



Audio Description Association

Items 314-319

December 2019

314 ADA's 20th birthday celebrations

Birthday and cake go together like audio and description, and ADA's Executive Committee were delighted when fellow member Paula Suchy offered to supply the cake for ADA's 20th birthday celebrations last September.

And who better to cut the cake than its creator? Paula is pictured here with cake knife poised, in the crimson and gold, chandelier-lit setting of the Reform Club Library. Flanking her are ADA's incoming Chair, Neil Reading, Theatre Director and Manager at Wolverhampton Arena (on the left), and outgoing Chair, Vidar Hjordeng, Inclusion and Diversity Consultant at ITV News.

Baked by Paula and iced by her son, using traditional white icing with buttercup yellow and chocolate brown motifs and piped red birthday wishes, the fruit cake is shown in close up here, surrounded by ingeniously-sourced table napkins in similar colours featuring the number 20 plus exclamation mark.



Thank you, Paula!

315 Describing al fresco: ADA's next PDS

ADA's first Professional Development Session of 2020 will focus on how people with sight impairment experience the outdoor heritage setting.

The session will be held in the newly-restored **MK Gallery** (described by the Guardian as "utterly, thrillingly Milton Keynesian") on **Monday, 23 March** from 1.45-3.45pm, with speakers **Sarah Bell**, Lecturer in Health Geography at Exeter University, and **Anna Fineman**, Museums, Galleries and Heritage Programme Manager at VocalEyes.

Full details in next month's Note Pad

316 VocalEyes State of Theatre Access Report 2019

VocalEyes has published the findings of its fourth biennial survey of the state of theatre access in the UK, carried out in partnership with Stagertext, Touretteshero and Leeds Playhouse. For the 2019 survey, a team of 21 volunteer researchers combed hundreds of theatre websites to find what general information venues provide about access, and the specific access services they offer.

The first section of the 2019 report aims to raise awareness of the importance of having access information on the venue's website, something that **just over a quarter (26%) of UK theatres fail to do.**

The second section gives a snapshot of the access services provided by theatres: the key finding here is that **only around 3 in 10 (29%) of UK theatres list one or more access services for an upcoming production.** Many theatres offer more than one service, but overall:

- **20%** provide **audio description** for performances
- **21%** provide **British Sign Language** for performances
- **19%** provide **captioning** for performances
- **4%** provide **dementia friendly** performances
- **20%** provide **relaxed** performances

Compared with 2017, the survey seems to show that between 3% and 5% fewer theatres are providing the established access services of audio description, BSL and captioning, while 10% more theatres are offering relaxed performances. Dementia friendly performances were not covered in the 2017 survey, but the 2019 report states it is certain that they have increased in number since then.

The State of Theatre Access 2019 report can be downloaded in PDF or Word:

<https://vocaleyes.co.uk/state-of-theatre-access-2019/>

317 Accessible Singapore

ADA member **Trish Hodson** switched from Access Manager at Bristol Hippodrome to freelance access consultant a couple of years ago. These extracts from her Singapore blog record her experience of running a series of workshops there in October 2018, with support from Singapore Repertory Theatre and the Temasek Foundation:

- Singapore on arrival is immediately an amazing place. As you fly in across the straits and see the city skyline and the unmistakable shape of the Marina Bays Sands complex, you momentarily believe in time-travel.



My contact is Paul Adams, Singapore Repertory Theatre's Learning and Engagement Manager. It's his passion and drive for greater access and inclusion across both SRT and Singapore itself, not least through the development of the Access Art Hub, that has made this week happen.

Paul has been brilliant and welcoming, making it feel as normal as possible for me from the get-go. I don't know if it's because he, like me, grew up in the North and he's brought out my Northern twang in this most far-from Yorkshire place, but it all feels very familiar. I've been away from the day-to-day theatre experience for almost two years now, but I guess, having clocked up 23 years in that environment, returning to it is like returning to my Yorkshire accent - it's always in you.

So, four days of delivering everyday access solutions in the form of the **Accessibility in Mind** workshop. Day One brought 16 people, half of whom, we collectively joked, seemed to be from the National Gallery of Singapore. But in fact we also had folks from across Singapore, including the National Arts Council, Theatre Practice, Gateway, Access Path, Theatreworks and the Storytelling Centre Ltd.

It's a full on day. I've crammed at least two days' worth of training into a slender seven hours which becomes less than six when you have to be fed and watered too. We were all pretty tired by the end, but as one person left they declared they were "excited" about getting on with their access improvements, and another said in their feedback: *"The workshop and resources are great, feels like I'm equipped to take the next steps to increase accessibility."* It was encouraging that despite the tiredness at the end of a long day the passion remained.

And the following three days unrolled in the same vein. Each morning I would step outside the air-conditioned bubble of the hotel and into the physical, humid heat of the streets. The walk to work was along a river bizarrely reminiscent of the river running through Bristol, making me feel far more at home than expected 11,000 miles away!

Day Two brought 19 more participants with representatives from VSA, the Arts Science museum, Story Connection, Wild Rice, Kino Kino and independents again – and more positive feedback: *"Trish's 'Quickfix' solutions were amazing – things that we can immediately implement, which don't cost us much \$, but make a difference in increasing the accessibility of our events."*

The biggest turnout was on Day Three, when 21 participants arrived from places such as the Republic Polytechnic, Marina Bay Sands theatre, Singapore Art Museum, and School of the Arts Singapore, alongside a global hotel hospitality manager, more independents and even more staff from venues who had attended on previous days.

Our last workshop on Day Four had 15 attendees, including The Finger Players, Teater Ekamatra and a large and wonderfully enthusiastic posse from SRT's box office and front of house team. SRT's own Managing Director, Charlotte Nors, joined us too, having set aside the whole day to take part in the workshop – squeezing in another meeting over lunch so she could stay with us throughout. What a fantastic testament to the dedication and determination she and her team are showing in their drive to improve accessibility there.

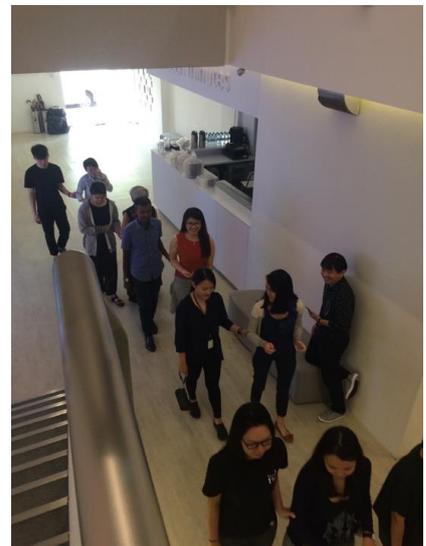
In total we met 71 participants from 23 organisations. Each brought their questions and their confusions, and generously shared their knowledge and experience for the benefit of others.

I feel very fortunate to have met so many people trying to get accessibility right in their respective organisations. The passion and dedication to it within the Singapore arts and culture scene is palpable. It reminded me of the Access Forums I attended during my theatre career when you couldn't get people to stop talking about their ideas, their frustrations, their worries and their hopes!

Trish's contact details and website:

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<https://accessandinclusivitymatters.com>



318 Audio description training opportunity at ADP



The American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project (ADP) is running its 16th annual Audio Description Institute, from 20-24 February 2020, in Alexandria, Virginia, USA. This is a three-day training event led by ADP's Director, Dr Joel Snyder.

The event is intended for "anyone interested in working as freelance description writers for broadcast television, working as a describer in a local performing arts program, working as a describer for visual art exhibitions, and experienced describers desiring an updated refresher course".

Full details are given in the ACB/ADP press release sent with this issue of Note Pad or visit ADP's website at: www.acb.org/adp/

319 Christmas post



First to arrive in this year's post was this elegant card from Sightlines, which captures the wonder of Christmas in a close up photo of a translucent glass bauble hanging from the evergreen branch of a Christmas tree and catching the light and colour of its surroundings.

The card comes with season's greetings and all good wishes from the Sightlines core team – Margaret Spittles, who took the photo, Jonathan Nash and Julia Grundy.

Find out about the audio description services Sightlines offers at:

www.sightlines-audio-description.com



'Merry Christmas' is the message on the card from Mind's Eye, which features five of the team wearing Santa hats and big smiles, with Chief Santa, Anne Hornsby, second from right in the lineup. The faces of two more of the team in pointy elf hats, appear on the twin baubles hanging from the greenery overhead.

Discover where and what they are describing in the coming weeks at:

www.mindseyedescription.co.uk

Note Pad's card brings you the editor's regular postbox, yarnbombed in aid of local charities for the second year in succession. This pillar box topper is clearly a disaster scene: Santa's legs in knitted black boots and red trousers are sticking out of the chimney, Rudolph (out of sight here) is sitting propped against the chimney stack in a state of shock, and a small snowchild, stands with hand over mouth, eyeing the undelivered present in dismay.



Happy Christmas to all our readers – may you have a disaster-free holiday season and a rewarding year ahead!

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