

TO: SSSP Board of Directors

FROM: Saher Selod, Chair, SSSP, Accessibility Committee

RE: Committee Annual Report

DATE: July 15, 2015

This year the Accessibility Committee worked to ensure the 2015 SSSP meetings in Chicago are accessible to all who attend. We reviewed the 2014 survey results, which is summarized below. We also reviewed the Accessibility Guidelines before they were posted on the SSSP website and emailed to program participants. Finally, we worked with Michele Koontz on accommodating participant requests for the 2015 annual meeting in Chicago.

We received accommodation requests from six conference attendees for the 2015 SSSP conference in Chicago. Their requests were met by Michele Koontz with assistance from the Accessibility Committee. The requests include wheelchair accessibility and conference badges for partners who are accompanying attendees and assisting them. The Accessibility Committee's approved budget for 2015 is \$2500, which will go toward making sure the conference is accessible to all attendees.

On Friday, August 21<sup>st</sup> from 10:30-12:10 the Accessibility Committee (Room: Atlantic C) will hold an Accessibility Committee Informational Meeting, which will be open to any attendee who wants to share or discuss accessibility issues. Saher Selod will chair the meeting and chair-elect Fernando Rivera will be in attendance.

#### Accessibility Guidelines:

The Accessibility Guidelines were sent to all program participants and posted on the website. It included the following instructions for program participants:

1. Presenters must send copies of their papers to the session presider and/or discussant by June 30th to facilitate the accommodation of all.
2. Keep rooms accessible to all by moving chairs as needed and ensuring entryways are not constricted.
3. If you are a presenter, read any visual aids aloud and describe any illustrations or charts. Please request a microphone if your voice is quiet, and speak clearly.
4. If there are American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter(s) present, be sure the room lighting is not overly dim and that the interpreter can see the presenter and be seen by the audience.
5. If you use handouts, make several available in larger font format and have an electronic copy available.

6. Please do not wear scented products, smoke, or bring companion animals other than service animals into the conference space.

Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel will designate the men's restroom on the Atlantic Ballroom function space (Level One) as gender-neutral. Michele Koontz was inquiring if housekeeping would use unscented products in the bathrooms on the meeting room floors.

This was unanimously approved by the Accessibility Committee.

#### 2014 General Survey Results: Question about Accessibility

Question #30 on the General Survey asked participants for feedback (both challenges and positives) about accessibility issues at the 2014 Annual Conference in San Francisco. Below is a summary of the responses from program participants:

- Stairs are a problem for some participants. For example, the podium at the business meeting could have had a ramp for those with mobility issues.
- Some participants had a difficult time hearing at the business meeting and requested a microphone for audience members who make comments or ask questions.
- Program attendees requested scent-free hand soaps.
- Free Wi-Fi and complimentary breakfast for new members was appreciated.
- Some participants have issues with hearing loss and need voice amplification for all sessions and for participants to speak up.
- Sessions are too long and do not leave time in between for attendees to get food. This is a problem for anyone on medication or who needed to avoid low blood sugar levels.
- The comfort room was appreciated by some attendees.
- Affordability is an issue for participants. The hotel cost, registration fee and transportation costs is too much for many of the attendees.
- Hotel location can be problematic for some attendees if it is not close to the other meetings that occur at the same time as SSSP. If a shuttle or some other transportation service is not available, participants with a disability who are attending both ASA and SSSP may chose the ASA hotel instead.
- Reception needs to be wheelchair accessible.

- Presenters need to speak clearly and slowly so that attendees who have a hard time hearing and those who English is not their first language are able to understand the presenters.
- Survey should ask respondents if they have a disability with an option of "Choose not to share" on it. It might give us some good information. The survey could follow up the "yes" answers with questions about the type of disability in order to better accommodate all of the program attendees instead of just the ones who have audio or visual concerns.
- Participants appreciate multiple gender neutral restrooms at the hotel.

### Future Actions

The Accessibility Committee is grateful to Michele Koontz for her efforts with this committee. She is an invaluable member of SSSP and has provided members of the committee with guidance and advice throughout the year.

Some items that continue to need attention is making audio more accessible at the conference sessions. Program participants need to be reminded to speak loudly and clearly. Perhaps the presider of each session should get an additional email with the Accessibility Guidelines, stressing its importance. The conference could be more accessible if each session had the appropriate audio equipment and participants were encouraged to utilize them.

Program organizers should also continue to make sure the conference hotel is wheelchair accessible, including the rooms where there are receptions. They should also continue to secure multiple gender neutral bathrooms, something that participants appreciated last year.

Finally, the Accessibility Committee would like to discuss the possibility of including a question on the survey about disabilities to accurately assess needs.