notes on accessibility

Bill Thompson -- moderator

Some accessibility features that should be looked at for a con.

Hotel rooms should have a King size bed AND enough space for a scooter to get around.
Blocking out accessible HC you have to get in live
Most rooms in Europe, and in Ireland accommodate 2 people only, and are small rooms that might not accommodate scooters or mobis.

Some rooms in Ireland are King and double and accessible are not in the block.

Social anxiety can't be changed.
Sights, sounds, odors and tactile triggers often can't be changed, but can be warned about.
Conventions and the Hospitality rooms, or hotel hospitality services often can't control possible triggers.
Because of the fanbase aging, bathrooms aren't large enough for scooters or wheelchairs.
In order to check for accessibility, you really need to take scooters, mobiles, wheelchairs, walkers, etc. into the rooms to verify they are accessible. Do a powerchair walkhru.

SMOFcon 36 problems.

No public transport connection to the Flamingo from airports, no access to a power scooter once here. Non-North American cons do this: Hae rally good public transport. At Helsinki, everything seems to take roll on scooters.

On the other hand cobblestones don't work with canes or scooters.

Inside structures at conventions.

Access issues -- Worldcon exclusively can be approached with 'how do the locals do it?'
Worldcons regularly rent enough mobis for attendees who request one prior. But many people don't reserve a mobi before arriving a the con. The convention usually has to rent from other scooter companies. It's good to give all local scooter rental companies that the con may need to have access to their machines.

The bulk of the pre-arranged scooters used are trucked in, but local renters help take up the slack.

Visual and Hearing Disabilities

Recently at a small Los Angeles con, 125 to 150 people, the main thing was prioriy seating for the Song and Vid show. Good to have a list of those who have hearing and/or visual impairment, because they should also have access to the front seats with similarly impaired mobi users. Besides the front, side and aisle spaces for mobis is also good. Wheeled walkers should also get some priority for aisle seats.

Invisible disabilities

1,000 of Baycon's attendees are gray and may need accessibility for things that are invisible. It's important to let folks know that if they need help, they need to let us know. If the disability is not visible we often overlook it.

It was noted that Disney is very good about disabiliy situations and could be used as a model. While they have limits for what you can ask for, that is people who don't have a disability that requires a mobile device don't get a mobile device. But even at Disney, not all disabililties can be accommodated. The fireworks won't be cancelled, for instance.

Fluorescent lights can be a problem for many people, particularly when they are used in meeting rooms. It was mentioned that many places are moving away from fluorescent.

Persons with hearing disabilities can sometimes use American Sign Language, but interpreters are often difficult to find or too expensive for a convention.

Somethings can't be made better. Many places just aren't accessble to persons with physical disabilities. You can't change crowds and crowding and mass movement at events. Because of that, Mid December is a good time to schedue cons because the number of people seems to drop a bit at venues.

Hotel Resources

It's good to find out up front if a hotel has or has access to an accessible shuttle. Many smaller venues, like Denver, have a supershuttle but it's not wheelchair accessible. While airlines take mobis for free, there often is not way to get them from the airport to the venue. For instance, in San Francisco it's possible to get accessible transportation going South from the airport, but nearly impossible to get it going north.

The problem with SMOFcon is that no one is bidding for us.

Visually Impaired

While hotel rooms are good here VI members need and appreciate electronic or large print for all the information that's handed out: books, programs, souvenir books.

Program items are vital at conventions and also because a few months after a convention, the Con website goes down taking its links with it.

Black and White plain text!! Accessible paperwork should not have color. Even if the font used is large color interferes with some folks' ability to read. One way to overcome this is to make all program material available on the Website for viewing AND download. Also including hypertext links to various accessible conversions, programs, and assistance sights. Programs can read and speak plain text faster now than a human could.

Money

A lot is not feasible for smaller cons because of the cost. Some folks can't make it physically to conventions, but would be happy to assist remotely if you ask. The convention mailing list could be a good resource.

Small conventions in small hotels are difficult fo accessibillity. Transportation using an outside van service can cost about $120 per ride.

Close conditions

Make ribbons for persons that need physical space
Don't hug without permission, don't touch without permission
Being misgendered can be painful
Don't wear cologne

Behavior and Social Impairment

Volunteers on spectrum may take extra consideration. Sometimes you can't accommodate these volunteers because of a lack of resources. The first step has to the person being open about the disability so it can be accomodated. If they need a construction of specific tasks at specific times you need to provide those: scope of task required, rest breaks, lunch breaks.

Communications are always a good thing, and it's important to be more vocal about what needs are so that conventions can accommodate if possible.