## Accessibility at the 2018 ASTR/TLA Conference

ASTR strives to create an inclusive and accessible conference environment for all attendees. The first step in generating this atmosphere is planning for access and communication. The Executive Committee (EC) and Committee on Conferences (CoC) therefore encourages all conference attendees to communicate requests for accommodation through their conference registration form. You are also welcome to email these requests directly to the Vice President for Conferences (vpconferences@astr.org). Please try to communicate any requests by six weeks prior to the conference so that we can work to provide seamless access once you arrive.

In the interest of an inclusive conference environment, in 2016 the CoC established a Subcommittee for Conference Accessibility. This Subcommittee created the Best Practices Guide below that offers suggestions for organizing and creating conference presentations that are accessible and welcoming to all members. Please review these suggestions and incorporate them into your conference presentation and session planning.

## Best Practices for Creating
## Accessible Conference Presentations[1]

The Society for Disability Studies at the University of Buffalo offers two foundational guiding principles: "think access, model access" and "foster community, strive to connect."[2] ASTR's Subcommittee for Conference Accessibility encourages all conference attendees to embrace both principles as we plan the 2018 conference in San Diego. We hope this document supports you in that effort.

### Room Set-Up: Meetings, Discussion, Presentation
- Reach out to participants and inquire about accommodation requests
- Maintain barrier-free path(s) to and inside the room, and ensure that cables and cords do not obstruct pathways.
- When possible, make sure all aisles are at least 38" or wider and meeting room tables are 36" or higher.
- Provide a ramp to dais/podium if presenter has a physical disability.
- Leave space near the podium/speaking area for sign language interpreters. Reserve seating for participants who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Remove chairs from various locations to create space for participants who use wheelchairs.
- Provide water for guide dogs and information on where dogs can be walked.
- Refrain from wearing perfume, cologne or other strongly scented products.

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[1] This guide was compiled by borrowing suggestions and language from the following resources: http://www.washington.edu/doit/lectures; http://www.disstudies.org/conferences/accessible-presentations; http://www.washington.edu/doit/group-workdiscussions; "Checklist for Planning Accessible Meetings and Events," Disability Resource Center, Washington, DC, https://www.transportation.gov/citizens/disability/checklist-planning-accessible-meetings-and-events
[2] "Accessible Conference Presentations." Society for Disability Studies. University of Buffalo. http://www.disstudies.org/conferences/accessible-presentations

### Presentations
- Provide audio description of visual images, charts and video/DVDs, and/or open or closed captioning of films and video clips
- Provide written materials in a variety of formats as requested by participants
- Control background noises as much as possible
- Enable electronic aids in the room, laptops for note-taking, or other devices
- Facilitate preferential seating for differently mobile individuals, including clear pathways into and through rooms; and for visually or aurally impaired individuals, for optimal listening, lip-reading and viewing
- Speak clearly, loudly, and at a moderate rate
- Have available hard copies of presentation materials; have available large font (17 pts or more) materials, as well. If you like, add a disclaimer: "Please do not distribute without the expressed permission of the author" and include your name and contact information
- Refrain from wearing perfume, cologne or other strongly scented products

### Designing PowerPoint Presentations
- Use a high contrast color scheme and a templated slide format
- Use a sans-serif font, such as Arial, and maintain a large font size
- Provide minimal text on each slide (only a few points)
- Incorporate audio description of all images, graphs, charts on your slides

### Organizing Working Sessions and Leading Discussions
- Reach out to participants and inquire about accommodation requests
- Establish clear ground rules for discussion. Participants with particular discussion needs are encouraged to reach out to session conveners before the conference.
- Allow for written questions
- Give clear descriptions of visual materials
- Control background noises as much as possible
- Paraphrase questions and answers and highlight key points throughout discussions
- Create options for electronic discussions, and/or multiple discussion formats and participation opportunities
- Circulate material to group members in advance, electronically
- Enable electronic aids in the room, laptops for note-taking, or other devices
- Facilitate preferential seating for differently mobile individuals, including clear pathways into and through rooms; and for visually or aurally impaired individuals, for optimal listening, lip-reading and viewing
- Clearly communicate expectations for presentation and/or participation of group and audience members in advance
- Speak clearly, loudly, and at a moderate rate. Use pauses to allow for processing time.
- If an audience member uses an interpreter, speak to the audience member, not the interpreter
- Indicate who is speaking, by gesturing

**Additional Resources**

Many of the suggestions above were borrowed from the online resources provided by the DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) Program at the University of Washington. See especially the page devoted to Accommodations: http://www.washington.edu/doit/resources/disabilities-and-accommodations/accommodations

Planning Accessible Meetings and Events: https://www.uwyo.edu/union/reservations/accessible_meetings_toolkit.authcheckdam.pdf

Checklist for Planning Accessible Meetings and Events. U.S. Department of Transportation, Disability Resource Center. https://www.transportation.gov/citizens/disability/checklist-planning-accessible-meetings-and-events

Removing Barriers: Planning Meetings that are Accessible to all Participants: http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/other-resources/NCODH_RemovingBarriersPlanningMeetings.pdf


Our membership, field, and conferences are rich with diversity. Therefore, like the Society for Disability Studies (SDS), ASTR's Subcommittee on Conference Accessibility invites you to "think about issues of privilege and injustice and to reflect on the inclusions and exclusions" as you begin preparing presentations and organizing conference sessions.[3]

ASTR's leadership to choose conference venues, develop programming, and provide resources that will allow all members to access the conference completely. We welcome your suggestions as we continue those efforts.

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[3] "Accessible presentations." http://www.disstudies.org/conferences/accessible-presentations