommendation #4
Provide accessible electronic copies of the program available upon request as a standard accessibility feature. Making this a standard accessibility feature, rather than a pilot program, would mean listing it on the website, in the letter distributed to individuals who checked that they wanted to receive information on disability services, and in other documents and communications regarding accessibility and accommodations. To note, this is a low cost, relatively easily achieved accommodation that would benefit many people.

Recommendation #5
Establish as standard ASA policy and practice the distribution of a letter regarding disability services to members who check the box requesting information. As noted previously, in 2008 the ASA staff included a check box on the membership form regarding information on disability services and created a letter to be disseminated to those who desired such information (see Appendix B). This is an important pro-active effort to raise awareness of ASA services and ease in requesting them. Rather than the effort of particular staff member, the letter should be a standard part of ASA membership meeting policy.

New Initiatives and Further Recommendations
of the Committee

Accessibility at the Annual Meeting

This section focuses on continuing issues of accessibility at the Annual Meetings. As stated by Barbara Altman in her "Guide to Accessible Meetings," created as a product of this committee, "Professional meetings are among the most important ways for sociologists to exchange ideas, disseminate research findings, find out about employment opportunities and in general create and be involved in a community of contemporaries" (approx. 1994, p. 4). Accessible meetings enable people with diverse abilities to participate, so that they can benefit from the opportunities provided and also offer their expertise to other meeting participants. Not only is accessibility morally and intellectually desirable, it is the law, and all organizations must keep up-to-date on changing requirements. And even when an ASA Annual Meeting site satisfies the specific legal

requirements of their state, it may still present specific areas that are accessibility challenges for persons with disabilities.

The ASA has made significant progress in enhancing the accessibility of its meetings, and the committee commends these efforts. Moreover, the committee is aware that the ASA Meeting Services Department follows procedures for assuring accessibility outlined by the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) as well as the Convention Industry Council Manual in site preparation specifically, and Annual Meeting planning more generally. Below are several recommendations to further improve access for ASA Annual meetings.

Recommendation #6
As part of standard meeting policy, the hotel should complete an accessibility checklist, preferably before contracting or at least a year before the meeting, to enable the identification of accessibility problems. Based on this checklist, ASA staff can identify potential problems and negotiate for their resolution. Completed checklists should be recorded and saved, and made available to the committee to the extent appropriate, along with reports on changes made to properties in response to them. The suggestion to conduct accessibility reviews of properties has consistently been made by the Committee, including in Altman's Guide to Accessible Meetings. Completion of the accessibility checklist is performed by the hotel site, and adds little work to the ASA staff. The site's engineering department has most of this information already as part of their ADA compliance audit work and can therefore be completed quickly. ASA Meeting Staff currently conduct site accessibility reviews following the standards set by the PCMA and Convention Industry Council Manual, but at this time do not systematically record the results of those reviews for data collection purposes or to track changes in hotel or convention center accessibility due to renovations or complaints. A checklist could become an instructive document for meeting planners to get the gist of the range and scope of accessibility to be considered, and for making specific requests regarding accessibility issues at the meeting sites. This is a low-cost, low-effort recommendation and we strongly recommend that ASA adopt the use of an accessibility checklist that is conserved over time. (For a sample checklist, see Appendix C)

Recommendation #7
As part of standard meeting policy, the ASA should conduct an on-site inspection following receipt of the checklist. The onsite inspection compliments the accessibility checklist and is used to (a) visualize site design issues that are difficult to capture on a checklist, such as whether there are steps required to access an "accessible" bathroom and flow of meeting space, (b) discuss/negotiate hotel room set up taking into account the design of the rooms to ensure accessible pathways and seating (this is particularly important in set-ups for events like round tables and poster sessions where the set-up is often congested), and (c) assess the accuracy of the

checklist (e.g. whether the "accessible" rooms really have blinking fire alarms, etc.. Again, the results of the on-site inspection should be recorded and conserved over time for data collection purposes and to track changes in hotel or convention center accessibility due to renovations or complaints. Additionally, this information will be helpful for providing advance notice to members with accessibility concerns so that they can plan routes and timing accordingly (see Recommendation #8 below). Finally, when hotels or convention centers make changes to improve accessibility as a result of concerns raised on checklists and on-site inspections, the ASA membership can be informed of these successes.

On-site inspections could be performed using several strategies. Organizations like Association on Higher Education and Disability offer site inspection including formal reports and recommendations for $1,500 plus travel costs. We recognize this is a considerable cost, however we would like Council to keep in mind that ASA routinely uses the many of the same hotels, some of which have access problems time and time again. An investment in an on-site inspection conducted by a trained expert in accessibility could yield long-term site-specific recommendations that would improve meeting accessibility for years to come. Large organizations like ASA that use the same hotels have considerable power to negotiate with hotels to improve their accessibility.

There are two less costly, although also potentially less effective, strategies. The first is that a trained expert could train an ASA staff member to conduct this inspection, so that ASA would only pay for the on-site inspection and report once, and thereafter it would become a routine part of the on-site visit that ASA already conducts. The second option is that we utilize on-site ASA members knowledgeable in the field of disability to conduct such an inspection. This option would make it part of meeting services' responsibilities, in cooperation with this committee, to identify a member in the locality of the annual meeting to conduct the on-site inspection. This option has significant limitations because people with disabilities and/or people with expertise in disability studies are not necessarily experts in the wide range of accessibility design and accommodations. On the other hand, it is relatively low-cost and low-effort on the part of ASA staff.

The next set of recommendations focus on recommended accommodations that should be made available in standard practice. To note, Recommendation #4 already addressed one of these accommodations, the provision of electronic copies of the program available upon request a standard accessibility feature, and is therefore not included in the section that follows.

Recommendation #8
Provide an orientation/walk-through upon request as a standard accessibility service.
Conference sites can be daunting to many people, but can be a particular challenge to people

with low-vision, blindness, or other disabilities that make rapid navigation a challenge. An orientation/walk-through can either be written, in-person, or both. We recommend here the standard provision of an in-person walk-through upon request. In an in-person walk-through, a person is guided through the site and provided information on the location of meeting rooms, dining options, bathrooms, elevators, etc. to make their navigation more efficient. This can be done when the individual arrives and registers for the meeting, and ASA staff can draw upon members of the Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and/or the Section on Disability and Society to conduct this walk-through. Unlike an accessibility on-site inspection, conducting a walk-through requires little prior expertise. However, the results of the completed check-lists and documentation produced during the on-site inspection (see Recommendations #6 and #7) should both be provided to the person conducting the walk-through to help them quickly identify problematic areas and alert the member who requested the in-person walk thought.

To note, some organizations also provide a written orientation, available to registrants either before the meeting or at time of registration that details the site. An example is provided in Appendix D. This is a useful tool, and we recommend that Council consider the feasibility of providing a written orientation in a format accessible to text readers.

Recommendation #9
Provide a gender-neutral restroom as a standard accessibility service. The provision of a gender-neutral restroom has already been acknowledged as an important feature in meeting site usability by those interested in GLBT issues. It is also of relevance to the disability community because (a) issues of transgender and intersexuality may overlap with disability and (b) individuals with disability may rely upon personal assistants of a different gender.

Recommendation #10
Provide captioning for all plenary sessions as standard practice (not simply upon request).
The plenary sessions are at the heart of each annual meeting. Due to their importance, no other events are scheduled to compete with them. Due to their significance in the program, they should be accessible to all attendees. Just as curb cuts were found to benefit both those with limited mobility and those with no mobility impairments, captioning has been shown to increase comprehension for a wide variety of individuals far beyond those with hearing impairments. Captioning plenary sessions would help a broad range of ASA members better follow and comprehend these important presentations, including those with hearing impairments.

Recommendation #11
Insert accessibility features/concerns onto the program maps. A map that takes into account accessibility features and concerns would note where there are stairs, elevators, accessible bathrooms, and other features that aid in efficient navigation.

Recommendation #12

Materials related to the site more broadly should offer relevant accessibility information. For example, the local restaurant guide should provide a symbol if a restaurant is accessible, tour descriptions and local transportation information should also include accessibility related information.

Recommendation #13

A brief mention of disability services and how to file a concern/complaint should be in the annual program, on the website, and emailed to any member who has requested information on these services. An organization may provide services, but this does not mean that its members *know* that it does. ASA has multiple dissemination outlets at its disposal, including (1) its website, (2) direct emails to those who have indicated interest, and (3) its meeting program. A consistent message about disability services and accessibility should be disseminated through each of these venues, including both the availability of services and the process for filing complaints or concerns.

Recommendation #14

As a matter of policy, include a link to the 2008 *Footnote*'s article on universal design and accessible presentations - http://www.asanet.org/footnotes/julyaugust08/presentation.html- in communications accepting presentations. The publication of this article was an important step forward in raising awareness of presenter's responsibilities in creating accessible presentations. By providing a link when accepting presentations, all presenters are given this important informational resource in a relevant and convenient manner. This was done for the first time in 2011, and the committee recommends making this practice a regular ASA policy.

ASA Website Accessibility

There are two standards for accessibility in the Web World. One is Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The second is the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). WAI Guidelines have recently been updated, and Section 508 is also in the process of being updated, although the final regulations may not be released for quite some time. For now, Michele Dupray, ASA Webmaster, is revising the ASA website following the WAI Guidelines. Her goal is to be able to add the WAI "Double-A Conformance to Web Content Accessibility" sticker to the ASA website by the 2012 Annual Meeting.

There are four projects currently underway to achieve this goal. The first involves adding a "skip navigation link" that will facilitate the use of screen readers on the site. A screen reader normally will read all of the navigation options; with this link users who make use of screen readers will have the option to skip to the main content. The second project will make it possible

for ASA website visitors to change the text size. The third project focuses on training relevant ASA staff on web best practices for accessibility. The fourth project involves going through the site and fixing errors that make the site inaccessible to the naked eye. An example of this is the older, common use of tables to lay out a page and deprecated HTML code to change the text. The webmaster has gone through some departments (about us/governance/press/meetings) and removed deprecated code. She is working on tweaking code for changing the font our pages, as this type of code is deprecated too. The "skip navigation link" is now working. She is still ironing out the code in the feature for changing the font size, but she anticipates the she will have this feature in place by the 2011 Annual Meeting.

Recommendation #15
Provide continued support to ensure website compliance by 2012 Annual Meeting.

Moving Forward: Future Items for the Committee

Each year the ASA Committee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities defines its agenda. We foresee three important agenda items during the committee's next term: additional data collection with ASA members who indicated that they would like to receive information about accessibility services, increasing accessibility in Annual Meeting presentations, and raising awareness among sociologists and related professions of matters related to electronic information and accessibility.

Data Collection with ASA Members Expressing Interest in Accessibility Information.
In 2011 more than 200 ASA members indicated that they would like to receive information on accessibility at the Annual Meeting, but only 11 requests for accessibility services were included in 2011 Annual Meeting registrations. In order to better understand the characteristics and needs of members requesting information on accessibility the committee is exploring doing a follow up survey with these members, including a small subsample of interviews.

Accessibility and Presentations
Presentations are really at the heart of the ASA annual meeting, and therefore the meeting cannot be accessible without the cooperation of the many sociologists who participate each year. Above we recommend that an information link to material on accessibility and presentations be provided to all presenters upon their acceptance to present. We encourage the committee to consider ways in which presenter's sense of responsibility for accessibility may be heightened. For example, upon submission or acceptance presenters might have to check a box agreeing to comply with presentation standards, or at least to read these standards. The committee should review presentation accessibility guidelines, potential policies regarding these guidelines, and recommend a policy to the ASA.

Accessibility and Electronic Information

Technological advancements have greatly impacted the typical mode of operation in today's classrooms. Students now commonly use electronic learning platforms such as Blackboard and Desire to Learn, electronic textbooks, and internet resources as part of their coursework. These advances provide many opportunities but also present numerous challenges. Two of the most pressing concerns right now on which ASA might act are: (1) access to electronic readers and (2) video captioning of educational materials. We have begun working with the National Federation of the Blind to consider a resolution regarding the importance of accessibility in such media, but we are not yet at a point to recommend particular actions. (Draft material included in Appendix E.) We urge the committee in the next year to continue this work and bring forth a resolution pertaining to address these matters.

Conclusion

We strongly encourage the ASA Council to accept the above recommendations and thereby to further expand and standardize its efforts to ensure accessibility for its members. Moreover, we strongly encourage the ASA to continue its support of this active committee. We have worked towards the continual improvement of the ASA and see future steps that still need to be taken to address persistent and emerging accessibility concerns. Due to the constant changes in legislation, technology, and cultural expectations, concerns about accessibility and the techniques available to ensure accessibility change frequently and require an active committee dedicated to this issue to stay in keeping with current standards. We believe that the ASA has benefited from the work of this committee in the past and will continue to benefit from a commitment to proactive strategies to ensure accessibility.

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Appendix A

ASA Annual Meeting Accessibility Concern Report

Date concern submitted: ___/___/___.

Time concern submitted: _____

Person with the concern (optional):

Name:_____

Cell phone:_____

Email:_____

Hotel:_____

If we need to follow up with you during the Annual Meeting, what is the best way to reach you?

☐ Call hotel

☐ Call cell phone

☐ Send email

☐ Other (please specify) _____

Describe the concern (use the back of the page if needed):

Urgency of response needed:

☐ Immediate response needed.*

☐ Response needed during same business day.*

☐ Response needed before the end of the Annual Meeting.

☐ Follow up after the Annual Meeting will be fine.

☐ No response to me required – report given for information only.

Report Received by:

Name: _____

*Information Desk Staff: immediately inform the ASA Office about these concerns

Concern Description Continued:

For ASA Staff only

Date concern resolved: ___ / ___ / ___ .

Time concern resolved: _____

How was the concern resolved?

Please describe in detail noting hotel or ASA Staff involved and what was done.   If the resolution included re-contacting the individual reporting the concern, note in this space the day/time of each contact and how the person was contacted.

Appendix B:
DRAFT Letter Regarding Accessibility Services

«First Name» «Middle Name» «Last Name»
«Institution»
«Address 1»
«Address 2»
«City», «State» «ZipCode»
«Country»

April 7, 2011

Dear «Salutation»:

When filling out your ASA membership renewal form, either this year or in the past, you indicated that you would like to receive information regarding services at the Annual Meeting for persons with disabilities. In this letter we describe our current efforts to make the Annual Meeting accessible to everyone in terms of housing, session locations, tours, and presentations.

If you will be attending the meeting and need specific accommodations related to a disability, we request that you contact ASA Meeting Services (meetings@asanet.org or 202-383-9005 x305) as soon as possible. With advanced notice, we can make sure that your needs are met. Some of the services we can provide include:

- ASL, Computer Aided Real Time Transcription (CART), and voice interpretation
- Loaner scooters, as well as information on scooter resources in the area
- Lists of local providers for personal assistants
- Conference site walk-thru/orientation
- Electronic copy of the program, provided on site. (If your request is received by the close of pre-registration, a flash drive will be included with your badge materials.)
- And others…

Housing

- This year all Annual Meeting events and hotel accommodations are under one roof, in the Caesars Palace facility.

- There is currently a special discount on hotel accommodations for the meeting. The deadline for receiving the discounted prices is April 15, 2011, so we encourage you to make your reservations now.
- Information on hotel accomodations at the Annual Meeting is available on the ASA website. We have reserved a block of ADA compliant hotel rooms. If you would like an ADA room, please indicate that using the field labeled "Additional Requests" on the online reservation form. (Note: you will see the "additional requests" field once you arrive at the screen that requests your name and address.) The printable PDF version of the form has a section at the top for special requests, including requesting an ADA room. *Use the housing forms to request any accommodations you need _in your hotel room_. Requests for accommodations for any Annual Meeting activities, including sessions, workshops, or plenaries should be made by contacting ASA Meeting Services.*
- Additional information regarding the meeting facilities, including maps with the locations of elevators, stairs, and accessible restrooms will be available to attendees on the ASA website prior to the start of the Annual Meeting.

Sessions

- To the greatest extent possible, sessions and meetings organized by the Section on Disability and Society will be scheduled in centrally located, easily accessible locations. Similar care will be taken to place other sessions and meetings with a theme related to disability in central locations.
- The on-line preliminary program for the Annual Meeting will be available on April 29. If you will need accommodations for specific sessions, please review the program and contact ASA Meeting Services with the specific sessions you plan to attend and the type of accommodations you will need.

Doing a presentation?

- If you will be presenting and need accommodations related to a disability, please be sure to contact ASA Meeting Services right away. With advanced notice we can provide ramps onto stages, lower podiums, CART services, interpreters, and other services as needed.
- All individuals who have a paper accepted for presentation at the Annual Meeting will receive the article "Universal Design: Creating Presentations that Speak to All."

Concerns while at the ASA Meeting

- If you have *any* problem or negative experience related to accessibility, including issues with housing, meeting sessions, travel throughout the city, restaurants, or any other accessibility related issue, please report the problem to the Information and Housing

desk, which will be located near the ASA Annual Meeting Registration in the Milano Ballroom at Caesars Palace. An ASA staff member will record the concern and assist in resolving the problem whenever possible. By informing us of any concerns that arise we can work toward making the ASA Annual Meeting more welcoming to sociologists with disabilities, and make the cities and hotels where ASA meetings are held more aware of accessibility issues.

The ASA continues to strive to find ways to make the Annual Meeting more accessible and friendly toward all participants, including those with disabilities. Please be sure to contact ASA Meeting Services (meetings@asanet.org or 202 383 9005 x305) about any assistance that you need at the Annual Meeting. We value your participation in the association and hope to see you in Las Vegas.

Sincerely,

Kareem Jenkins
Director, ASA Meeting Services

Margaret Weigers Vitullo, PhD
Director, Academic and Professional
Affairs Program

Appendix C: Site Accessibility Survey

Site Accessibility Survey - Standard

Specifications are in upper and lower case.

___

Parking:

- Are parking spaces for persons with disabilities clearly identified by the international access symbol?

    o

- Are reserved spaces located on the shortest possible accessible route to an accessible building entrance?

    o

- How many accessible parking places are designated?

    o

- Do accessible parking spaces have adequate vertical and horizontal clearance (minimum 96" high and 156" wide suggested)?

    o

- Does the passenger loading zone adjacent to accessible parking have curb cuts and an unobstructed accessible aisle at least 48" wide parallel to the vehicle pull-up space?

    o

- If the facility has a parking garage, are there some spaces available in areas with a minimum 96" ceiling clearance to accommodate adapted vehicles?

    o

- COMMENTS:

    o

Walks, Curbs, and Ramps:

- Are grounds, walks, and floor surfaces along accessible routes stable, firm, and relatively non-slip under all weather conditions?

  o

- Are sidewalks from reserved parking area to the facility entrance free of abrupt changes in surface level?

  o

- Do sidewalks and ramps have a 36" clear opening with an occasional allowance for turning and passing?

  o

- If curb cuts are recessed into sidewalks, do they have flared sides with a maximum slope of 1:10 (1" rise to every 10" of slope)?

  o

- Is the maximum slope of all ramps 1:12 (1" rise to every 12" of run)?

  o

- Do ramps have a 5' level landing at the top, bottom, and at ramp direction change or at 30" vertical intervals?

  o

- Are gratings designed so that openings do not exceed 1/2"? If elongated, is the grating perpendicular to the direction of travel?

  o

- Do ramps have tactile warning surfaces and/or are they visible through color change?

  o

- Do all temporary ramps meet standard ramp requirements, and are they securely anchored?

- o

- Do sidewalks and ramps with a slope greater that 1:20 have handrails on both sides?

  - o

- Are handrails mounted 32" above the ramp surface, no more that 1 1/2" from the wall, and extending 12" beyond the top and bottom of the ramp?

  - o

- Do ramps and landings with drop-offs have curbs (minimum 2" high), walls, railing, or projecting surfaces that prevent people from slipping off?

  - o

- COMMENTS:

  - o

Entrances, Corridors, and Stairs:

- Is at least one accessible route from the parking area to the facility entrance clearly marked?

  o

- Is the international symbol of access displayed at entrances?

  o

- Is a primary entrance accessible with a clear opening of 32" or more?

  o

- Are doors relatively easy to open (require no more than 8.5 lbs. for push and pull and 5 lbs. for sliding doors)?

  o

- Are doormats stationary, flat or recessed, and less than 1/2" thick?

  o

- Are handles, pulls, latches, locks, and other operating devices on accessible doors easily grasped and can they be operated with a closed fist?

  o

- Do automatic and/or power assisted doors operate in a manner and direction that does not present a hazard to guests?

  o

- Is there an accessible door adjacent to all revolving doors?

  o

- Are thresholds at exterior doors flush with the floor and is there a maximum edge height of 1/2"?

  o

- Are handrails installed on both sides of all stairs and extended at least 12" beyond the top rise and 12" plus the width of one step beyond the bottom step?

  o

- Are handrails 1 ¼" to 1 ½" in diameter and easy to grasp, and no more than 1 1/2" from the wall?

  o

- Are all suspended stairs provided with sufficient warning devices to alert people with visual impairments of reduced headroom?

    o

- Do protruding and hanging objects (i.e., telephones, water fountains, etc.) with their leading edge 27" to 80" above the floor protrude not more than 4" in the path of travel?

    o

- COMMENTS:

    o

Public Restrooms:

- Is there an accessible restroom for each gender clearly marked with an International access symbol readily available in public areas?

  o

- Do restroom entrances have a clear opening of 32"?

  o

- Is there a mirror mounted within 40" of the floor?

  o

- Is the sink mounted at least 29" from the floor (measured from the bottom of the apron) for wheelchair knee clearance, and is the drain-pipe at least 9" from the floor for toe clearance?

  o

- Is insulation or protective covering used on bathroom hot water pipes under the sink to prevent burns to persons in wheelchairs?

  o

- Is there clear floor space provided in front of the sink to allow for forward approach of a wheelchair?

  o

- Are faucet controls of the push or lever type?

  o

- Are restroom dispensers and accessories within reach of a person seated in a wheelchair (no higher than 54" from the floor)?

  o

- Is at least one restroom stall available with a clear opening of 32"?

  o

- Is the accessible toilet stall arranged in such a way to provide either side approach or front approach by someone in a wheelchair?

  o

- Are the flush controls and toilet paper rolls positioned in such a way that they can be reached by someone using either a front approach or side approach to the toilet?

  o

- Are the flush controls hand operated and mounted no more than 44" above the floor?

  o

- Does the men's restroom have at least one stall type or wall-hung urinal with elongated rim at a maximum of 17" above the floor?

  o

- Are there grab bars of sufficient length located along the side and back of the toilet to facilitate transfers into/out of a wheelchair?

  o

- COMMENTS:

Elevators

- Are there any levels of the building that are not accessible by elevator?

  o

- Is a visual as well as an audible signal used to identify direction of elevator travel (sound once of up, twice for down)?

  o

- Are call buttons in lobbies and halls located 42" above the floor with raised, indented or Braille floor designations on both elevator door jambs 60" from the floor?

  o

- Does the elevator accommodate a wheelchair with inside dimensions no less than 54" x 68" and a clear door opening of 36"?

  o

- Is the space between the floor and the elevator platform no greater than 1 ¼"?

  o

- Are the elevator doors equipped with an automatic bumper safety system?

  o

- Are controls, call buttons, and alarm buttons 42" above the floor, with raised or Braille floor designations on both elevator jambs 60" from the floor?

  o

- Is the area in front of elevator call buttons kept free from obstructions to allow access by someone in a wheelchair?

  o

- COMMENTS:

Public Telephones and Water Fountains:

- Is one telephone with both the handset and coin receiver within 48" of the floor and with a cord at least 29" long included within each bank of public telephones?

  o

- Do telephones that are enclosed have a clear path width of at least 30"?

  o

- Are phone directories usable at a wheelchair level?

  o

- Are telephones equipped with an amplifier available for people who are hard of hearing?

  o

- Is there a TTY available for public use within the facility, and is the information on how to access this equipment prominently posted?

  o

- Are water fountains located in such a way that they are usable by someone in a wheelchair?

  o

- Is the water fountain controlled by a hand lever or push button that is easily operated?

  o

- For water fountains that extend into passageways, has some effort been made to alert persons who are blind of this potential "hazard" (e.g., by blocking the space below with planters)?

  o

- COMMENTS:

Meeting Rooms:

- Are the meeting rooms centrally located to prevent undue problems for persons with mobility limitations?

    o

- Do hallways and corridors between rooms have a clearance of 36"with an occasion allowance space for turning and passing?

    o

- Do the doors to meeting rooms have a clear opening of 32"?

    o

- Do thresholds of interior doors have a maximum edge height of 1/2"?

    o

- Are meeting room floors non-slip, level, and independently negotiable by persons in wheelchairs?

    o

- Are there temporary ramps available for use with all raised podiums or head tables?

    o

- Are microphones available that can be easily adjusted and are flexible for use?

    o

- Is the lighting non-glare, non-reflecting, and non-blinking?

    o

- Are meeting rooms equipped for Assistive Listening Device (ALD) transmission through existing systems?

    o

- If no, what is the hotel's plan for providing this service through their sound/AV company? (It is the facilities responsibility to provide the amplification system, *AHEAD* is responsible for the rental costs of the receivers for attendees to use.)

    o

- COMMENTS:

Restaurants/Lounges:

- Do entrances to food service establishments have a door with a 32" clear opening, single effort door pull, and negotiable threshold?

    o

- Are tables accessible (27" clearance under the table and 30" in width?

    o

- Are cafeteria/buffet lines accessible (at least 36" wide with adequate turning space at corners)?

    o

- Does the restaurant have menus in Braille and large print?

    o

- Is the restaurant staff able and willing to make reasonable accommodations (minor menu changes, reading menus, tray assistance)?

    o

- Are all lounges accessible, including tables, aisles, game room, and dance floor?

    o

- COMMENTS:

ADA Adapted Guest Rooms:

- Are guest rooms numbered in consecutive sequence and identified with tactile numbers?

  - o

- Are room keys available with large fixed handle for easy handling?

  - o

- If key cards are used instead of keys, does the angle of insertion or the speed/dexterity required to use the system pose a problem for persons with limited upper body mobility?

  - o

- Do entry, bathroom, and closet doors have a clear opening of 32" with maximum threshold height of 1/2"?

  - o

- Is there a minimum of 32" opening by one side of the bed(s)?

  - o

- Do guest rooms and bathrooms allow sufficient turning space for a wheelchair to move about (60" diameter preferred)?

  - o

- Are mirrors mounted within 40" of the floor?

  - o

- Is the sink mounted at least 29" from the floor measured from the bottom of the apron for wheelchair knee clearance, and is the drain pipe at least 9" high for toe clearance?

  - o

- Is insulation or protective covering used on bathroom hot water pipes under the sink to prevent burns to persons in wheelchairs?

  - o

- Is the toilet seat between 17" and 19" high?

  - o

- Are sink and tub controls easy to operate with a closed fist?

  - o

- Do shower and tub combinations have curtains rather than glass doors?

  - o

- Are grab bars of sufficient length mounted by the toilet and in the tub and shower?

  o

- Are shower benches or chairs available for use in the tub?

  o

- Is there a flexible hose with a handheld shower head available?

  o

- Are the telephones in rooms accessible when in bed?

  o

- Are amplified phones and/or TTY's available in guest rooms?

  o

- Is there a visual alert system available in some guest rooms for the safety of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing?

  o

- Are rooms free of wall mounted protruding objects (such as televisions, hanging lamps, etc.)?

  o

- Are light switches, heating and cooling controls, drapery and shade controls within reach for use by someone in a wheelchair?

  o

- Are towel and closet racks located at a height not greater than 54"?

  o

- How many guest rooms are available that have been adapted for use by persons with disabilities?

  o

- What procedures does the hotel use in determining guest needs for accessibility and reserving/assigning accessible sleeping rooms?

  o

- COMMENTS:

Hazards and Emergency Procedures:

- Has the facility's staff received special Instruction on the needs of people with disabilities, particularly in emergency procedures?

  o

- Are standard/textured surfaces for tactile warning present for hazardous conditions (i.e., fountains, stairs, pools, floors, doors, etc.?)

  o

- Are all glass panels in doors located within 12" of floor protected by kick plates on the push side?

  o

- Are all emergency exit doors clearly marked, with a 32" clear opening and equipped with a crash (panic) bar?

  o

- Are doors leading to potentially dangerous areas identifiable to the touch by textured surface on the handle, knob, or pull?

  o

- Are all audible alarms accompanied by simultaneous visual signals?

  o

- Does the facility have an emergency evacuation plan for individuals with disabilities?

  o

Appendix D: Sample Written Orientation

Sheraton Downtown Denver
1550 Court Place
Denver, CO 80202
T – 303-893-3333
F – 303-626-2543

The hotel is located at the intersection of Court Place and 16th Street. The hotel consists of two building – the Plaza on the north side of Court Place and the Towers located on the south side of Court Place.
The Plaza (8 stories) on the south side of Court Street contains the lobby, 15-50 Restaurant, Bell Captain, Concierge, 2 bars, Gift Shop, Business Center, meeting rooms, guest rooms (floors 2-8)
The Towers on the north side of Court Street contains Katie Mullen's Irish Pub and Restaurant, Salad Bowl, Fitness Center, Swimming Pool, and guest rooms (3-19 but no 13th, 20-22 are Starwood Guest Rooms.)
There are meeting rooms and the 2nd floor and Mezzanine but they will not in use for this conference.
The Concourse (conference center "C" on elevator panel) is located on the next level down under both the Plaza and Towers. Concourse/conference center will be used interchangeably.

With the exception of the lobby, and public restrooms that all have tile, most of the rest of the floor covering is carpeted. There is background music but it is the same on the first floor and conference center. There are very few landmarks.

In front of the hotel are modern art statues of dancing women. The front of the hotel faces the intersection of Court and 16th Street. 16th Street is a one-mile pedestrian mall with shops, restaurants, and free buses to access its entire length.

As you approach the hotel, you will exit the vehicle under a canopy/awning. There is an automatic revolving door and a double set of standard hung doors on either side. There is usually a doorman to greet you and open the door.
Once inside the doors (floor tiled) you will enter the lobby facing south. Directly to the left of the door is the Bell Stand. In the center of the lobby is a circle of chairs in a carpeted area. To the right is an elevator that will take you down to the concourse level. Beyond that towards the south is a glass partition that separates the lobby and the escalator down to the concourse
The hotel registration desk is located to your front left (east). On the other opposite (south) side of the lobby is the restaurant, (Fifteen-Fifty) and toward the west side of the lobby Sheraton Links – small "business" center with computers and printers. Between the restaurant and links is a meeting area with chairs, tables and chess/checker games on the tables. At the back of the meeting area is the Fifteen-Fifty bar.
On the west side of the lobby is a door to 16th street. Just before the door on your right is Mix – an indoor/outdoor bar.
At the south end of the Registration Desk is a small lobby area (east) that has an ATM machine on the left wall and on the right (south) wall are restrooms. All public restrooms in the hotel have motion sensors and automatic flush. The water spigots in the sinks have motion sensors at the base that will turn the water on. Towel dispensers are motion sensed and manual.

After checking in – turn north and walk to the end of the registration desk (at the end is the Concierge Desk. To your left is the Bell Stand. The hall turns east. Continue east and on your left you will pass the Gift Shop, the Business Center (sales). Just beyond the business center there is a hallway/elevator lobby

on your left. If you continue walking east, you will encounter carper – you have just gone past the elevator lobby.

There are 6 elevators – 3 cars on each side of the lobby. The call button is located between the first and second car on each side.

Elevators –

To go up beyond the second floor of the both the plaza and tower buildings you will need your room key to access the elevators. Card access is not required to go down to Second floor, Lobby, Convention Center, or parking deck. The card swipe is located on the right side of the elevator car above the floor button call panel.

Your room card will access elevators in both Plaza and Tower.

The Plaza and Tower are connected by the Concourse (Convention Center) at the basement level under both buildings.

With a few exceptions of tile (specified later) the primary floor covering is carpet. All 'programmed' music is the same throughout the lobby and concourse.

In the Plaza there is one set of escalators in the back of the lobby across from the Registration Desk that go down to the concourse level.

Toilets – in the public restrooms in the hotel the toilets have a motion sensor automatic flush function and the water spigot at the sink have a sensor under the spout to dispense water.   Most paper towel dispensers are manual. Soap dispensers, located on the right of the sink are plunger type.

Plaza Elevators – located left off of the hallway left of the registration desk. The hallway, like the lobby is tile. When you encounter carpet you have just passed the elevator "lobby"

There are six elevators – three on each side of the 'lobby' and the call button is located between the first and second elevator on each side as you approach from the main hallway.

Once on the elevator there is a card swipe located on the right side of the elevator as you look out. It is located approximately 60 inches and just above the control panel. You must swipe your room card to go above the 2nd floor and anytime you plan to go up between the second and eight floors. You do not need to swipe the card to go down to the second or first floor or concourse.

The button (all Braille) pattern on the elevator from the top rows down
6-7-8
3-4-5
C-L-2
Blank – space – blank
Space – blank – space
Open Door– space – Close Door

There is an elevator across from the Registration desk that serves the concourse, and parking deck located under the concourse level.

Plaza Guest Rooms – hallways.

With the exception of the fifth floor, the hallway pattern for all floors is a square with guest rooms on both sides of the hall. As you exit the elevator lobby the hallway will go left (numbers ascend from X00) with even numbers on your right (inside of the square) and odd numbers on your left – there are some exceptions. For the sake of orientation this hallway is east/west and intersects a north/south hallway. There is an emergency staircase on your left just before you get to the corner of the two intersecting

hallways. Across from the emergency stairs on the inner hall is the ice machine. The north/south hallway has numbers generally X14 to X39. There is now another intersection of an east/west hallway with numbers X40 to X63. There is an emergency stairway on the outside wall about a quarter of the way down the hall. At the end of the hall is a north/south intersecting hallway. There is an ice machine at this intersection – setback in a small alcove – and an emergency stairway. The north/south hall numbers generally are X66 to X 91 where it intersects the original east/west hall and back to the elevator lobby. All rooms are Braille label approximately 60 inches on the wall on the same side as the doorknob. There are ice machines located at the NE corner (near room X14) and the SW corner (near room X 64) (Pepsi venue) $2.50 each and an ice machine. Put your ice bucket under the plastic spout. Push and hold the activator button (to the right of the dispenser).

Tower Access
Katie Mullen's, Guest Rooms, Spa, Pool, Salad Bowl, Service Animal Relief area,
Use the Plaza elevators and go down to the Concourse. As you exit the elevator lobby (facing north) you will come to a wall. Turn right (west) and walk to the end of the wall – turn right (north) and walk straight. This is part of the concourse, all carpeted and very little landmarks. You will come to a wall. Stay to the right and you will come to a hallway that is the elevator lobby for the Towers. There are 6 elevators, four on the north wall (the call button is between #2 and #3). There are two elevators on the South wall, one each, east and west of the exit hall.
The button (all Braille) pattern on the elevator from the top rows down

21-22
18–19-20
15-16-17
11-12-14
8-9-10
5-6-7
S (street)-2-M
B3 (parking)- C
Open Door – Close Door

The elevators stop in the center of the hallways that has an east/west configuration. There is an emergency stair at the end of each end of the hall. Even numbered rooms are on the north side and odd numbered rooms are on the south side. X00 is located at the west and X86 at the east end.
Across from the main elevators is a small room (south side) with a soda vending machine (Pepsi venue) $2.50 each and an ice machine. Put your ice bucket under the plastic spout. Push and hold the activator button (to the right of the dispenser).

Room Information
To unlock the door, insert the card in the slot. There is no sound to indicate if the card has deactivated the lock.

All rooms have wireless but there is a daily/weekly charge
Problems with connections – Tech Support is extension 6100

Breathe Clean Air – Our guest rooms are smoke free so all can enjoy fresh, clean air. If signs of smoking are found, a $200.00 cleaning fee will be charged.

Informational Tags – hang on outside door level

Peace and Quiet (Do not Disturb) 3X7

Coffee Maker – in some rooms the coffee maker is on the upper shelf on the desk, in some rooms (Plaza) it is located on a shelf the wall that is next to the bathroom
1.   Fill the 12 ounce cup with water, lift cover and pour inside
2.   Place a filter pod firmly into brewer basket – it will fit though it may seem to be too large. (For tea just add water)
3.   Turn the brewer on (toggle switch on front). Machine shuts off automatically after brewing. The pods are disposable but please don't throw away the brew basket.
Drink to your health – bottle water in room –compliments of Starwood preferred guests.

"Make a Choice" – 10 x 4 inches card – "you have the option to decline housekeeping service for the day. For helping us conserve natural resources, we are happy to offer you a $5.00 gift card for use at participating food and beverage (no alcohol) outlet within our hotel or 500 SPG (Starwood Preferred Guests) Starpoints redeemable at Checkout.
To Decline Housekeeping - Hang this cared on the outside door handle before 2 a.m. Program not offered on your day of departure.
For fresh linens – Place this card on you bed for fresh bed linens and leave towels on the floor that you want cleaned.

As you enter the room the closet is located behind the open door. The closet has 2 sliding mirrored doors. For rooms with single King beds the refrigerator is located in the closet. There is an ironing board hanging on the wall closest to the hallway.   The iron is located on the top shelf.
Across from the closet is the bathroom. Extra towels are located on a lower shelf under the sink next to the toilet. The water control in the tub/shower water control is a single lever that turns counter-clockwise to hot. The shower control is a lever located on the spindle of the water control.
On the wall beyond the closet is a small dresser (3 drawers) and then a desk and chair. There is a telephone on the desk. There is a light on the desk, has a circular base with a toggle on/off switch. The base of the lamp also has an electrical outlet.
Across from the desk is the bed(s). If two beds there is a night table with telephone between the beds as well as on either side of the bed. If a single room there will be night tables on either side.
The outside wall is windowed with double curtains, the outside curtain eliminates outside light and the inside curtain is a decorative sheer. The curtains are open/closed with a pull rod.

Telephones in Rooms
There are two telephones in each room. One is located on the desk and the other is located on the nightstand between the beds if there are two queen beds or on the night stand closest to the door if the room has a king bed.
The phone has 2 communications lines
On the telephone pad from top down
First row - five buttons - Left to Right
Voice Mail – Room Service – Guest Services – Reservations – Emergency
Followed by a standard telephone keypad with an additional button to the right
1-2-3 – blinking message waiting
4-5-6 – line 1
7-8-9 – line 2
Star- 0 – Pound sign - Hold

This is followed by two rows of five buttons the first row closest to the numeric key pad all being useless
The bottom row from left to right

No function – Handset Volume – Redial – Mute – Speaker Phone

Hotel Communications via telephone

Room to Room
Tower - Floors 5-9 dial 7 plus room number, Floors 10-22 dial room number
Plaza – dial 3 plus room number
Local area – 9 plus 303 plus telephone number
Long Distance – 9 plus 1 plus area code plus number
International - 9 plus 011 plus country code plus city code plus number
Toll Free – 9 plus 1 plus toll-free number
Operator (not hotel) Assistance 9 plus 0
Credit Card – 9 plus 0 plus area code plus telephone number
Emergency 9 plus 911

Television – there is a 42-inch plasma screen on the wall opposite of the bed. The remote control has a rounded and blunt end. The rounded end is pointed toward the screen to activate.
Power – near the top of the remote
Menu – on the upper left side – this will set up various menus but there is no voice over for each option.
Volume – about mid remote on the left side
Channel – about mid remote on the right side.

There is also a radio in the room but it seems to be a bit limited. (will orient to radio if requested)

Pool – located on the 5th floor of the Towers just west of the elevator lobby on the North side.

Fitness Center – located on the street level of the Towers. Turn east from the elevator lobby and you will feel a down slope. On your right is a set of stairs going up to the second level. Turn left (North) and you will encounter 4 steps (up) continue North to the end of the hall. Turn right (east) and on your left is the door. You need your room key to access.

Service Animal Relief area – located at the street level of the Tower Building. From the elevator lobby at the street level turn east and walk to the end of the hall. Turn right (south) and you will locate an exit door. Just off of the walk is the relief area. This area is a closed drive. A trashcan is available for disposal.

Conference Area.
With the exception of a couple of meeting rooms (Director's Meeting Room – see below) on the first floor of the Plaza Building, all conference activity – concurrent, plenary, poster session and exhibit hall will take place on the concourse level below the Tower and Plaza Buildings.
The conference area consist of:
Exhibit Foyer (120 feet by 175 feet)
The Plaza Ballroom (east side) of the Exhibit Foyer.
Meeting rooms:
Plaza Court (1-2-3-4 and 5 east to west) located on the South wall of the Exhibit Foyer.
Plaza Court (8-7-6 east to west) next to the escalator/stairwell on the north side of the Exhibit Foyer
Governor's Square – an east/west hallway to the north of the Exhibit Foyer with meeting rooms 9-10-11-12 (east to west) on the south side of the hall, and 17-16-15-14 (west to east) on the north side of the hall.

To access Plaza Court 1-2-3-4&5 travel south along the outside of the Plaza Ballroom and at the end of the Ballroom, turn right (west). The meeting rooms are on your left beginning with #1. Please note that there may be sofa/chairs along the wall. The entrance is a single set of double doors per room.

From the Lobby – at the south end of the lobby at the entrance to the restaurant turn right (west) and walk toward the 16th Street Exit. There is no landmark other than the sound of the escalator on the right (north) side of the lobby. There is carpet as you approach the elevators on your right. On both sides (north/south) of the elevators are standard stairs. At the base of the escalator/stairs you will be in the Exhibit Foyer and across from the Plaza Ballroom

From Plaza Guest Rooms
Take the elevators to "C" and as you exit the elevator lobby turn north and as you walk out of the elevator lobby turn left (west). If you walk straight you will enter the Governor's Square Hallway. If you stay to the left as you exit the elevator lobby you will enter the Exhibit Foyer area on the east side near the Plaza Ballroom.

From Towers Guests Rooms
Take the elevator to "C" and as you exit the elevator lobby (south) keep to the right to avoid the parking garage elevators. Maintaining a straight line of travel, the first hallway to your right (west) is the Governor's Square Hall meeting rooms. Continuing south you will enter the Exhibit Foyer area at the corner of the Plaza Ballroom. To your right (west) is the escalator/stairs and to the right are Plaza 8-7-6 meeting rooms.

Director's Meeting Rooms - located on the first floor of Plaza Building. If when leaving the Registration Desk and lobby and going to the Plaza elevator, instead of turning left when encountering carpet, continue east. Director E will be on your left with the doors set back. Two sets of double doors (each end of the room) open out to the hall. Director F is next on your left with a single set of double doors. Passing a service entrance Director G is next on your left with a single set of double doors. At the end of the hall is Director H with a single set of doors. The hallway turns south – immediately on you left are exit doors to 15th Street. Continuing south the Director I has two sets of double doors at each end of the meeting room. At the very end of the hall is Director J with one set of double doors. Across from the exit doors to 15th Street are Women and Men's Restrooms.

Restrooms – on the first floor of the Plaza Building are two sets of restrooms. One is located in the ATM Lobby just south of the Hotel Registration Desk. As you turn left into the ATM Lobby the restrooms are on your right (south) with the Men then Women's. There is also a set of rooms in the back hall. Go past the Plaza elevator lobby to the end of the hallway, turn right (south) and the restrooms are immediately on your right, Women then Men.

At the Concourse level there are two sets of restrooms. We you exit the Plaza Building Elevator lobby in the Concourse and walk straight, without turning left into the Exhibit Foyer you will come to a wall. Trail the wall on the right and it will turn right. The first door on your right is the entrance to the Men's restroom. Continue trailing the wall and around the corner on your right is the Women's restroom. If you are traveling south along the outside of the Plaza Ballroom, at the end of the Ballroom is a hallway (that access to the ballroom on the left), and on the right are the restrooms. There is a common entrance - the Men's restroom is on the right and the Women's restroom is on the left.

Again, the toilets have a motion sensor automatic flush function and the water spigot at the sink have a sensor under the spout to dispense water.   Most paper towel dispensers are manual. Soap dispensers, located on the right of the sink are plunger type.

Restaurants
There are 3 restaurants on the Hotel property – all of which will bill to your room.

Fifty-Fifty – located on the south side of the hotel lobby. The entrance is to the right of the ATM lobby located at the south end of the hotel registration desk. There is a host/hostess to meet you and take you to your table. There is a breakfast buffet or you can order off the menu. In the morning there is also a coffee and pastry special the host/hostess will assist with.

Salad Bowl – located at the street level on the Towers Building. As you get off the elevator, turn east and walk to the end of the hall. Turn right and trail the wall to locate the door to the Salad Bowl. Create or build your own salad service.

Katie Mullen's Irish Restaurant and Pub - located at the street level of the Towers Building. You can access it from the elevator lobby in the Towers building.   Turn west and follow the hallway on your right. You will come into Katie Mullen's in the back door and sometimes, especially in the evening, there will be a host/hostess, and if not, go in, turn left and follow the sounds of the patrons. Ask!

ATM's
One ATM is located in the small lobby on your left just past the hotel registration desk.
An ATM is located at the Street Level in the Towers Building in the east end, near the stairs that lead to the fitness center.

ROOM SERVICE
Tea and Coffee (Pre-Ordered Breakfast Room Services)
Hang Tag but may be called in (Room Service – top line - second from left top) the night before – indicate you have a visually impairment and cannot fill out card
Indicate time to expect delivery - 15-minute intervals beginning at 6:00 a.m. up to 11:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (Noon)

Choices
American Breakfast - $19.50
Two Eggs: over easy, poached, scrambled, sunny-side up
Meat: bacon, sausage link, ham
Bread: toast (wheat or white), Danish, English muffin, muffin

Deluxe Continental Breakfast- $14.00
- Served with assorted pastries, fresh fruit and your choice of milk, juice and beverage.
- Blueberry–or-Golden Griddle Pancakes - $18.50
- Served with whipped butter, warm maple syrup and your choice of milk, juice and beverage.
- Hot oatmeal with caramelized apples and sun dried raisin compote – or – choice of cold cereals – Served with you choice of milk, juice and beverage $16.00
- Wheaties, Total Raisin Bran, Country Corn Flakes or Cheerios

Beverages: Coffee, decaf or assorted teas, Milk – 2 percent, skim,
Juice – orange, grapefruit, apple, cranberry, V8

A La Carte
- Sides: Fruit or berry yogurt - $6.50, Seasonal fruit and berry cup - $8.00
- Freshly brewed Starbucks Coffee: Small pot of coffee [regular or decaf]- $5.00, large pot of coffee - $8.50
- Tea – assorted - $4.00
- Milk – 2 percent or skim - $3.00
- Juice (glass) Orange, apple, V8, cranberry or grapefruit – $4.00

ROOM SERVICE – on demand – For In-Room Dining call 59

Energize Your Day - Breakfast (6:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)
- Hot oatmeal $9.00 - Caramelized green apples, sun dried raisin compote
- Cereal Favorites - $8.00 - Choose from an array of classics or crunchy granola, seasonal berries or sliced bananas
- Smoothie $8.00: Banana, Strawberry, or Pineapple – blended with low-fat yogurt and honey.
- Bounty of Fruit and Berries - $10.00 Seasonal selection of the market best
- Seasonal Berry and Fruit Parfait - $11.00 Served tiered with flaxseeds and all natural granola.

Feeling Great
- Breakfast Sliders - $12.50 Scrambled eggs, cheddar cheese, crisp bacon on toasted brioche buns
- Egg whites, spinach, cheddar cheese omelet - $14.00 White cheddar cheese lace with over-cured tomatoes, fruit selection or crisp golden hash brown potatoes.
- Griddled buttermilk blueberry pancakes - $14.50 Warm maple syrup and whipped butter.

Morning Glory
- Chef's Omelet - $14.00 Three eggs packed with cured ham, sautéed sweet onions, aged Swiss and white cheddar, serve with crisp golden hash brown potatoes and toast.
- Grilled Ham and Eggs - $13.00 Crisp golden brown hash brown potatoes and choice of toast or with bacon or sausage, if you like.
- Farm Fresh Scramble Eggs and Bacon Quesadilla - $14.00 - Jack cheese, guacamole, salsa and sour cream.
- Hot Iron Griddle Belgian Waffle - $14.50 Golden deep-pocketed waffle, whipped cream, warm maple syrup and strawberries.

The Side Plate
- Toasted Bagel with Philadelphia Cream Cheese (low fat or regular) $5.50
- A Big Bowl of Berries - $8.00 A bright mix of seasonal favorites
- The Bakery Basket - $6.50 A buttery croissant, daily muffin, your choice of English muffin, sourdough, multi-grain, rye or white toast with jam, hone and butter.
- Crisp Golden Hash Brown Potatoes – $6.00
- A Cup of Low Fat Fruit Yogurt - $6.50
- Berries or Fruit
- Crispy Smoked Bacon, Breakfast Links or Grilled Ham - $6.50

We'll Fill Your Cup
- Fresh Brewed Starbucks' Coffee - Regular or Decaffeinated Small $5.00, Large $8.50

- Hot Tea $4.00 - Choose from our selection of Tazo Tea
- Juice - $.4.00 - Orange, Grapefruit, apple, cranberry or tomato
- Milk - $3.00 - Non-fat, 2 percent, whole, soy or chocolate

Dinner – 5:00 p.m. – Midnight

Openers
- 13 Wings $11.00 - Tossed in hot sauce with celery batons and blue cheese dip
- Field of Greens - $8.00 - Tender baby lettuce, tomato, cucumber and your choice of dressing
- Home Style Chicken Noodle Soup - $7.00 Egg noodles in herbed broth with carrots, onions and celery
- Crispy Calamari - $12.00 Lightly breaded, served with tartar and cocktail sauce

Classic Sandwiches
Sandwiches served with choice of French Fries or fruit and berry composition

- Flame Grilled Burger - $15.50 - Half pound patty, aged cheddar, tomato and lettuce
- Three-tiered Roasted Turkey Club - $15.50 -Bacon, lettuce and tomato on toasted bread of your choice.
- Market Vegetable Wrap - $15.50 - Spinach, roasted Portobello, asparagus, red pepper, tomato, soft mozzarella, arugula, and basil pesto in a whole-wheat tortilla

Santa Fe Grilled Chicken Quesadilla - $17.00 - Spicy pepper jack cheese, guacamole, fresh salsa and sour cream.

Main Course
- Penne Pasta, Italian Sausage and Broccoli - $20.00 - Spinach, cured Roma tomato, garlic and parmesan
- Grilled Chicken Breast Cutlets - $23.50 - Parmesan tossed asparagus, blistered red pepper sauce and brown rice pilaf
- Crispy Batter Cod Fish - $19.00 Zesty tartar sauce, lemon and sea-salted fries
- Roasted Salmon Fillet - $26.00 - Mustard chive sauce, crispy vegetables and potato hash
- Fire Grilled Center Cut New York Sirloin - $32.00 White cheddar whipped potatoes and garlic herb butter
- Stone Fired Pizza - $18.00 - Choose three toppings – caramelized onions, sausage, fresh mozzarella, tomatoes or basil

Great Finishes
- Warm Double-Chocolate Pecan Brownie a la Mode - $8.50 - Laced with caramel sauce, vanilla ice cream
- New York Style Cheese Cake - $8.50 - Raspberry sauce, whipped cream
- Field Strawberries - $8.50 - Lemon glazed cake, whipped cram and dark chocolate curls
- Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream - $8.00 - Choose from French vanilla, strawberry or frozen vanilla yogurt

Create Your Own Greenery – select the protein and dressing for your salad
- Traditional Cobb Salad – chopped lettuce, tomato, avocado, blue cheese and bacon
- Caesar Salad – tossed with traditional dressing, shaved Parmesan cheese and garlic croutons

Main Ingredients - Grilled Chicken - $16.50, Grilled Steak $17.00, Seared Salmon - $17.00

Dressings – Champagne Vinaigrette, Blue Cheese, Low Fat Ranch, classic Caesar or Balsamic Vinaigrette

Welcome to the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel

Appendix E: Draft Work with National Federation of the Blind

The following material was drafted by Chris Danielsen, NFB

Access to Electronic Books for Students with Print Disabilities

Throughout most of human history, access to written information has been one of the greatest challenges faced by the blind. In fact, until the invention of Braille, lack of access to written knowledge probably played the largest role in the isolation of the blind from the rest of society. While most people gained previously-unheard-of levels of access to information with the invention of the printing press in the mid-1400s—sparking nothing less than a revolution that allowed even those in the humblest of material circumstances to learn to read and write—Braille did not come along until nearly four hundred years later. The introduction of sound recording later allowed the production of audio books, the first of which were specifically designed for blind users. But neither the introduction of Braille nor the creation of Talking Books gave blind readers, or other readers with print disabilities, full access to the scope of printed material available to the rest of the general public. E-books have the potential to allow the blind and others with print disabilities to gain full access to the printed word, but this will only happen if e-books and the applications and devices used to read them are well designed; if public institutions that plan to use e-books demand accessibility; and if public policy affirms the right of the blind and others with print disabilities to have full and equal access.

Current Access to Books for the Blind

When Braille was invented in the early 1820s, it offered blind people, for the first time in history, the ability to read books independently and without difficulty. The code is still indispensable to blind people as a means of obtaining literacy and gaining access to information. But mass production of Braille books has always been problematic. In the beginning, each copy of a Braille book had to be transcribed by hand. Braille presses were developed in the early twentieth century and allowed multiple copies of Braille volumes to be made, but the text first had to be hand-transcribed onto the metal plates that were used to press the dots into paper. Today, computer software can translate text into Braille, so production is quicker and easier, but hard-copy Braille still has limitations. It is not as compact as print, so a single novel may take several Braille volumes—each the size of a conventional print dictionary—to reproduce.

Beginning in the 1930s, blind Americans also obtained access to literature through Talking Books—the first unabridged audio books. For eighty years, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress (NLS) has distributed Braille

books and Talking Books through its network of cooperating libraries. A special postal exemption allows these materials to be sent for free through the U.S. mail to blind patrons throughout the country.

Digital technology has certainly made it easier for the blind to access the specialized Braille and audio books that NLS and other entities have made available. For over a decade now, devices that can store Braille electronically and reproduce it on refreshable electronic displays have been available to the blind. This means that a Braille book can be distributed in a single electronic file—downloadable from the Internet—rather than in two or more bulky Braille volumes. The NLS has taken advantage of this fact, and its patrons have been permitted to download Braille books since refreshable Braille devices became widely available. NLS is also in the process of digitizing its Talking Book collection and making it available for download as well. So blind people have, in a sense, been using e-books longer than any other segment of the general public. But these e-books are converted into Braille or audio from the original print books, so they still take time to produce. Furthermore, refreshable Braille technology is still very expensive and out of the financial reach of many blind readers. Stand-alone Braille displays start at around $1,500, and devices that also have some of the functions available on a PDA or laptop computer— commonly called "Braille notetakers"—sell for up to $6,500. Digital Talking Book players can be purchased for $300 to $500 or borrowed from NLS for free, but Talking Books are often not as useful for research and reference.

The biggest problem with the specialized Braille and audio materials available to blind people, however, is that they still cannot be produced in large numbers. The NLS is a government agency, and most of the other entities that produce books for the use of blind people are nonprofit corporations staffed largely by volunteers. NLS produces around two thousand books a year. Of these, six hundred are Braille titles. Learning Ally, formerly Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic, which is probably the nation's leading provider of accessible textbooks, claims to have around 65,000 titles in its entire library. A few popular commercial titles are available as commercial audio books. But even adding these to the equation, it is estimated that only about 5 percent of the books published each year become available in formats that blind readers can use. In short, the very limited access that blind and print-disabled readers have to the printed word means that new solutions are needed.

The Unrealized Potential of Commercial E-books

Commercial e-books represent a potential but as-yet-unrealized solution to the problem of access to books by the blind. E-books are really just computer files—collections of 0s and 1s—that can be translated by computers and other devices into any desired medium. Most computer file formats can be easily translated into accessible media for the blind by text-to-speech technology, Braille displays, magnification software, and the like. The primary factors that have prevented the e-book revolution from becoming a road to access to books by blind readers are: (1) the use of file formats that cannot be read by the technologies that are used by the blind; (2) digital rights management (DRM) security schemes that prevent such technology from accessing these files; and (3) proprietary e-book reading software or devices that cannot be used by the blind. All of these factors are entirely within the control of e-book publishers or device manufacturers, but with a few notable exceptions publishers and manufacturers have not prioritized accessibility. Barnes and Noble's Nook and Nook Study, the Sony Reader, and books from Adobe Digital Editions can't be used by blind readers at all (although Adobe has promised accessibility). Even when the text of a book is made available to text-to-speech software, important features like the ability to navigate to a specific page, paragraph, sentence, or word; to create electronic bookmarks; to annotate the text and share one's annotations; and to access charts, diagrams, and embedded multimedia features, may not be available to blind readers. Amazon's Kindle 3 and Kindle for PC are perfect examples of this problem; while books can be read aloud via a text-to-speech engine, there is no navigation capability, so the feature is only really useful if a reader intends to read a book straight through from beginning to end. (The Kindle, Kindle 2 and Kindle DX are completely useless to blind readers, since the menus for the device are not voiced as they are on the Kindle 3 or the accessible version of the PC application.) The inability to navigate a book's contents and lack of access to other advanced features are particularly problematic with electronic textbooks, the fastest-growing sector of the e-book market. Thus e-books, which hold the potential to allow truly equal access by the blind to all printed information, are in serious danger of becoming an even-greater barrier to such access.

There are some signs of improvement in the situation. CourseSmart, a major provider of electronic textbooks, has introduced accessible versions of its materials and an accessible Web-based reader. The Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) publishing standard, already used by NLS and others to create text and audio books with enhanced features like the ability to navigate through the book by chapter, section, and page, shows promise as a template that e-book producers can modify and use to create books that can easily be read by the blind. Apple's iBook application allows the blind to read books from the company's iBook store using the VoiceOver feature that is included on the iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch. iBooks include the capability for a blind reader to navigate by character, word, and line; to access a specific chapter or section from the table of contents; to look up a selected word in the dictionary; and to access footnotes or end notes. Images can even be described for blind users if proper alternative text is

added by the book's publisher. While none of these solutions are perfect, they are important for blind readers and provide evidence that designing accessible e-books and e-book readers is possible and practical.

Law and Public Policy

Colleges and universities are covered by the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. These laws require institutions of higher education to make their programs accessible to students with disabilities. In response to concerns raised and litigation initiated by groups advocating on behalf of blind individuals, the United States Department of Justice and the Department of Education informed all university presidents in the United States in a [letter](#) dated June 29, 2010, that their legal obligations include making sure that electronic textbooks and e-book readers are accessible to the blind and students with other print disabilities. The letter followed settlements reached with several universities that had been using Amazon's Kindle DX, which is not accessible to blind students, in the classroom. The letter described the settlement agreements, in which "the universities agreed not to purchase, require, or recommend use of the Kindle DX, or any other dedicated electronic book reader, unless or until the device is fully accessible to individuals who are blind or have low vision, or the universities provide reasonable accommodation or modification so that a student can acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as sighted students with substantially equivalent ease of use."   The letter spelled out the guiding legal principle as follows: "Requiring use of an emerging technology in a classroom environment when the technology is inaccessible to an entire population of individuals with disabilities â€' individuals with visual disabilities â€' is discrimination prohibited by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) unless those individuals are provided accommodations or modifications that permit them to receive all the educational benefits provided by the technology in an equally effective and equally integrated manner."

Conclusion

It is important for the academic and research communities to urge educational institutions, libraries, and other entities to procure accessible e-books and e-book readers in order to ensure that all students benefit from this emerging technology. Accessibility of e-books and readers will continue to increase if the academic community demands access. For this reason, the

authors of this report recommend adoption of the attached resolution by the American Sociological Association.

Draft Resolution for the American Sociological Association

WHEREAS, the ability to read is critical to living a well-informed personal and professional life; and

WHEREAS, blindness and some other disabilities pose challenges to accessing all available written information fully and efficiently; and

WHEREAS, text-to-speech and Braille technology have helped to remove these access barriers for the approximately thirty million blind and otherwise print-disabled people living in the United States; and

WHEREAS, many educational institutions have explored or are exploring the possibility of electronic textbooks and mobile access to electronic book information; and

WHEREAS, access to electronic books and other electronic educational materials may therefore become increasingly critical to the study of and professional advancement in many fields, including sociology; and

WHEREAS, the civil rights offices of the United States Department of Justice and the United States Department of Education have reminded educational institutions of their obligations to use accessible technology in order to provide equal benefits and services to their disabled students; and

WHEREAS, while a few e-reading applications and devices, such as the Apple iBooks application for its iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad devices, take advantage of text-to-speech and Braille technology to deliver the content of commercially available e-books to the blind and others with print disabilities, and other providers of e-reading solutions are promising to provide access, many such devices and applications, such as the Sony Reader and Barnes and Noble Nook, are still inaccessible to the blind and print-disabled, and some publishers are still resistant to allowing this population to access e-books; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the American Sociological Association that this organization urge all government procurement agencies, schools, institutions of higher education, and libraries to exercise diligence in complying with technology-procurement requirements and state and federal disability nondiscrimination laws and to insist that mobile e-book readers and e-books procured for use by such institutions are accessible to blind and print-disabled students, faculty, and researchers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization urge all e-book reader developers and content providers to allow equal access by the blind and others with print disabilities to the interfaces of their e-readers and to the content of e-books; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization commends those providers of e-books and e-book readers that have incorporated accessibility for the blind and others with print disabilities in their products and services.