

2008 SSSP Access Committee Meeting Agenda
Thursday, July 31 from 10:30am – 12:10pm in the Holmes room.

Members: Liat Ben-Moshe (chair), Angela Wadsworth and Diane Gifford.

I. Formal access requests:

1. An attendee emailed Michele Koontz on 4/25 ~ "For your information, months ago I had made my hotel reservations knowing I needed a roll in shower. I surely hope I do not experience what I have at other conferences. I make my reservations and then when I sign in at the conference, the room with the roll in shower is not available and given to a more prominent individual." Michele informed Marlene that the hotel has 50+ accessible sleeping rooms and that we had reserved 5 for our meeting (2 rooms with a king size bed and a roll-in shower and 3 rooms with two double beds and a roll-in shower). Michele followed up with the hotel on 4/28 and was told that Marlene's reservation was all set.
2. On our registration form, there is a section entitled "Accessibility Services" where registrants with disabilities may request accessibility services such as sign language interpreters, sighted guides, accessible accommodations, etc. to facilitate their full participation at the meeting. Another attendee registered on 6/29 and requested a "wheelchair accessible room, roll-in shower, seat in shower, hand rails, if only one bed in the room will need a cot or rollaway for overnight PCA to sleep." Michele has asked the hotel to confirm that his request will be honored.

II. Outreach

Since we have received so few access requests in person, perhaps there is a better way to keep in touch with our attendees needs. This way we can also gauge how our suggestions in the access memo are actually operationalized, and whether people follow presentation guidelines that ensure access for all.

- We might need to consider administering a survey (online or at a meeting) by which we inquire about attendees satisfaction with accommodations and whether they feel fully included in SSSP conferences and activities.
- I want to also suggest in this lieu to perhaps collaborate more with the ASA office on access issues. (Liat: I believe they do not handle access requests very well as ASA usually hire a management company to coordinate their meetings. i could be wrong, but it has been my experience that such companies do not know how to handle access request beyond the absolutely legal requirements, if that)

III. Future conference and ensuring access

In the last committee meeting (2007) we suggested touring all the sites for future conferences with an eye for true accessibility for attendees. What we meant by this statement, is that often the rooms that are shown or the layout which is described or advertised are very different then the lived experience of using them. For instance, in last years conference at the Roosevelt hotel the wheelchair lifts worked only half the time... so just the fact that they are there and the hotel can proclaim accessibility, does

not mean it will be usable for wheelchair users in real time. What we suggested as a result at the 2007 meeting was to move from notions of compliance (with ADA for example) to notions of beyond compliance. What matters is how user friendly the spaces are for people with disabilities and other attendees, NOT how compliant the hotels are with existing laws. (if people are interested in the concept of beyond compliance check out my colleagues website at <http://bccs.syr.edu/>)

It was therefore **decided** that one of the ways to ensure full accessibility is to tour the hotel with an accessibility expert or gain information from a local CIL (center for independent living) or other local disability organization. Liat has contacted local organizations in Chicago, where the 2011 meeting will be held and sent any pertinent information to the organizing committee (specifically to Michele and Tom). Michele included the information was received from Robin Jones, Director of the DBTAC-Great Lakes ADA Center, University of Illinois at Chicago in the spreadsheet that was distributed to the Board of Directors. The Board ultimately selected The Blackstone, A Renaissance Hotel as our 2011 conference hotel.

- It would be great to gather any feedback from Michele or the board whether the information gathered from the local CIL was helpful at all in making a final decision about the location. Since this is the first year we have used this procedure it would be helpful for the committee to get any feedback about this process.

IV. Awards and access

We were contacted by the Lee Student Support fund as they had a student applying that requested increased travel support because they needed their personal assistant to attend the meeting. The committee decided to honor the request for the additional costs but to limit the award to travel costs as was done for all other applicants. This issue will be presented at the board meeting. The Lee committee will ask the board to develop a policy in this regard.

- The committee should discuss its stance on ensuring fairness in granting the awards while keeping in mind people's diverse needs.

V. Collaboration with the disability division

- We can potentially co-sponsor sessions or student paper competitions and so fourth.
- Another idea for collaboration with the disability division was raised last year and entails doing an analysis of the way disability is framed in social problems textbooks and perhaps the journal as well. If there is further interest in such a proposition it can be discussed in the disability division meeting perhaps.