American Folklore Society
Guidelines for Accessible Presentations

AFS strives to ensure that all meeting participants have equal opportunities to engage in and contribute to its Annual Meeting. Everyone benefits when we change how we think about – and act on – issues of access and equity. The field of folklore offers tools for social justice, one of which is our own meetings. As a step towards equitable access, AFS has developed the following guidelines for conference presenters to follow in order to make their work more accessible to all. AFS asks all presenters to read and follow these guidelines and to ask for assistance if needed.

**Inclusive Presenting:**

- **Check pathways in the room.** Space within each conference room has been left for persons who use wheelchairs or motorized vehicles. Please keep pathways clear and if you have rearranged chairs, make sure space is left so that all may enter and participate.
- **Let people know who you are.** It helps most participants when we wear name tags where they can be easily read, or place name cards on the table, or both.
- **Welcome everybody.** At the start, take a moment to welcome people to the presentation and encourage all to make themselves comfortable in the room, e.g., “Feel free to sit, stand, put your feet up, knit, leave and return, move to a better vantage point, or do what you need to do to be at ease in this space and get the most out of the session, while being mindful of others’ possibly different needs.”
- **Encourage feedback.** – “If something is not right, please stop me.”
- **Position yourself where you are clearly lit.** Seeing your facial expressions helps people fully understand your message.
- **If there is a microphone, use it.** Test your mic – “How is the volume?” If possible, practice using the microphone beforehand to be sure you are positioned so that your voice is being amplified adequately. Be alert to any cues from the audience that your voice may be too soft, too loud, or muffled. Since microphones do not pick up comments or questions from the audience, repeat the question or statement before answering/responding, pass the microphone, or ask people to step up to it. Remind participants to say their name before speaking. If your presentation is better done in a small circle or semi-circle and you cannot use the microphone, take the time for a communications check-in with those in the room.
- **Face forward.** Turning away from those in front of you reduces what the mic can pick up. Try to keep your face visible, as some people lipread to supplement access to the spoken word. If you need to look back or at a screen, pause for a second or two.
- **Offer print “access copies” of your paper.** Give, or ask a fellow presenter to distribute, copies to anyone who requests a copy, without asking why. If you want the copies back at the end of the session, say that while distributing and indicate it on the paper copies. Bring a few copies in 12 pt font and at least one copy in 18 pt font for use during your session.
- **Pace your presentation.** Recognize that communicating effectively with your full audience may require a little extra time and plan the length of your presentation text accordingly. Try to avoid reading a text straight through. Pause, look up, and gauge audience reaction. Seeing your face helps people follow your presentation, and cues from the audience will help you know if you are communicating clearly.
- **Describe images.** While you are presenting, incorporate description of images, graphs, or charts. For example, “this graph shows the increase of xyz to the level of . . .” or “this photo of hundreds of marchers reflects . . .” If you have text on a slide, read it.
• **Pay attention to sound levels.** Especially in conference rooms with thin partitions, be mindful that the volume of sound from a mic or audio or video presentation may interfere with the ability of those in adjacent rooms to hear their presenter. When not using the projector, turn it off. This reduces background noise.

**Working with American Sign Language interpreters:** Professional interpreters will ask for materials to review; when possible, AFS staff will contact presenters as needed to arrange advance review of materials. Sharing your paper, outline or other content helps the interpreting team correctly spell names of people and places and accurately convey your message. A team of two interpreters may switch off during your presentation. Usually, this requires no change of pace or special attention. Try not to walk in front of the interpreter or block the sightline between the interpreter and Deaf participants/presenters. During exchanges always talk directly to the Deaf individual, not the interpreter. Remember that the interpreters are there for everyone; their job is to facilitate two-way communication for hearing and Deaf people. Sign language interpreters usually stand/sit either next to the presenter or in a sight line so that Deaf participants can see both the interpreter and the presenter(s). Presenters, working with Deaf participants and the interpreting team, should ensure that this line of vision remains clear. Conversely Deaf presenters will work with interpreters to ensure they can see both the interpreter and audience members.

**Showing Films:** Be sure to communicate with conference planners if you are screening a film as part of your presentation. If the film is not captioned, careful lighting arrangements should be made in advance so that Deaf participants can clearly see the interpreter and lighting does not flood the film screen. Also, work with the conference planning team so that you (or a conference team member) are prepared to provide audio description if requested. If you are using brief clips of films, provide information on what will be seen before hitting “play.”

**For PowerPoint slides use:**
- high contrast color scheme (white or light background with black text or the reverse)
- templated slide format
- san-serif font, such as Arial, and maintain a large font size (20+ point)
- minimal text on each slide

**In addition to technical equipment, bring the following with you:**
- Memory stick with any audio and visual materials you need. Do not depend upon being able to access the internet during your presentation.
- Print copies (12 pt font) of your paper or presentation outline for audience members who can more easily follow the presentation if they can both listen and read it. Feel free to add the disclaimer, “Please do not distribute without permission of the author” and/or “Please return at the end of the session.”
- A large-print copy (18 pt or larger) for anyone requiring larger font size for easy reading.
- A copy of your paper for any interpreting team. This will help the team accurately convey your message. Note that you may be asked in advance for documents to help the interpreting process.

Access is always a work in progress. Ways to accommodate differences in learning styles, language use, and ability are constantly evolving with new technology, innovation, and shared knowledge. Feedback on these guidelines is sincerely welcome.

(Version of August 2018. Accessibility committee: Patricia Sawin, Jean Bergey, Andrea Kitta, Phyllis May-Machunda, Jodi McDavid, Anand Sw. Prahlad. Send communications to sawin@unc.edu)