

TO: SSSP Board of Directors

FROM: Fernando I. Rivera, Chair, SSSP, Accessibility Committee

RE: Committee Annual Report

DATE: July 15, 2016

This year the Accessibility Committee worked to ensure the 2016 SSSP meetings in Seattle are accessible to all who attend. We reviewed the 2015 Annual Meeting survey results, which are 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 2016 annual meeting in Seattle.

We received accommodation requests from six conference attendees for the 2016 SSSP conference in Seattle. Their requests were met by Michele Koontz with assistance from the Accessibility Committee. The requests included providing chairs with backs, accommodations for service dogs, wheelchair accessibility, fragrance free and chemical free spaces, accessible rooms for a walker, a lactation room, and conference badges for partners who are accompanying attendees and assisting them. The Westin Seattle Hotel has seven accessible sleeping rooms, five of which have been reserved for our attendees. The hotel also features many accessible entrances and all meeting spaces are accessible. In addition, SSSP offers the Comfort Zone, <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageid/1864>.

On Friday, August 19th from 10:30-12:10 the Accessibility Committee (Room: Cascade II) will hold its annual Accessibility Committee Meeting, which will be open to any attendee who wants to share or discuss accessibility issues. Fernando I. Rivera will chair the meeting and other members will be in attendance, Sara E. Green (Chair-Elect) and John D. Foster.

Accessibility Guidelines:

Each year after the annual meeting we send a survey out to our attendees. The following accessibility statement was published:

The SSSP strives to ensure that meeting facilities are accessible to all, including people with disabilities, health challenges, or other differences. If you had any accessibility difficulties or if you noted something that could be a problem for others, please share that information here. If you wish to inform us of some accommodation or access that worked particularly well, we would welcome that feedback as well. Also, please feel free to contact the Chair of the SSSP's Accessibility Committee, Fernando I. Rivera, Fernando.Rivera@ucf.edu, with your concerns.

The 2016 AM Accessibility Guidelines and Services page was created and posted on the SSSP website. (http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/665/Accessibility_Guidelines_and_Services/). A menu item was created as well (<http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/665/m/641>).

The Accessibility Guidelines read as follows:



CHECKLIST FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

SSSP strives to make our annual meeting as accessible as possible. The Accessibility Committee has developed written guidelines to maximize access for all program participants.

The guidelines are presented in full here:

<http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/pageid/1928/>

1. Presenters must send copies of their papers to the session president 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.
7. If you need accommodations in order to present your paper, or have any questions or concerns contact Fernando I. Rivera, Accessibility Committee Chair, fernando.rivera@ucf.edu and Michele Koontz, Administrative Officer & Meeting Manager, mkoontz3@utk.edu no later than June 30.

2015 General Survey Results: Question about Accessibility

Question #31 on the General Survey asked the following: The SSSP strives to ensure that meeting facilities are accessible to all, including people with disabilities, health challenges, or other differences. If you had any accessibility difficulties or if you noted something that could be a problem for others, please share that information here. If you wish to inform us of some accommodation or access that worked particularly well, we would welcome that feedback as well.

Below is a summary of the responses from program participants:

- Layout of hotel was weird though SSSP's signs were super helpful in accessing the building. Wish there were clearer maps, though again, that is something the hotel should have provided.
- Need to remind presenters that they should speak clearly and loud enough to project to the back of the room.
- The all-gender bathroom situation continues to need work. This year, the signage was poor. A white paper covered the "men" sign, with a women's restroom nearby, this became the default men's room. We need to create bigger signage, making 1 room (or 2 rooms that are right next to each other) an "all-gender" restroom with a short description as to why the space is there and matters.
- The walk-in showers at the Radisson Blu were perfect. Often stepping in and out of a shower tub is problematic. Accessibility rooms are often limited and bathroom designs are hospital like. This was one of my favorite features of the hotel.
- I will repeat here: PLEASE make sure future conference hotels don't have systematic fragrance dispersion. It would be great to have a fragrance/chemical free conference, altogether but at the very least the site shouldn't have perfume all throughout. I paid \$60 to attend 3 sessions out of the whole weekend, one of which was outside and one of which I only went to because it was off-site.
- I had hoped there would be real childcare available rather than just telling us to hire a babysitter through the hotel. It was a very unwelcome surprise to simply get an email with contact information for other people bringing kids in case we wanted to coordinate babysitters. Some sort of family reception or family playroom would have been helpful to actually make connections with other kids. I presented but basically felt I had no alternative but to skip most of the rest of the conference because childcare was so difficult and so expensive. It was very frustrating.
- Thanks for having the gender-neutral restroom available. I do note that the sign for this bathroom was removed a number of times, and apparently tossed on the floor, making it unclear which bathroom was the one so designated.
- I know that SSSP tries to organize child care options. I wish that this can be done a bit better.
- The Radisson Blu was a fabulous hotel at good rates negotiated by SSSP. It was a ways from the ASA at the Hilton, but I walked it twice.

- It was nice that you had the room we could go to relax, but I would note on Friday it was in a part of the hotel that had no Wi-Fi access.
- I am not a person who is hard of hearing, but I found at least half of the 16 sessions I attended were inaudible. No microphones were used, facilitators didn't attempt to repeat questions from the audience so all could hear, presenters didn't project their voices. If I were the organizer for this meeting, I would never let this happen again.
- The session rooms I was in were very cold.
- I liked seeing the gender neutral bathroom available.
- A colleague and I were going to attend back to back sessions in one large room with a microphone set up. Because the organizers/presiders of the two sessions did not ask people to use the sound system, we couldn't hear, and we left early and didn't return for the next session to be presided over by the same people.

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.