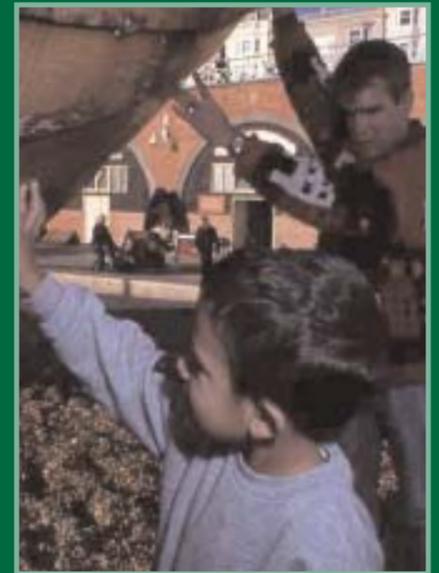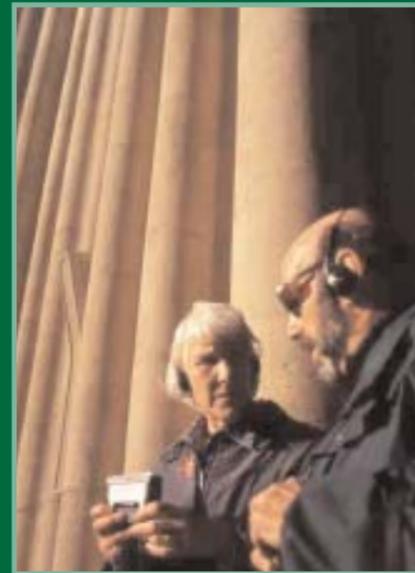Further copies of the **Talking Images Research**, as well as copies in accessible formats, are available from RNIB customer services on 0845 702 3153, email cservices@rnib.org.uk, priced **£5.95**.

Copies of the **Talking Images Guide** are also available from RNIB customer services, priced **£9.95**.

Talking Images Research

Museums, galleries and heritage sites: improving access for blind and partially sighted people

RNIB

VOCALEYES

ENGLISH HERITAGE

MAGDA
Museums and Galleries
Disability Association

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

re:source
The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries

RNIB

VOCALEYES

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the venues involved in the Talking Images research project:

Foreword

The Talking Images Research

Museums, galleries and heritage sites: improving access for blind and partially sighted people

Contents

1. Introduction

"Going to a museum and having somebody guide me around and give me the information I need is superb, really quite exciting. But getting there and being disappointed because of a lack of information, or misguided information ruins it for me." **Auditor**

People with sight problems experience many barriers when visiting museums, galleries and heritage sites. In order to explore these barriers and find ways to improve access, RNIB and Vocaleyes collaborated on an extensive research study, the **Talking Images: museums, galleries and heritage sites project**. This publication summarises the findings of the Talking Images research, which focused on the use of audio guides and also examined other aspects of access.

As with many research studies, this report raises as many questions as it answers. It is hoped however that this study will contribute to a growing body of user led research that will help venues make decisions over their provision for blind and partially sighted people.

Methodology

The Talking Images project comprised a number of research studies. These research studies examined current provision through:

- a telephone survey of 270 blind and partially sighted people which investigated attitudes towards and experiences of visiting museums, galleries and heritage sites

- audits of 63 audio guides undertaken by blind and partially sighted auditors at venues across the UK

- self-assessment questionnaires completed by the 55 venues involved in the project.

In addition to the research, Vocaleyes undertook case studies with:

- **Kettle's Yard**, on an audio guide for the touring exhibition of work by Ben Nicholson that also visited The Whitworth Art Gallery and Southampton City Art Gallery

- **Tate Britain**, on the development of two audio tours

- **Christchurch Mansion** in Ipswich, on an inclusive low cost guide.

The experience from the case studies informs this publication and the **Talking Images Guide**.

The full case studies report will be available via the Arts Council England website: www.artscouncil.org.uk and from Vocaleyes at www. vocaleyes.co.uk

The full methodology for each study is contained in the appendix (see page 75). The findings used in this study do not represent the full reports for each separate research study.

If you would like copies of these separate reports, please contact the Talking Images Arts and Heritage Officer at RNIB; and for the telephone survey, contact Vocaleyes.

What is included within this publication

This publication summarises the research undertaken for the Talking Images project. The findings are ordered thematically around the particular issues of a visitor's experience, and each section contains pertinent findings on that theme from each research study.

- **Planning for inclusion** contains user and venue experiences of consultation and evaluation. It also contains findings into the number of venues that have access policies and how these plans work in an organisation.

- **Improving access: information** looks at the number of venues that provide accessible information and the user's experience within these venues.

- **Improving access: descriptions, tours, touch and events** contains user's and venue's perspectives of different approaches to improving access to collections.

- **Improving access: audio guides** examines issues around developing audio guides that are accessible to blind and partially sighted people – the main focus of the research. Issues include the user perspective of technology, description and orientation, information and sound quality.

- **Promoting your service** looks at what motivates visitors to attend a venue, and why non-visitors do not attend. It examines how blind and partially sighted people find out about leisure activities and summarises the experiences of venues in marketing services.

- **Welcoming visitors with sight problems** examines the customer service blind and partially sighted visitors receive at venues, and at how accessible premises are.

- The **Summary** concludes the report.

Contact details for further information can be found at the end of the publication.

The aim of this report is not to provide conclusions but to illustrate experience, views and opinion of users and venues. The **Talking Images Guide** draws together these responses, providing practical guidance, recommendations and contacts in order to help venues provide a high-quality experience for visitors with sight problems. Details of how to obtain a copy of this guide are available on the back cover of this publication.

Background to the project

The Talking Images project is a collaboration between **Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)** and **Vocaleyes**. Research undertaken by RNIB has been funded by **Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. Arts Council England** through its **New Audiences Programme** has funded the research undertaken by Vocaleyes. All research was undertaken between 2001 and 2003.

A steering group has overseen the project, consisting of members of the lead organisations, funding bodies and other partner organisations including **English Heritage** and the **Museums and Galleries Disability Association (MAGDA)**. An advisory group has guided the development of the project and this publication.

Aims of Talking Images

Talking Images focused specifically on the use of audio description in museums, galleries and heritage sites and aims to:

- raise the standards of audio guides, description and general access to museums, galleries and heritage venues throughout the UK for blind and partially sighted people

- make a significant contribution to quality developments in the field of audio guides, description and inclusive interpretation

- positively influence the practices of all key stakeholders: museums, galleries and heritage venues; commercial producers of audio guides; cultural sector policy makers and funders; cultural training agencies and organisations of and for people with sight problems.

The organisations involved

RNIB is the leading UK charity working with people with sight problems. RNIB's vision is a world where people who are blind or partially sighted enjoy the same rights, responsibilities, opportunities and quality of life as people who are sighted.

Vocaleyes enables blind and partially sighted people to experience the arts through high quality, live and recorded audio description. Originally specialising in theatre description, Vocaleyes' work increasingly includes description in the visual arts.

Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries is the strategic body working with and for museums, archives and libraries in England. Resource's mission is to enable the collections and services of the museums,

archives and libraries sector to touch the lives of everyone.

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts in England, distributing public money from Government and the National Lottery. Arts Council England's ambition is to place the arts at the heart of national life, reflecting the country's rich and diverse cultural identity as only the arts can.

MAGDA is a not-for-profit organisation comprised of museum and gallery professionals who work to achieve access for all. MAGDA promotes the rights of disabled people to enjoy museums, galleries and heritage sites as visitors and employees.

English Heritage is the Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment. English Heritage is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body and reports to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

2. Planning for inclusion

Summary: This section contains findings from the research that deal with consulting users and developing policies based on consultation. Users and venues both recognise the importance of consultation. The research shows however that consultation is often reactive rather than part of a long-term strategy. Consultation also tends to focus on services rather than policy. Half of the venues surveyed for the Talking Images project have an access policy, whilst a recent Resource survey indicated that 38 per cent of museums have one.

Access policies and implementation

The venue perspective

Several venues surveyed for Talking images recognised the frustration of providing services outside of an access policy.

"It appears that the opportunistic production of an audio guide – outside a planned access plan/policy – does not contribute greatly to the wider issue of improving access for visitors with visual impairments." **Venue participating in the survey**

Of the venues surveyed for the Talking Images project:

- nearly two-thirds of organisations in the sample (36 venues) have an access policy

- 62 per cent (34 venues) have a disability access policy, half of whom state that their policy mentions blind and partially sighted people

- just over half of the venues have an access or disability action plan (28 organisations); half of those with a plan state that this mentions visually impaired people

- in only 20 organisations, however, (36 per cent of the sample) is access for disabled people built into annual budgets.

Access is prioritised in capital developments. 82 per cent of the venues (45 organisations) stated that the needs of visually impaired people are considered when planning a refurbishment or building work. In terms of exhibitions, half of the organisations (28 venues, 51 per cent) affirm that their exhibitions budget includes provision to put access for disabled visitors into practice.

Whilst the sample of venues researched for Talking Images reflects a range of types of venue and scale of operation, it is recognised that this sample is not representative of all museums, galleries and heritage sites, as only venues with

audio guides were included. Therefore findings from other research studies which aimed to be representative of the sector are included.

The 2001 Resource survey of provision for disabled users of museums, archives and libraries consulted with 340 organisations. This survey found that:

- only 38 per cent of museums have a policy or plan that specifically mentions disabled people
- only 46 per cent of museums have part of their core budget earmarked for providing services for disabled people.

The 1998 Digest of Museum Statistics (DOMUS) survey of 690 museums conducted by the Museums and Galleries Commission found that even fewer venues had a disability policy:

- 28 per cent of museums had a disability policy
- 23 per cent of venues had a disability action plan.

These findings illustrate that although many venues involved in the Talking Images research recognise the importance of an access policy, there are many venues that do not have such a policy.

Consultation and evaluation

The user perspective

Focus group participants stated that they believe consultation with blind and partially sighted visitors is essential when developing services. Consultation should be planned into any project or service development from the start, and should continue into user assessment of services delivered. Consultation needs to involve a range of people to reflect the diversity of views and needs of blind and partially sighted people.

> "You need to try it on a wide range of people, there are so many different takes on things, and you need to get a cross section of opinion." **Focus group participant**

The venue perspective

The venues surveyed for this project also recognised the importance of consultation:

> "Always get advice from people with direct experience of visual impairment. Be focused – don't take on too much or you won't achieve your aims."

> "It's very important and useful to consult the end-user in the development of a service, facility or building." **Venues participating in the survey**

However, despite the venues recognising the value of consultation, less than two thirds of organisations (34 venues, 62 per cent) stated that blind and partially sighted people had been consulted when services for visitors with sight problems were developed. Of these organisations:

- eight use or have used consultants who have a sight problem
- five consulted with local societies of blind and partially sighted people
- two have access groups with blind and partially sighted members.

However, only 21 organisations (38 per cent) stated that they had consulted blind and partially sighted people when access polices had been developed.

Only a quarter of venues stated that they monitor and evaluate services for blind and partially sighted visitors (13 venues). Of these organisations:

- four evaluate in an ad hoc way through discussion with visitors
- two venues work with local societies for people with sight problems
- two use evaluation forms
- one hosts access evenings and solicits feedback at these events.

Whilst 21 organisations (38 per cent) stated that they had an idea about how much their audio guide is used by blind and partially sighted visitors, only 13 organisations (24 per cent) stated that

they had an idea about how much other services for visitors with sight problems are used. This indicates that many venues do not have evaluation mechanisms in place.

The 2001 Resource survey of provision for disabled users of museums, archives and libraries found that most consultation carried out was found to be reactive, and information tended only to reach those who were already users of a service.

- 47 per cent of museums said that they had user groups including disabled and non-disabled people
- only 27 per cent of museums had consulted with non-users
- 43 per cent of museums had mechanisms for reporting back to participants on the findings of consultation, compared to 75 per cent of libraries.

3. Improving access: information

Summary: The auditors described how having information in accessible formats would encourage them to attend a venue. Yet several of the auditors visited venues where information was not accessible. The venues surveyed for this project were organisations that had audio guides and were willing to participate in the study and therefore may represent organisations that are aware of the needs of people with sight problems. Yet even in this sample, 42 per cent of the venues surveyed admitted that at best, a blind or partially sighted visitor could access none, or only "a little" of their venue, collections and events through using information in accessible formats. Over two-thirds of the venues stated that they provided little or none of their information in large print, despite the fact that large print can be easily and cheaply produced.

The user perspective

The auditors discussed what would encourage them to visit a venue:

"Having information about the museum in an accessible format that we can read would encourage me to attend, then you can make an informed choice." **Focus group participant**

"In my case, I wouldn't go somewhere without accessible information unless I had a guide." **Focus group participant**

In some of the venues where audio guides were audited, information that was available to sighted visitors was not made available in accessible formats:

"Literature ranging from advertising leaflets, general and specific information, is not currently available to visually impaired people. This needs to be rectified urgently."

"Access to sighted literature and information is vital and information should be provided in accessible formats such as braille, large print, and audio cassette." **Auditors**

The venue perspective

Forms of accessible information

Venues were asked what formats their general visitor information is available in. The most frequently provided format was large print, but this was only provided by 45 per cent of the venues. (see table 1 overleaf).

Table 1: Provision of accessible information

	No. of venues	%
Large print	25	45.5
Braille	17	30.9
Audio	12	21.8

Base: 55 venues

Venues were then asked roughly what proportion of any visitor information is available in accessible formats. (see table 2).

Two of the venues provide all their information in large print and three in audio formats. However:

- 58 per cent provide at best "a little" of their information in audio

- 69 per cent provide at best "a little" of their information in large print

- 85 per cent provide at best "a little" of their information in braille.

42 per cent of the venues surveyed admitted that at best, a blind or partially sighted visitor could only access "a little" of their venue, collections and events through using information in accessible formats (see table 3).

Table 2: Proportion of visitor information available in accessible formats

	Large print		Audio		Braille	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
None	20	36.4	18	32.7	35	63.6
A little	18	32.7	14	25.5	12	21.8
A fair amount	4	7.3	9	16.4	1	1.8
Much	5	9.1	5	9.1	0	0.0
All	2	3.6	3	5.5	0	0.0

Base: 55 venues

Table 3: How much of your venue, collections and events are accessible through information in accessible formats

	No.	%
None	7	12.7
A little	16	29.1
A fair amount	16	29.1
Much	7	12.7
All	1	1.8

Base: 55 venues

The DOMUS survey undertaken in 1998 found that even fewer venues produce accessible information.

- Four per cent of museums produce information in braille.

- 14 per cent of museums produce information in large print.

On-line information

Over two-thirds of the venues (38 organisations) stated that they have a website:

- of these, only 29 per cent, (11 organisations) stated that their sites are accessible to blind or partially sighted people

- only five of the venues provided descriptions for blind and partially sighted people of photographs or other images on their website.

The Resource survey of provision for disabled users found that only 26 per cent of museums have websites complying with standard guidelines for universal access, compared to 41 per cent of libraries.

Linking accessible information to the venue

Organisations involved in the survey discussed ways in which visitor information for blind and partially sighted people had been linked to their venue.

- 12 venues (22 per cent of the total sample) stated that visitor information for people with sight problems introduced exhibits or features which can be touched or handled.

- Four of the organisations stated that they had developed minoltas or raised images professionally produced.

- Two venues had a tactile model of the building.
- Two venues described illustrations they had produced which enhance visibility for partially sighted visitors.

"We have black and white schematic drawings for selected key portraits, combined with descriptive, large print guides."

"All of the objects in the guide were chosen with the assistance of a visually impaired person for their accessibility, e.g. colour contrast." **Venues participating in the survey**
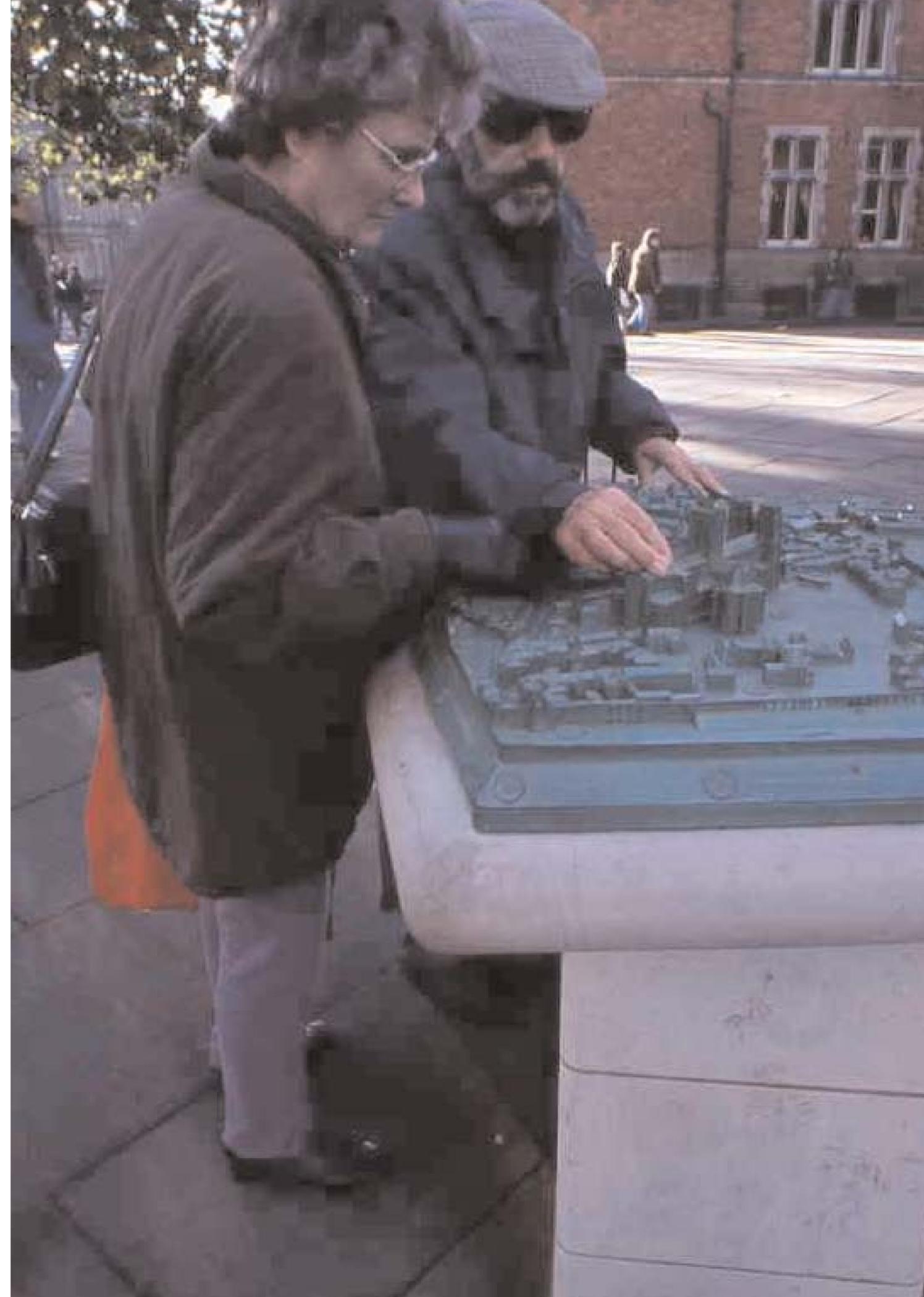
4. Improving access: descriptions, tours, touch and events

Summary: This section contains findings from the research into approaches to improving access to collections. Users were positive about opportunities to touch objects and models in venues, and were also, in general, positive about guided tours. Respondents to the phone survey said they would be likely to attend venues more often if there was a wider availability of services for people with sight problems.

The user perspective

General impression of services

Respondents to the phone survey who were regular, occasional or infrequent visitors of museums, galleries or heritage sites were asked to rate their overall experience of services and facilities for blind and partially sighted people at these venues as shown in table 4.

- Displays and objects you can touch, models you can touch, and one-to-one guides were most likely to be awarded "very helpful" ratings.

- Braille information and tactile maps were the most likely to be awarded "very unhelpful" ratings although it is not known how many people in the sample are braille readers.

- People were also more likely to award information in large print and raised images "unhelpful" or "very unhelpful" ratings than "helpful" or "very helpful" ratings.

Table 4: Ratings awarded for services and facilities by respondents who visited galleries, museums and heritage sites frequently, occasionally or infrequently

	Percentage of respondents providing rating					
	Very helpful	Helpful	No benefit	Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Base
General audio or print	22	30	22	10	16	125
One to one guide	33	23	25	6	13	103
Staff escort	30	23	18	5	22	92
Information in large print	16	22	18	15	29	79
Braille information	13	15	13	10	45	78
Audio guides for visually impaired visitors	29	34	21	6	10	149
Tactile maps	22	12	26	7	33	76
Raised images	19	25	22	13	22	79
Displays you can touch	37	22	22	7	12	113
Models you could touch	35	23	22	6	15	102
Live events and talks	29	28	25	7	10	109
Total	285	257	234	92	227	1105

Base: 208 respondents who had visited galleries, museums and heritage sites.

Experiences of using services

The phone survey found that a third of respondents who were aware of services or facilities offered at the last venue they visited did not make use of them. The most popular reasons for not using services or facilities were that people felt they "would not add to their experience" (five people) and that they were "not appropriate to their needs" (four people). Doubts about the quality, cost and no one being there to assist were explanations mentioned by one respondent, and two respondents supplied other explanations.

Two-thirds of respondents who were aware of services or facilities at the last venue they visited (35 people) had gone on to use them. Respondents were asked to rate each of the different types of service or facility they had used separately as "very helpful", "helpful", "no benefit", "unhelpful", "very unhelpful". Although over half of the ratings provided were positive (56 per cent), a quarter of them were negative and 19 per cent fell in the "no benefit" category. The ratings provided by respondents would seem to suggest that galleries, museums and heritage sites have room for improvement.

The types of service and facility that tended to be awarded positive ratings were "audio guides for blind and partially sighted visitors", "displays and objects that you can touch" and "models you can touch" – in each case more than 70 per cent of ratings were in the "very helpful" or "helpful" category, as shown in table 5 overleaf.

Table 5: Ratings awarded for services and facilities used on last visits

	Number of respondents providing rating					
	Very helpful	Helpful	No benefit	Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total no. of ratings
General audio or print	1	4	4	2	4	15
One to one guide	3	6	6	1	3	19
Staff escort	–	2	2	–	4	8
Information in large print	1	5	1	1	3	11
Braille information	6	3	2	–	3	14
Audio guides for blind and partially sighted visitors	8	3	2	–	2	15
Tactile maps	4	2	–	–	4	10
Raised images	4	1	2	–	4	11
Displays and objects you can touch	11	3	3	–	3	20
Models you can touch	9	2	2	1	1	15
Live events or talks	6	1	5	1	2	15
Total	53	32	29	6	33	153

Base: 35 people who had used at least one service or facility for blind or partially people at the last gallery, museum or heritage site they visited.

On the negative side staff escorts, general audio and printed information and tactile maps were the services and facilities most likely to be awarded "unhelpful" or "very unhelpful" ratings – in each case 40 per cent or more of the ratings were in these categories:

- four of the eight respondents who had used a staff escort on their last visit indicated the service was unhelpful and only two people awarded the service a positive rating

- six out of 15 people using general audio and printed information awarded them negative ratings while five awarded positive ratings

- although four people awarded the tactile maps they had used a "very unhelpful" rating, six awarded them positive ratings. Possibly there was variation in the quality of this service across venues or it might be that this is the type of facility that works well for some and not for others.

It needs to be remembered that the respondent sample is small and the range and quality of services and facilities offered will vary from venue to venue. People's needs will also differ and a facility one person might find useful may be of no benefit to someone else or even be unhelpful. For example, one respondent found touch tours a "harrowing experience", while another said she wanted more opportunities to touch objects during her visit. This helps explain why there are examples of respondents visiting the same venue and having very different experiences. For example, one respondent was "very disappointed" with the services offered at The National Gallery but another had attended the same venue and been impressed. In the same vein, the Victoria and Albert Museum received positive feedback from some visits and was described as "wonderful for blind people" by one, but one visitor was critical. Because each visitor is different, it is important to offer a variety of ways to access your collections.

Respondents to the phone survey were offered the opportunity to comment further on their last visit and experience of galleries, museums and heritage sites more generally. The feedback highlights how important staff are in making visitors feel welcome, making visitors aware of facilities or services and supporting them during their visit as necessary. There were many cases of visitors praising staff for being accommodating, helpful and positive. However, there were also a few cases of staff not explaining how to use equipment very clearly, not being very informed and telling a visitor off for touching an object when the visitor concerned could not read the sign that said "do not touch". One respondent noted that staff needed training about the needs of people with sight problems.

Several respondents offered positive feedback on being able to touch objects at venues and being able to go behind barriers and take more time in visits. A number of auditors also commented on how much they enjoyed the opportunity to touch exhibits or objects at the venues.

> "I thought that the description of objects was very good and in some cases for objects that could not be reached or felt, they provided replica pieces for me to feel."
>
> "A lot of historical information was given, and because a lot of the exhibits were of a robust nature, I was able to handle most things which lessened the need for a full description." **Auditors**

When objects were not available to be touched, the experience of the visit was less enjoyable for many of the auditors:

> "The huge number of artefacts on display but only a small percentage were available for tactile exploration." **Auditor**

> "The castle is ideal for touch tours, but all furniture is roped off and objects are behind glass."
>
> "The tour guide actively discouraged touching objects because there were pigeon droppings – the offer of tissues or the opportunity to wipe hands afterwards might have helped a lot." **Auditors**

The venue perspective

Just over half of the venues in the sample (31 venues, 56 per cent) provide live guided tours for blind or partially sighted visitors:

- only eight organisations (15 per cent of the total sample, a quarter of those who provide tours) stated that a guide was always available

- eight venues stated that a few days notice was needed in order to provide a guide, four venues stated a week, two stated, ten days, five stated two weeks and two that four weeks was needed.

Slightly fewer organisations (30 venues) provide tours or activities for groups of people with sight problems whilst 39 organisations (71 per cent) provide visits for groups, which include people with sight problems (e.g. school groups, families).

23 venues (42 per cent) stated that blind and partially sighted visitors could borrow pre-visit information (e.g. general information, an audio guide, a tactile map):

- five venues stated that visitors could borrow audio guides in advance of a visit

- four stated that other audio tapes could be borrowed

- three lend large print versions of their audio guide scripts

- four lend general information in large print

- two lend tactile maps.

15 organisations state that they provide tactile models. 29 organisations (53 per cent) stated that there were objects that can be handled.

Over half the venues (29 organisations, 53 per cent) state that generally speaking, they provide exhibition panels (information/interpretation) which have been designed for people with sight difficulties and/or people with reading difficulties in mind.

- Seven venues (13 per cent of the total sample) stated that less than five per cent of their panels roughly fits this category.

- Over a third (21 venues, 38 per cent of the total sample) stated that over half of their panels fitted this criteria.

Venues were asked what proportion of their collections or historic property they feel is currently accessible to blind and partially sighted people, when considering all services offered:

- 29 venues (53 per cent) felt that less than 50 per cent is accessible

- 12 organisations (22 per cent) felt that less than 10 per cent of their collections or historic property is accessible.

5. Improving access: audio guides

Summary: The main focus of the Talking Images research was on the use of audio guides. This section contains findings from the research on the accessibility of technology used, descriptions on the guides, orientation information and quality of recordings.

An overview of audio guides

The user perspective

In the telephone survey, respondents were asked to rate services they had used at museums, galleries and heritage sites. Audio guides for blind and partially sighted people were positively received with 63 per cent of respondents finding these "very helpful" or "helpful".

As well as compiling reports on their experiences at venues, the auditors discussed examples of good and bad practice at a focus group meeting:

"One guide was inclusive. It had some extraordinary descriptions built in to the commentary. I think that it is a real art, building in the description without it being obvious." **Auditor**

"My worse experience was probably an audio guide for visually impaired people that was confusing and misguided. They went to a lot of trouble to give you an audio impression of what the rooms had been like, but the sound effects overwhelmed the speech of the information they were trying to give you." **Auditor**

The ideal guide was seen as being an integrated guide that has information for blind and partially sighted visitors on a mainstream guide. This information should be layered so that those who wish to access additional description or orientation information can access it:

"The way to make an inclusive guide is in layers. If you are sighted and you don't want to know how to use the audio guide, it will say, "if you want to hear how to use the audio guide press five". If you don't want to have a detailed description of a particular painting then you don't have it. There will be detailed orientation information but it will not assume that you will be on your own." **Auditor**

The venue perspective

Venues surveyed for this project recognised the value of audio guides, but also the associated difficulties.

> "Audio guides are a minefield! We have expensive out of date guides and not really any money to update though we are looking at options."
>
> "The availability of a high quality audio guide really enhances the visit for visually impaired people. However, it needs a lot of careful consideration and consultation to ensure it meets the required standard and can give the visitors confidence in their unfamiliar surroundings." **Venues participating in the survey**

Technology

The user perspective

Auditors were asked questions on the technology used to deliver the audio tour they were assessing. Of the 63 audio guides assessed:

- 20 were on a walkman
- 27 on a form of audio wand (including all forms of MP3 player)
- nine on a CD based player technology

- seven guides were on other formats, including recordings operated by a foot pedal whilst sitting down and a mobile unit the visitor travels in with an audio narration.

Although the vast majority of auditors recorded that a member of staff offered to explain how to use the technology, during eight of the visits this service was not offered. One auditor noted that she did not have instruction on how to use her audio guide and "there was no description at the start of the CD on how to use the machine."

Over half of the audio guides were described as "easy" or "very easy" to use. However, eight of the guides (12.3 per cent) were described as "difficult" to use, and a further three as "not easy". Of the eight guides described as "difficult" to use, two were on walkman, three on audio wand and three on CD.

	Difficult		Not Easy		OK		Easy		Very Easy		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Walkman	2	10.0	1	5	5	25	8	40	4	20	20
Audio Wand	3	11.5	2	7.7	4	15.4	12	46.2	5	19.2	26
CD player	3	30.0	0	0.0	4	40.0	3	30.0	0	0.0	10
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	4	80.0	5

Base: 63 guides

When the ease of use was cross-tabulated against the type of technology, it was found that of the three main technologies assessed, the audio guides in the sample that were on audio wand technologies and the walkmans were considered the easiest to use (see table 6). It must be remembered, however, that the sample size is insufficient to draw conclusions.

Auditors were asked to give the positive and negative features of the technology they used in each guide.

Walkman

Many of the auditors using walkmans stated that one of the positive features of this technology was the ease of use:

> "The walkman technology is very familiar, as I use it for reading. This made the tour very relaxing with no need to master any different experiences."
>
> "The first Sony walkman was a very tactile machine to use and very easy to operate. It had just four buttons, stop, play, fast-forward and rewind and some of the buttons were different colours." **Auditors**

However, there were distinct negative features given on the walkman audio guides used, for example, it was difficult for auditors to repeat a description or section if they wished to listen again to that section:

"I got tangled up in the wires. It was not easy to get back to an exact spot on the tape if I missed something."

"Unfortunately the tape would only wind forward so in order to rewind it you had to turn the tape over and wind it forward then turn it over again. There was no cue and review." **Auditors**

A number of the audits highlighted the limitations in the linear format of the walkman tours. There was no opportunity to find out more information about a particular object, work of art or area that interested the visitor:

"You were limited to listening to the tour; there were no facilities for extra information." **Auditor**

As the walkman guides generally have headphones that go over two ears, these guides could be difficult to be used by a blind or partially sighted visitor who is being guided:

"I was wearing headphones at same time as being escorted by a guide. Ear grommet type headphones would be easier in this instance so not continually taking headphones on and off." **Auditor**

Audio wand

Audio wands can offer random access to the information stored on the player, which can give the user control over the information they listen to:

"I was able to choose works I found interesting by dipping in and did not have to follow a linear pattern. This allowed for interpretation as well as description." **Auditor**

Several auditors commented on the ease of use of using a telephone keypad on the wand, and of having a tactile indication of the number five:

"The audio guide starts by giving a very clear and simple description of where the buttons are and their function."

"Compared with other audio wands, this one had a sensible control layout and allowed easy navigation within an item, the ability to skip back and forward, which I found missing in many others." **Auditor**

There were however guides which were not considered easy to use, mainly due to the non-standard layout of the buttons:

"This wand was the most unintuitive and awkward I have encountered. For example, pause did not pause/resume (you had to press play after pausing), volume was left for up, right for down, the number keys were neither at the top nor at the bottom, no rewind or fast-forward, or any other way of navigating within items."

"Buttons were pressed accidentally between one session and the next; this seems a weakness in the design."

"Simply starting any item proved quite difficult. You had to be in a particular default state before it would start, and it was impossible to tell without seeing the visual display." **Auditors**

Another difficulty in using an audio wand was that auditors found they did not know if they had correctly entered the number they required for a particular item as numbers were only confirmed via visual output (e.g. LCD) rather than by an audio output:

"One problem with the audio wand is that it does not give you a verbal readout of the number you have typed in before starting a description."

"It was difficult for a blind person to use unaccompanied as there was no audio readout of the number keyed in." **Auditors**

Another difficulty expressed was how a blind or partially sighted visitor would know which number to enter for information on the audio wand, as these numbers were given via visual signs:

"A blind person could not access this wand alone, it is only suitable for partially sighted visitors as it demands a visual cue to key in and there is no audio readout to give the next number." **Auditor**

CD

CD players, like wands, were praised for the ability to randomly access information, and also to access additional information on an item when it was offered:

> "I was using a mini CD player that had various tracks to choose from for further information about historical events that took place. I liked the fact that you could choose if you wished to play them or continue on the tour."
>
> "The CD was in sections. After the description of the present surroundings you had an option of listening to further information about the current spot or skipping and continuing to the next point." **Auditors**

In terms of operating the CD players, a number of auditors expressed difficulty in knowing the function of the various buttons on the guide and navigating their way around the keypads:

> "The machine had not been tested for its suitability and ease of operation by a visually impaired person. It was not easy to differentiate between control buttons – I would suggest application of bump ons." **Auditor**

> "To start the guide you had to press 99 then the green button. To stop the guide you had to press the red button. Both buttons were joined together at the top and very difficult to distinguish."
>
> "The digital readout was small, and the buttons were also small. You needed some sight to confirm right buttons pressed as controls were small and sensitive and therefore it was easy to press wrong button." **Auditors**

Accessible audio guides

One of the key findings of the audits in terms of technology was the high degree of inconsistency, and difficulty that blind and partially sighted people found in using the equipment, even when the guides were supposedly designed specifically with them in mind. The experiences of the auditors were collated by one of the auditors into a set of guidelines that reflect the views of the users who participated in the project on how audio guides could be made more accessible. These guidelines assume that the guide will be in the form of a wand, with a numeric keypad giving random access to items that are stored in solid-state memory. Most of the principles should apply to other carriers such as CD, PDAs or adapted MP3 players, but the wand is the working model.

General principles:

- **Layout**: Controls should be grouped separately and made distinctive from each other. For example, the number-pad should be clearly separated from other controls, and should be at the top of the panel; the volume up/down buttons should be together, and separate from other groupings. The number-pad should respect the convention of the telephone key-pad (1-2-3 on the top-row) since this is in far more common use than the computer/calculator layout.

- **Visual indication**: When symbols are used to represent functions or controls, then widely recognisable ones should be chosen. An easy-to-read font should be used for all display indications. Colour combinations must have a contrast (brightness) of 4.0 or greater. There should be a clear colour and tone contrast between the buttons and the surrounding panel, and/or coloured 'circling' of buttons.

- **Audible indication**: Feedback should be given to confirm that a button press has been accepted, or warn if it has not. If the unit is speech-enabled, then this feedback will be in the form of spoken prompts and confirmations of the button pressed. If not, then a simple system of tones or beeps, such as is used in mobile phones, will be adequate.

For example, a short discrete beep means that the press was accepted, and a longer harsher beep means that some sort of error occurred.

- **Tactile indication**: Buttons should be clearly distinguishable from the surrounding panel and from each other, so they should project, be hard plastic rather than rubber, and should give a firm positive click when pressed. Shaped buttons can help to confirm functions, such as arrows pointing right and left for moving forward and back, or up and down for volume. On the numeric keypad, the widely accepted convention of putting a dot on the number 5 should be respected.

- **Functions and controls**: In order to navigate effectively within and between a large number of recorded items of variable length, the following controls are essential, and must have dedicated buttons (not dual function). No guide audited has met these requirements.

  Play: starts an item from the beginning when it is selected.

  Stop: stops the item, ready for either re-play from the beginning, or entry of new item.

  Pause: pauses the item mid-way, and resumes when pressed again.

Scroll forward/back: a group of two controls allowing forward or backward scrolling with audible movement (sometimes called cue and revue).

Clear/cancel: returns to default state if you make a mistake.

All the guides reviewed had some combination of these controls, but often had dual-function buttons, or missed some of the essential functionality.

Other considerations:

- **Listening modes**: There should be two ways of listening to the audio: through the wand itself, in the style of a telephone handset, but also through stereo headphones for extended listening or when the audio and production quality are more critical, so a headphone socket is essential. The type of headphones or earphones should be considered carefully. For example, in most visiting situations, it is important to be able to hear sounds in the environment clearly alongside the audio-guide, but there may be settings where it is important to reduce outside noise with closed or 'in-ear' designs.

- **Carrying**: Guides should be fitted with a cord or strap, to allow them to be carried round the neck so that hands are free when needed.

- **Triggering of items**: A number of systems, based on infra-red or radio control 'tags', or GPS location, make it possible for appropriate items to play automatically when the visitor passes the right point, or simply to indicate which item is nearby, so that it may be selected when desired. One of these systems should be used whenever possible, in view of the difficulty of knowing when you are near a numbered item.

- **Multimedia guides**: New guiding techniques are constantly being developed, some current examples being multimedia workstations placed around venues, and portable multimedia devices (similar to PDAs) containing all the information content in memory. The principles in these guidelines should be applied to new carriers, in such a way that the information content, whether text, audio, or, where applicable, graphical, be made accessible to blind and partially sighted visitors.

Description

The user perspective

Auditors discussed their experiences of audio description in general and particularly on audio guides in the focus group meeting. The aim of description was to "convey what the person is seeing" to a person who can't see it as well:

> "A good description for me is something that tells me what the person can see in as clear and concise a way as possible. It's different for a large biblical picture with thousands of characters in it when you need to pick out elements, because if you described every single element in the picture you would be there for two hours. That would be very different from describing a still life that's just a fruit bowl where you've got a simple object where you need to say something about the colours or the perspective or presentation. It's something for me, that seems to be conveying what the person is seeing, simple as that." **Focus group participant**

Auditors wanted to experience a balanced description that was neither too subjective nor objective:

> "If you have too much detail it tends to be boring; you also need to capture the essence of it. That's your balance, that's what you're aiming for." **Focus group participant**

An ordered approach was discussed, one that started with a description of the general environment, then moved to an overview of the image or object, its size and dimensions, before considering the detail of that image or object. A number of the auditors also discussed the possibility of combining tactile elements into a visit to complement the description:

> "You have to start with the room you've walked into, the environment you are in."
>
> "You must start off with a global idea of what the painting is of, I really think that's important, otherwise the rest of it won't make sense." **Focus group participant**

How useful were descriptions contained within the guides accessed?

Descriptions on all audio guides were assessed to determine the quality and effectiveness of the information conveyed, and how much it contributed to the visit.

Auditors were asked how much these descriptions helped them to form a clear mental picture of the object. Both mainstream guides and guides specifically developed for people with sight problems were assessed and the assessments were fairly similar for specific and general guides. Of the guides that were considered to help "very much", 14 were specific and 4 were general.

Specific guides were also seen to contribute more to auditor's understanding of sites and collections; 16 of the 26 guides which were considered to contain descriptions that "very much" contributed to understanding were specific guides.

Descriptions on mainstream guides

Although standard guides had not been specifically designed for blind and partially sighted visitors they had many positive aspects to enjoy.

Some of the auditors stated that the descriptions given on the mainstream guides were sufficient for them to access the interpretative commentary:

> "Several paintings were described excellently, giving emphasis on characters facial expressions and position of limbs. In the paintings the background atmosphere was communicated well. The audio guide contained interesting historical facts."
>
> "The guide gave some description of the painting, but did not attempt comprehensive description. I found this sufficient and enjoyed concentration more on background historical information, and in-depth discussion of context of the picture and artist." **Auditors**

There were several comments that the guides could have contained a greater number of descriptions or greater detail in the descriptions given:

> "I might just as well have listened to the audio guide in the comfort of my home as it was purely based on historical information."
>
> "The guide did not explain what was in the room itself…. For example, I actually found a pile of barley on the floor when I stuck my white stick into it by accident, up till that point I had actually assumed the room was empty." **Auditors**

> "There is only passing reference to what must be one of the main attractions for visitors to the gallery – the building itself. This interest in the building is likely to be just as true of visually impaired visitors as anyone else. I would have liked a bit more background, history, and information about the space." **Auditor**

Descriptions on specific guides

The descriptions on the specific guides contributed greatly to the enjoyment of the exhibition or site.

- Half of the specific guides assessed (15 guides), were said to contribute "very much" to the enjoyment
- 10 of the guides (a third) contributed "much"
- The assessments of the descriptive elements were much higher than for the standard audio guides when only 16 per cent of the descriptions were said to be "excellent" and 14 per cent "good".

Although in general the descriptions on the guides developed specifically for blind and partially sighted people were positive, there were some negative comments. Some guides were felt to have little description and not to be specifically useful for people with sight problems:

> "Most of this guide was historical background. There was very little description. I believe that the version for visually impaired people had very little added to the standard one; perhaps some additional introductory material, but hardly any description."
>
> "I was told that the guide is a modified version of that for the general public. I do not think that sufficient thought had gone into this modification. It should be redesigned from scratch to incorporate far more description and a certain amount of orientation and special information." **Auditors**

Three of the guides were felt to have descriptions that were overly long with no opportunity to skip unwanted description, and consequently lost the listener's attention:

> "The length of description was often too long – ability to switch to greater depth only if required would have been useful in order to give the visitor a choice." **Auditor**

"I am afraid I got rather bored during the descriptions. The descriptions were very lengthy and there was no change in pace or variety within the voice. The descriptions were meticulous but ultimately unengaging." **Auditor**

Auditors were asked to consider how lively the text was. Several guides were felt to be patronising in tone:

"It was mostly well written and relevant, but the level veered from patronising to over-technical when talking about architecture (transoms, mullions and praecenium)."

"Apart from the dramatisations which were good, the actual commentary was rather dry. The parts specifically for visually impaired people bordered on patronising." **Auditors**

Other guides were felt to be engaging and lively:

"The voice was very conversational, and the informal style made for a very engaging experience. Changing the speaker at different points also retained interest. Light humour was frequently included in the text. This was sufficient to put a smile on the face."

"The voices on the guide were those of the director, curator, chief restorer etc and they were all very enthusiastic. It was like being given a personal tour by the owner of the collection." **Auditors**

One guide had a recorded index, which was considered a very useful feature:

"The audio guide contains a separate section listing the items that will be described per room with their related numbers, I found this feature extremely helpful." **Auditor**

Auditors assessed the information that was available at the beginning of the audio guide that introduced the venue:

- most of the guides gave general information on the site or museum but fewer gave details on the building the visitor was standing in
- less than half the guides gave the approximate duration of the visit
- 90 per cent of the audio guide auditors stated that they thought that general information of this sort was "really useful".

Auditors reported on the sorts of information that was given when individual objects were described. Descriptions tended to focus on the general information such as title and date of production rather than more detailed background information on the producer or production techniques. Whilst 77 per cent described what the object is and its period, only half described the production techniques:

Table 7: At the beginning, did the audio guide give you a general idea about:

	%
The historic site or museum, its features or collections	86.2
The period/style	80.0
About features, exhibits, spaces that form part of the guide	73.3
About the building in which you were	66.7
About the surroundings	46.7
The approximate duration of the visit	43.3

Base: 30 specific guides.

Table: 8: What information was given in descriptions of individual objects:

	%
The title or name and what it is	76.7
The period/style	76.7
The date of production	73.3
The author or producer	60.0
The production techniques	50.0

Base: 30 specific guides.

Orientation information

The user perspective

Orientation information was discussed by auditors and it was recognised people have very different needs in terms of the amount and sort of orientation information they want or require on a guide, making it difficult to produce a guide that caters for all needs:

> "Visually impaired people are all different, they are all individuals. You cannot assume that just because one person is OK with stairs that someone else will be. I don't think there should be a guide specifically for visually impaired people without offering somebody to take you round. People have different needs."
>
> "If you have to find your way around, it takes the concentration away from the guide. It takes the enjoyment away as well." **Auditors**

Orientation information should not only refer to how to navigate a space, but should also describe this space:

> "I'd like to know about the space that I am in, that's the most important thing… 'This is a big room… there are certain features that may appeal to you, there's a fire place in the centre of the room.' I am aware of space and I want to know about it."
>
> "The guide made some attempt to describe the view out of the windows, which was particularly impressive as this is commonly missed from most audio guides. It is not necessary for every window or room, but helps to give orientation of the room and the building." **Auditors**

The proportion of guides with a positive assessment of orientation information was considerably higher for the guides specifically designed for people with sight problems than for the standard audio guides. One auditor described how enhanced orientation information on one guide had improved her visit: "Of all the audio guides, this one gave me far more orientation description, which made the tour far more enjoyable."

Auditors felt that guides should offer points of reference to help the visitor in navigation:

> "Had there been points of reference that could be touched, then the direction, description or size might have meant something."
>
> "The guide provided several descriptions of size and shape. However, one of the most basic omissions was that it did not say where the listener was. This meant that any partial sight the listener had could not be put into use." **Auditors**

It was felt that information on the location of other visitor services would be useful:

> "There is no basic information on quiet seating areas, refreshments areas, or access information (portable seats etc). I felt there needed to be more of an overview on what is on each floor, and how to get there." **Auditor**

Some of the auditors experienced difficulty in using the orientation information on the guides:

> "Even my guide was confused as to where we were being directed to go on the tour." **Auditor**

> "The navigational information in the audio guide was limited, and at the start was positively misleading, so that even sighted people could get it wrong. The navigational notes were always at the end of the track describing the function of a particular area, if they were missed, or forgotten, then it was necessary to repeat the whole track until the navigation notes were again received." **Auditor**

Accessing information on the audio guide

The user perspective

Guides that worked on a random access method require the visitor to key in a number to activate a particular commentary. A problem encountered at several venues was the difficulty in locating numbers in collections that referred to the numbers to be entered into an audio guide:

> "It was difficult to locate the painting described. Room numbers were displayed discretely in the left hand corners of display boards. They were too small and hung too high to see. Numbers next to paintings were also small and difficult to find." **Auditor**

Those who visited with a sighted guide, found that this was an issue for their guide as well:

> "What ruined one visit for me, was that both myself and my guide could not find the numbers you needed for the audio guide. I had to work so hard to find the information that it detracted from the pleasure of the visit."
>
> "The signage was inconsistent, in one place it was on a yellow background, sometimes on blue, sometimes they were big, sometimes small. Not that I could see them but the guide who was showing me round, and who knew the place couldn't find them. It really spoilt the visit." **Auditors**

In some venues, exhibits are frequently moved and if the audio guide is not updated, it can be difficult for visitors to follow the guide:

> "When we went to the gallery there were paintings missing, but it didn't tell you on the guide." **Auditor**

The venue perspective

Displays frequently change in some museums and galleries. Venues were asked if displays were changed, affecting the content of the visitor guide for blind or partially sighted people, what would their organisation tend to do. A quarter of the venues said they would usually update it whilst another quarter stated that they would be likely to leave the guide as it was.

Quality of recordings and added acoustic features

The user perspective

The sound quality on the guides was generally considered to be good; negative comments related mainly to muffled sound or obtrusive background noise:

> "The sound was muffled and noisy, as if from a worn tape, so that some of the speech and songs were incomprehensible."
>
> "The sound was generally rather poor, it sounded like the tape had been copied from a copy, possibly several times, and the quality had degenerated progressively." **Auditors**

Auditors were asked whether any added acoustic features were relevant to the collection/place visited, and virtually all

were considered to be (80 per cent either relevant or very relevant) although there were a few negative comments:

> "Some of the sound effects were confusing and muddled. One kitchen scene sounded like a busy railway station."
>
> "The guide had irritating, ill-defined background sound effects that were pitched at a low volume" **Auditors**

In general, the quality of the commentator's voice was considered to be good. Positive features identified related to the variety of voices used, and intelligible speed of delivery and fluctuation and emphasis in the delivery:

> "The accent was local to the area being described. The voice was clear and speed of delivery good and uniform."
>
> "There was a wide variety of male and female voices. These were mainly English accents, but Scottish voices were used to describe Scottish paintings."
>
> "The commentary was quite informal and made me feel very relaxed and welcome." **Auditors**

Negative features that were raised were monotony, caused by one voice being used for the whole tour, and delivery of commentary being too fast:

> "It would have been further enhanced if one or two additional voices, including female, could have been used in order to add variety"
>
> "The voice was well paced to cover the material, and was perfectly clear. However, it was a very bland presentation." **Auditors**

Some of the auditors gave positive feedback on guides that reproduced the acoustics of the space the visitor was in, which was seen as being very important in conveying the sense of size and type of space the listener was in:

> "By recording the guide on site I got an excellent perception of the space that I was in."
>
> "There was no local sound, the tape sounded like it had been made in a studio. Possibly unfortunate as the spaces of the cathedral clearly offered some opportunities for interesting sounds, including the organ. Background sounds could have been recorded on site, and merged with description in the studio." **Auditors**

6. Promoting your service

Summary: Venues surveyed for this project do not feel that information on their services is reaching blind and partially sighted people. The phone survey undertaken for this project suggests that blind and partially sighted people receive information on leisure activities from a range of sources but that local societies, friends and family and talking newspapers are the most frequently used.

The user perspective

What motivates people who visit venues to attend?

Respondents to the phone survey who had visited a gallery, museum or heritage site were asked which statement best described their reason for attending:

- 52 per cent said "a day out".
- 23 per cent had had a particular interest in a site, building or its contents.
- 22 per cent had visited a temporary exhibition or event.

What would motivate people who visit venues to attend more often?

Visitors to galleries, museums or heritage sites were also asked if a series of factors would impact on their decision to increase the number of times they visited. For each of the factors listed there was a positive response, with at least two-thirds of respondents saying such a measure would impact on their decision to attend more often.

The factors that had most popular appeal were:

- wider availability of specialist facilities or events for blind and partially sighted visitors (84 per cent)
- more general information on galleries, museums or heritage sites (83 per cent)
- improved quality of the facilities or events offered for blind and partially sighted visitors (82 per cent).

Three-quarters felt that having an organisation to co-ordinate visits would lead to them visiting more often, while better transport to the venue (69 per cent) and more information about facilities for blind or partially sighted visitors (66 per cent) were also identified as significant factors.

What would persuade those who do not currently visit venues to attend?

The 55 respondents who had never visited galleries, museums and heritage sites were asked to choose from a list of possible explanations the one that best described

their reason(s) for never visiting. The most frequently given reasons for not visiting were "no personal interest" (25 per cent) and "I feel as a visually impaired person there would be little for me to enjoy" (24 per cent), see table 9.

Difficulties finding transport to venues, the complications of organising a visit and difficulties finding a companion were also significant factors.

Table 9: Reasons that best describe why people had not attended

	% of respondents that had never attended	Number of respondents that never attend
No personal interest	25	14
I feel as a visually impaired person there would be little to enjoy	24	13
Difficult to find transport to venue	18	10
Too complicated to organise visit	18	10
Difficult to find a companion	15	8
Lack of information on places to visit	–	–
Lack of information about specialist facilities or events for blind or partially sighted visitors	–	–
Other	–	–
Total	100	55

Base: 55 respondents who never attended.

When deciding whether to visit a gallery, museum or heritage site a number of different factors, such as cost and convenience of location, are taken into consideration. For people with sight problems, awareness of any specialist facilities that will help maximise their enjoyment and understanding during visits is an additional factor that might influence a decision. Almost three-quarters of respondents who never visited venues (72 per cent) indicated they would consider making a visit if they were made aware that a venue had facilities such as audio guides, specialist talks or objects they could touch.

How do people find out about leisure activities?

All respondents to the telephone survey undertaken for this project were asked to indicate from a list what would be their main source of information if they wanted to find out about leisure events and activities. Societies or groups for blind and partially sighted people (36 per cent), friends and family members (31 per cent) and talking newspapers (31 per cent) were the sources most commonly identified, as is shown in table 10 overleaf. There were no significant differences in the range of sources used by visitors compared with non-visitors.

Table 10: Main sources of information about events and activities

Source of information	% of respondents	Number of respondents
Society or group for blind and partially sighted people	36	94
A friend or family member	31	81
Talking newspaper	31	79
Radio	28	73
Local or national newspaper	22	58
Via a brochure or leaflet	19	50
From the internet	14	36
Other	15	39

Base: 259 (eight people did not answer the question). Note: respondents could specify more than one source so percentages add up to more than 100 per cent.

How aware are people of services at museums, galleries and heritage sites?

Respondents who had named a museum, gallery or heritage site that they had recently visited (133 respondents) were asked if there were any facilities or services for people with sight problems at the venue they visited that they were aware of. Of the 133 respondents only 40 per cent had been aware of such a service or facility. Awareness was particularly low in local galleries/museums (28 per cent), indicating that provision in these types of venues was comparatively poor or that they were not successfully making blind and partially sighted visitors aware of what was on offer. Over half of respondents visiting the other types of venue knew of facilities or services (see table 11).

Of those 53 respondents who were aware of any services or facilities at the last gallery, museum or heritage site they visited, just over half (51 per cent) knew of facilities before they arrived and just under half on arrival (see table 11). For twenty of these visitors the provision of services and facilities had been a deciding factor for

Table 11: Respondents aware of facilities or services at their last visit to a gallery, museum or heritage site

Last venue visited	% aware	% not aware	Base
Local gallery/museum	28	72	47
National gallery/museum	50	50	40
Heritage	43	57	46
Total	40	60	133

Base: 133

their visit. What this suggests is the availability of services and facilities is a pull factor for a significant proportion of visitors who have sight problems.

The small size of the sample (53 people aware of facilities) makes it difficult to draw conclusions about patterns of awareness across the different types of venue. However, the survey indicates that respondents who had visited national galleries and museums were more likely to know of specialist services and facilities before they arrived at the venue (60 per cent) than people visiting heritage sites (40 per cent). If visitors to royal palaces and National Trust properties are excluded from the analysis then the proportion of heritage site visitors knowing about facilities or services before arrival was lower still (31 per cent).

Table 12: Awareness of facilities and services before arrival at venue

	% aware before arrived	% not aware before arrived	Base
Local gallery/museum	54	46	13
National gallery/museum	60	40	20
Heritage	40	60	20
Total	51	49	53

Base: 53 (respondents who were aware of facilities or services at last venue visited).

Almost all respondents who were aware of services and facilities before they arrived at venues indicated how they had heard about the facilities or services (25 of the 27). The most common sources of information were a society or group for blind and partially sighted people. (eight people), contacting the venue direct (five people), word of mouth (four people) and membership of an organisation (three people). Only one person had obtained information through the internet and one from a general brochure or leaflet. Interestingly, 16 respondents had passed this information on to others. These findings highlight the importance formal and informal networks people with sight problems.

Staff play an important role in drawing visitors' attention to facilities and services for people with sight problems. Of those respondents who had only found out about services or facilities during their visit, the most popular source of information had been staff (13 people). Other sources (displayed information, printed information, audio information and companion) were each mentioned by three or less people.

The venue perspective

How do venues market services?

Venues were asked what services or information they publicise to blind or partially sighted visitors. Obviously, the services promoted at any particular venue depend on the services offered at that venue, but the following chart shows that the information that is publicised is patchy and often excludes information such as general travel information and whether there is a café.

Table 13: Services publicised to blind or partially sighted visitors

Service	%
General visitor information	41.8
Shop	36.4
Distance from bus stop, railway station or underground	36.4
Website	34.5
Visitor information for blind and partially sighted people	27.3
Group visits for blind and partially sighted people	27.3
Audio guide for blind and partially sighted people	25.5
Group visits, inclusive of blind and partially sighted people	25.5
General travel information	25.5
Main means of transport	25.5
Mainstream audio guide	21.8
One-to-one guided tours	21.8
Coffee shop/restaurant	21.8
Tactile or multi-sensory interest of the collection or venue	14.5
Events programme	12.7
Tactile and/or bold/colour contrasted map	12.7
Tactile model	7.3
Accessible features of the website	5.5
Other	23.6

Base: 55 venues.

When asked where they publicise services for blind and partially sighted visitors:

- six stated that they advertise services in their general publicity
- four stated that they publicise information to local societies for people with sight problems
- three in publications aimed at people with sight problems such as RNIBs New Beacon magazine.
- two through access guides
- two through their local Talking Newspapers
- two through mailing lists to interested individuals.

Those venues that were managed by larger organisations promote services in access guides that cover all that organisations venues (e.g CADW, Historic Scotland, National Trust.) Nearly half (26 venues) state that their services for blind and partially sighted visitors are publicised in "mainstream visitor" leaflets.

Venues were asked whether they publicised their services, collections or historic property to blind and partially sighted visitors in accessible formats. 16 venues (29 per cent) publicise their services in large print, eight in audio and five in braille.

Table 14: Formats in which services are promoted

	No.	%
Large print	16	29.1
Braille	5	9.1
Audio	8	14.5
Other	8	14.5

Base: 55 venues.

How effective is this marketing?

Venues do not feel that blind or partially sighted visitors are aware of their services. When asked how aware they think blind and partially sighted visitors are of the services they can visit on their own or with a friend/companion, 44 venues (80 per cent) felt that blind or partially sighted visitors would either be "not at all" or only "a little" aware of services.

A third of the venues (18 organisations) think that blind and partially sighted people are "not at all" aware of the services a member of staff can offer to interested individuals and groups, in addition to the audio tour. Nearly half (49 per cent, 27 organisations) feel that blind and partially sighted people are only "a little" aware. This means that 82 per cent of the organisations surveyed felt that blind and partially sighted people were either "not at all or "only a little aware" of the services staff can offer other than the audio guide.

7. Welcoming visitors with sight problems

Summary: This section contains findings from the research into the welcome blind and partially sighted people receive at museums, galleries and heritage sites. Users commented positively on the customer service they received in general but felt in certain instances that members of staff were either not very confident in speaking to people with sight problems, or not very aware of what they could be doing to make visits more enjoyable. This section also contains research into how welcoming buildings are to blind and partially sighted visitors.

The user perspective

In general, the auditors were positive about the customer service they had received at venues:

"Some people always say 'why do you want to go on holiday?', 'why do you want to travel?' but on the whole people who work in museums have not been like that. On the contrary, they have been very helpful."

"Staff are welcoming and helpful. There is a small café on ground floor that is served by staff who are aware of the needs of visually impaired people."
Auditors

"My reception by all staff was very welcoming and positive, they are already well aware of the difficulties experienced by blind and visually impaired visitors." **Auditor**

The experience of visiting venues had meant that the auditors felt it was important to call in advance to ask what services were available and to a make an appointment:

"If I turn up without having called beforehand and ask if there's anyone who can show me round and they say – 'I'm sorry we're too busy today', then I'll accept that and I'll say "Oh dear, that's a shame, I'll come back another time."

"One thing I have learnt from this exercise is to ring the places beforehand and ask what services are available for someone who is visually impaired. If they say "none at all", I will still go but I will take a guide with me and get the information that I want."
Auditors

Auditors had however experienced negative responses when they had called in advance at venues:

"It's just that they see a visually impaired person as a problem and they don't know how to go round it. The best way is just to say 'no'."
Auditor

During their visits to venues for the study, some of the auditors had encountered some bad experiences in terms of customer service:

"When I said on the phone that I was going to look in my diary, he said, "Look! You can't look! Don't use such an expression! You told me that you had no sight!" And that was on the phone, he kept me for 10 minutes. That's the sort of person he was, the most unaware person I've ever met."
Auditor

It is key to ensure that whoever a visitor first speaks to at a venue is aware of the potential needs of people with sight problems:

"The person who is the contact should have some sort of understanding about what is expected of and what is meant by a 'guide'. There must be someone competent to answer the phone and greet you when you get there."
Auditor

"Staff were, on the whole, very helpful and well tuned into the needs of visually impaired people, neither neglectful nor patronising. However, I did get the classic 'over there' description, and 'straight ahead' being based on the speakers orientation, not the listener, which resulted in me heading off in the wrong direction."
Auditor

A number of auditors commented on the benefit of being accompanied by a staff member from the venue who could expand on information given in the audio guide:

"As my assistant could see which part of the commentary I was listening to at any given time via the LCD on the MP3 player, she was able to add relevant comments and extra pieces of information and, if necessary, stop the machine in order to provide further explanation."

"My sighted guide did an excellent job guiding me around the exhibition particularly when the CD player was malfunctioning. My guide's extensive in-depth knowledge and personal descriptions make me realise what the audio guide had not revealed."
Auditors

The auditors were pleased that the survey had provided them with the opportunity to express their opinions on the service they received at venues and were keen to encourage others to do the same:

"You need to make them aware that's not the way to treat somebody and approach them with suggestions."
Auditor

The venue perspective

Venues were asked whether staff had received training in how to meet the needs of blind and partially sighted visitors:

- in 25 of the venues (45 per cent), front of house staff had received such training
- in 21 venues (38 per cent), guides and education officers had been trained
- in 17 venues (31 per cent) managers and directors had been trained.

Less than a quarter of the venues (13 organisations, 24 per cent) stated that there was any evaluation of existing services for people with sight problems.

The Resource survey of provision of services for disabled users found that:

- 44 per cent have briefings on the implication of the DDA
- 49 per cent have disability equality training exploring social and other barriers

- 51 per cent have awareness training, with simulated "experience" of specific disabilities
- 39 per cent have awareness training in sensory impairments
- 39 per cent have disability briefing sessions, to put over plans to promote inclusion
- 33 per cent have training that is focused on members of staff who meet the public
- 55 per cent of museums have training to increase awareness on access for disabled people that extends to all members of staff.

The 1998 DOMUS survey found that only 32 per cent of museum staff had received disability awareness training.

Accessible environments

The user perspective

Auditors commented on the accessibility of the physical environments at some of the venues. Some venues were praised for their accessibility:

> "The guide covers three floors of this building all of which are easily accessible and served by a lift which is fitted with braille controls and a voice synthesiser." **Auditor**

Whilst in others there were difficulties with various features such as access to display cases ("the glass in the displays was not non-reflective") and lighting. Display text and signage were other areas that were criticised in the reports:

> "The signs need to be larger and could either be back lit or have a small spotlight on them. They could be consistently placed." **Auditor**

Some of the venues audited had braille signs although some of these were placed in the wrong position:

> "I was a little confused as the braille was under a line of raised text." **Auditor**

In the phone survey, some of the services or facilities that were offered by galleries, museums and heritage sites were criticised – a braille guide was out of date, braille on doors was inaccessible because it was placed too high.

Venues were also criticised by some respondents for their poor lighting conditions, poor lettering and signage, lack of large print or clear notices and providing captions that were difficult to read (e.g. captions on background colour).

There were also several complaints about steps and stairs, for example, lack of markings to differentiate ramps from steps, lack of a rail guard and so on.

Thirteen of the audio guides that were audited, which were specifically designed for people with sight problems, were offered with tactile maps. These were found by some of the auditors to be useful for orientation, and others not. Obviously however, there are a number of variables in this matter – the personal preference of the visitor and their familiarity with tactile maps, the quality of the tactile map itself and the ease of the building to navigate. A number of comments on tactile maps were made in the general comments of the audit reports. A number of auditors

felt that tactile maps would have greatly enhanced their independence at venues that had not provided them:

> "To allow independent exploration a tactile map would have been useful for orientation… and could have been used to locate and advise relevant numbers." **Auditor**

A number of the tactile maps were criticised however. Some were not up to date or inaccurate, and others were difficult to take on a visit:

> "I found the tactile map very problematic as it had inaccurate information. Things were in the wrong place or not there at all, this made the experience ultimately very frustrating."
>
> "The tour, because it does not give orientation, has to be used in conjunction with the large print folder and tactile map, making the whole process very cumbersome. This effectively means that a blind person would not be able to access this tour without assistance." **Auditors**

Other auditors experienced difficulties with reading maps but recognised that others may not:

> "I found reading the map extremely difficult because I have had no previous experience of using tactile maps. The tactile map gives you an idea of where artwork is within rooms, but personally I did not find it useful for finding the galleries." **Auditor**

The venue perspective

- 13 of the venues in the sample (24 per cent) have a tactile map for blind visitors.
- Only five (nine per cent) have a large print map.
- 19 of the venues (35 per cent) state that clear signage has been put in place to facilitate orientation.
- 18 of the venues (33 per cent) have labelled exhibits, furniture/fittings or architectural features in large size print (e.g. 24 point).
- Three venues (five per cent) have braille labels.

8. Summary

> "It's all to do with making people with power in organisations aware that it's not a privilege for a blind person to touch an exhibit or to have an audio guide that is accessible, it's a right"
> **Auditor**

This publication has summarised the research undertaken for the Talking Images project. The research has found both examples of good practice and imaginative approaches, and situations when the moral and legal right of people with sight problems to access information and services has not been met.

- **Planning for inclusion** has shown that although venues recognise the importance of consultation and evaluation, there are venues that develop services without consultation, and few that have long-term mechanisms for consultation or that feedback to participants on findings. Resource research indicates that only 38 per cent have an access policy that mentions disabled people. Only a third of museums surveyed for Talking Images have access for disabled people built into annual budgets.

- **Improving access: information** illustrated the frustration of blind and partially sighted people visiting venues that do not have information in a form they can access. Talking Images and other research indicates that few venues provide information in accessible formats. Large print can be easily and cheaply produced yet is often not provided. 42 per cent of the venues surveyed for Talking Images admitted that at best, a blind or partially sighted visitor could access none, or only "a little" of their venue, collections and events through using information in accessible formats.

- **Improving access: descriptions, tours, touch and events** gave the views of users on services provided for blind and partially sighted people. Having the opportunity to touch both real objects and models, and receiving personal guided tours were services that were generally praised. Few venues surveyed were able to offer a one-to-one guide without several days or even a few weeks notice. 53 per cent of venues felt when all services were considered, less than half of their collections or property were accessible to visitors with sight problems.

- **Improving access: audio guides** gave the experience of users in terms of the accessibility of technology used, descriptions on the guides, orientation information and quality of recordings. These findings illustrate that when done well, an audio guide can be an excellent way to improve access for visitors with sight problems. Just because a guide is in audio, however, does not necessarily mean that it will be accessible to blind and partially sighted people. Inaccessible technology, badly written descriptions, poor recording quality or added acoustic features made for frustrating visits.

- **Promoting your service** revealed that many venues surveyed for Talking Images do not feel that information on their services is reaching blind and partially sighted people. Respondents to the telephone survey said their main sources of information on leisure activities were local societies, family and friends and talking newspapers. Almost three-quarters of respondents to the phone survey who never visited venues indicated they would consider making a visit if they were made aware that a venue had services for blind and partially sighted people.

- **Welcoming visitors with sight problems** showed that although many visitors commented positively on the welcome they received at venues, there were instances when members of staff were not aware of the potential needs of blind and partially sighted people. There were also comments from users on poor lighting, signage and display text.

The research also informs the three practical case studies undertaken by Vocaleyes. The findings in this publication have been used to inform the development of the Talking Images Guide. This guide can be consulted by venues for ideas and information on how to create a high-quality experience for people with sight problems.

Image to follow for page 65

9. Contacts

Contact details are correct at time of going to press and are not exhaustive.

Partner organisations

Vocaleyes
(Nationwide audio description producers)
25 Short Street
London SE1 8LJ
Telephone 020 7261 9199
www.vocaleyes.co.uk

Royal National Institute of the Blind
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Telephone 020 7388 1266
Contact: Talking Images Arts and Heritage Officer

Contact for RNIB products, publications and factsheets:

RNIB Customer Services
PO Box 173
Peterborough PE2 6WS
Telephone 0845 702 3153
Minicom 0845 58 56 91
Email: UK customers –
CServices@rnib.org.uk
Overseas customers –
exports@rnib.org.uk

Funders and advisors

Arts Council England
14 Great Peter Street
London SW1P 3NQ
Telephone 020 7333 0100
Textphone 020 7973 6564
www.artscouncil.org.uk

Cadw – Welsh Historic Monuments
National Assembly for Wales
Cathays Park
Cardiff CF10 3NQ
Telephone 029 2050 0200
www.cadw.wales.gov.uk

Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH
Telephone 020 7211 6200
Email: enquiries@culture.gov.uk
www.culture.gov.uk

English Heritage
Customer Services Department
PO Box 569
Swindon SN2 2YP
Telephone 0870 333 1181
www.english-heritage.org.uk

Historic Scotland
Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh EH9 1SH
Telephone 0131 668 8600
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Museums & Galleries Disability Association (MAGDA)
Guy Purdey, (Chair)
c/o South East Museum Library and
Archive Council
Kent and Medway Office
Garden Room
Historic Dockyard
Chatham
Kent ME4 4TE
Telephone 01634 40 50 31
www.magda.org.uk

Resource
16 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AA
Telephone 020 7273 1444
www.resource.gov.uk

Other charities and organisations

Action for Blind People
14-16 Verney Road
London SE16 3DZ
Telephone 020 7635 4800
www.afbp.org

Audio Description Association
Adrienne Pye, Membership Secretary
c/o Arts Marketing Hampshire
Mottisfont Court
Tower Street
Winchester SO23 8ND
Telephone 01962 84 69 60

Audio Description Association (Scotland)
Caroline Brophy, Chair
c/o Edinbrugh Festival Theatre
13/29 Nicolson Street
Edinburgh EH8 9FT
Telephone 0131 529 6000

Disability Rights Commission
DRC Helpline
FREEPOST
MID02164
Stratford upon Avon CV37 9BR
Telephone 08457 622 633
Textphone 08457 622 644
www.drc.org.uk

The Group for Education in Museums
Primrose House
193 Gillingham Road
Gillingham
Kent ME7 4EP
Telephone 01634 31 24 09
Email: gemso@blueyonder.co.uk
www.gem.org.uk

Guide Dogs for the Blind
Burghfield Common
Reading RG7 3YG
Telephone 0870 600 2323
www.guidedogs.co.uk

Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management
ILAM House
Lower Basildon
Reading RG8 9NE
Telephone 01491 87 48 00
Email: info@ilam.co.uk
www.ilam.co.uk

Museums Association
24 Calvin Street
London E1 6NW
Telephone 020 7426 6970
Email: info@museumsassociation.org
www.museumsassociation.org

National Library for the Blind
Far Cromwell Road
Bredbury
Stockport SK6 2SG
Telephone 0161 355 2000
www.nlbuk.org

The Partially Sighted Society
Queens Road
Doncaster
South Yorks DN1 2NX
Telephone 01302 32 31 32
Email: info@partsight.org.uk

RNID
19-23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL
Telephone 0808 808 0123 (freephone)
Textphone 0808 808 9000 (freephone)
www.rnid.org.uk

Sense
11-13 Clifton Terrace
Finsbury Park
London N4 3SR
Telephone 020 7272 7774
Textphone 020 7272 9648
www.sense.org.uk

International organisations

Art Education for the Blind
The Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens
829 Riverside Avenue
Jacksonville
Florida 32204. USA
Telephone (904) 356 6857
www.arteducation.info

Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission
www.hreoc.gov.au

Audio guide producers

This list of producers is not exhaustive and the inclusion of a producer does not constitute a recommendation from the Talking Images partners.

Acoustiguide
188 Sutton Court Road
London W4 3HR
Telephone 020 8747 3744
Email: info@acoustiguide.co.uk
www.acoustiguide.co.uk

Advanced Thinking Systems
1 South Lane
Clanfield
Waterlooville
Hampshire PO8 0RB
Telephone 023 9259 5000
Email: sales@advances-thinking.co.uk
www.advanced-thinking.co.uk

Antenna Audio
J 307-309 Tower Bridge Business Complex,
100 Clements Road
London SE16 4DG
Telephone 020 7740 1155
Email: info@antennaaudio.com
www.antennaaudio.com

Audio Visual Consultants
107-111 Whitehouse Loan
Edinburgh EH9 1AT
Telephone 0131 447 6211
Email: les.bushby@avc-edinburgh.co.uk
www.avc-edinburgh.co.uk

Black Box AV Ltd
25 Aberafan Road
Baglan Industrial Park
Port Talbot
West Glamorgan SA12 7DJ
Telephone 01639 76 70 07
Email: info@blackboxav.co.uk
www.blackboxav.co.uk

The Dog Rose Trust
83 Greenacres
Ludlow
Shropshire SY8 1LZ
Telephone 01584 87 45 67
Email: information@dogrose-trust.org.uk
www.dogrose-trust.org.uk

Fieldsman Trails
Colin Antwis
Fron Deg
Clayton Road
Mold
Flintshire CH7 1SU UK
Telephone 01352 75 62 02
Email: colin@adams-consulting.co.uk
www.dialspace.dial.pipex.com/town/parade/
ni30/fieldsman/

Flexleigh Audio Guides
Scotlands House
Warfield
Bracknell
Berkshire RG42 6AJ
Telephone 020 733 7999
Email: flexli@netcomuk.co.uk
www.flexleigh.co.uk

OPHRYS Systems
BCM Ophrys Systems
London WC1N 3XX
Telephone 0800 028 1308
Email: ophrys@ophrys.net
www.ophrys.net

Producers of tactile images, maps and models

The Dog Rose Trust
83 Greenacres
Ludlow
Shropshire SY8 1LZ
Telephone 01584 87 45 67
Email: information@dogrose-trust.org.uk
www.dogrose-trust.org.uk

Living Paintings Trust
Queen Isabelle House
Unit 8, Kingsclere Park
Kingsclere, Newbury
Berkshire RG20 4SW
Telephone 01635 29 97 71
www.livingpaintings.org

National Centre for Tactile Diagrams

University of Hertfordshire
Hatfield
Herts AL10 9AB
Telephone 01707 28 63 48
Email: info@nctd.org.uk
www.nctd.org.uk

RNIB Tactile Images and plans
Sue King
Customer Liaison Officer
RNIB Peterborough
PO Box 173
Peterborough PE2 6WS
Telephone 01733 37 07 77

Accessible environments

Centre for Accessible Environments
Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London SE1 2NY
Telephone 020 7357 8182
Minicom 020 7357 8182
www.cae.org.uk

JMU Access Partnership
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Telephone 020 7391 2002
Email: info@jmuaccess.org.uk
www.jmuaccess.org.uk

National Register for Access Consultants
www.nrac.org.uk

Accessible information

Confederation of Transcribed Information Services (COTIS)
67 High Street
Tarporley
Cheshire CW6 0DP
Telephone 01829 73 33 51
www.cotis.org.uk

RNIB Transcription Services
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Telephone 020 7391 2341

RNIB Web accessibility team
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Telephone 020 7388 1266
Email: webaccess@rnib.org.uk

Talking Newspapers Association of the UK
National Recording Centre
Heathefield
East Sussex TN21 8DB
Telephone 01435 86 27 37
www.tnel.co.uk or www.tnauk.org.uk

Inclusive Design

Sensory Design Services
RNIB Peterborough
Bakewell Road
Orton Southgate
Peterborough PE2 6XU
Telephone 01733 37 52 80
Email: sds@rnib.org.uk
www.sds-uk.org
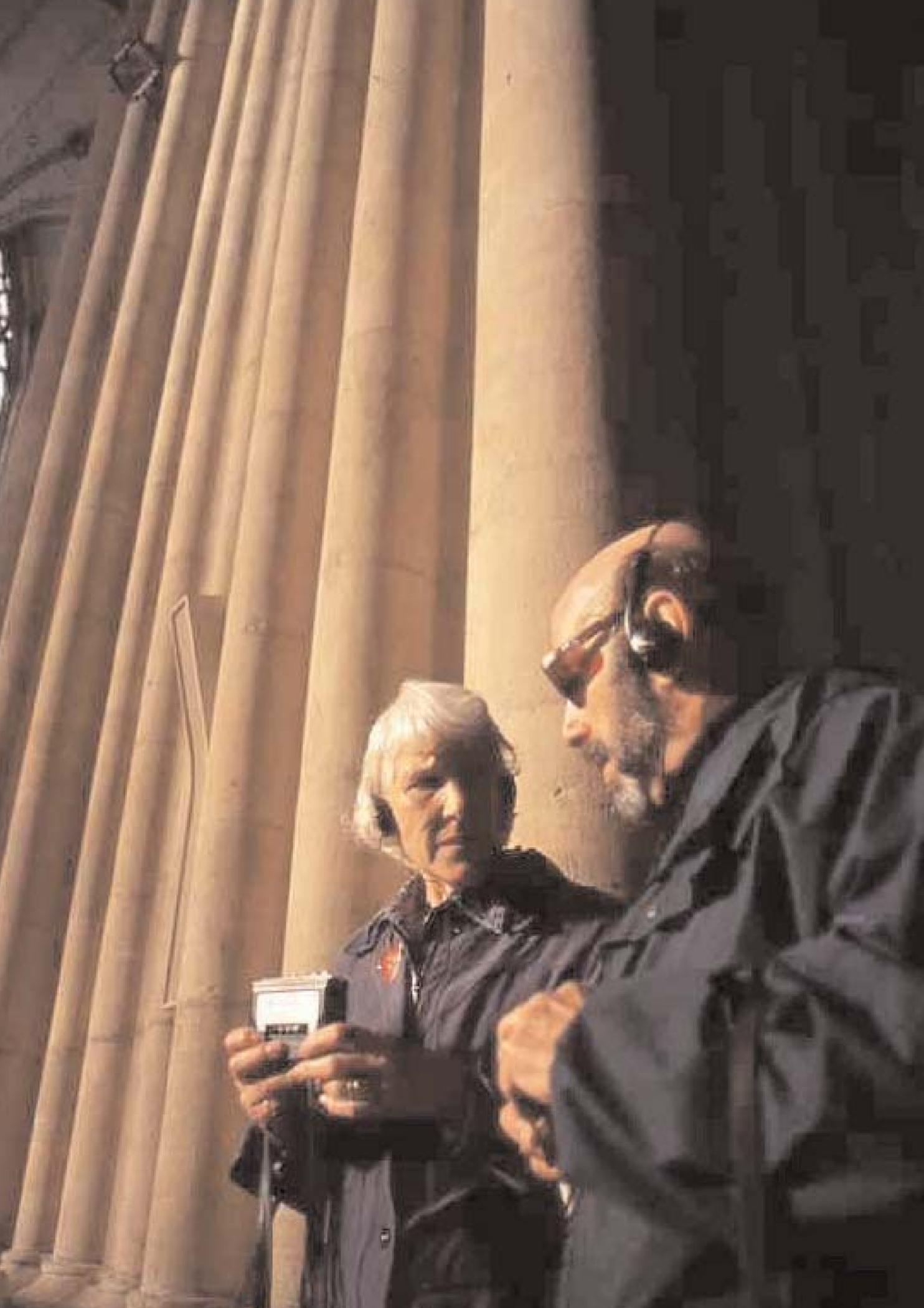
10. Appendix

Audits

Aim

This study was an assessment by blind and partially sighted visitors of a sample of audio guides offered at museums, galleries and heritage sites in the UK. Four main areas were covered in the assessments of audio guides: technology, sound, content and description.

Methodology

A team of 12 blind and partially sighted auditors based across the UK was recruited by RNIB to undertake the audits. Auditors were briefed on the project, the research and aims, and on the particular details of the survey.

Venues with audio guides were identified with the help of a number of organisations including:

- English Heritage
- The National Trust
- Historic Scotland
- Cadw
- SEMLAC (formerly SEMS)
- NWLAC

A matrix of these audio guides was developed to ensure a balanced representation of museums, art galleries, heritage sites, historic ships and stately homes. A representative sample of venues in England, Wales and Scotland was selected; at this stage of the project development, no audio guides were identified in Northern Ireland. The steering group, with additional input from the advisory group, developed the report form to be completed by the auditors, covering the audio guide and the visit in general.

The audit assessments were arranged with the knowledge of the venues and took place between September 2001 and November 2002. The auditors completed a detailed report on each visit. The information gathered forms a substantial user assessment of audio guides by blind and partially sighted visitors. However, the size of the sample does not permit extensive cross-tabulation, and an emphasis has been put on the wealth of qualitative feedback amassed. It must also be remembered that the experiences recorded are those of one person on one particular day.

Venue survey

Aim

The aim of this study was to survey the museums, galleries and heritage sites in the UK who participated in the audit study, to ascertain what services they provide for blind and partially sighted visitors. Seven main areas of provision, management and evaluation were covered.

Methodology

Venues were selected as described above. Participating venues were sent a self-assessment questionnaire that was developed by the project steering group with additional input from the advisory group. The questionnaire was sent to organisations by post. All of the 55 participating venues completed their assessment form.

It must be remembered that the venues participating in this survey are a sample of venues that offer audio guides to their visitors, not a sample of all museums, galleries and heritage sites. The venues surveyed already have audio guides and therefore may represent a more positive picture of provision for blind and partially sighted people than is commonly found. It must also be remembered that the questionnaire was completed by the venues themselves, and is subject to their interpretation both of the questions asked, and their own provision.

Phone survey

Aim

As part of Talking Images, RNIB and Vocaleyes wished to obtain a more informed view about blind and partially sighted people's attitudes towards visiting art galleries, museums and heritage sites and their experiences. It was felt that a telephone survey of blind and partially sighted people with an interest in arts and leisure would provide valuable data that could be followed-up at a later stage with a more in-depth investigation of issues.

Methodology

RNIB and Vocaleyes used their mailing lists to compile a sampling frame of individuals who were known to have an interest in arts and leisure. This is one of the reasons why the survey population is not necessarily representative of blind and partially sighted people more generally.

A telephone research company, The Phone Room, interviewed 267 visually impaired people and a research consultant, Helen Jermyn, was commissioned to write a report summarising key findings.