



Module 4

Unit 6: Audio description directions

Core video transcript

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Transcript

Slide 1

This is Chris Taylor of the University of Trieste with some information regarding audio description directions, that is the guidance as to how move around a museum, either assisted or autonomously in order to see the relevant exhibits. This is Unit 6 (AD Directions) in Module 4 (Semi-live or recorded AD for static arts and environments).

Slide 2

If a person with sight loss visits a museum, he or she will need guidance as to how to navigate the building and locate the points of interest.

Slide 3

If a human guide is available, he or she will guide the person with sight loss from exhibit to exhibit. The guide may be part of the museum staff and therefore be knowledgeable about the exhibits. Or he or she may be hired for the occasion and may or may not be knowledgeable re. the exhibits.

Similarly, the guide may come with the person with sight loss and only be of directional assistance. At this point the human gives over to the audio-guide at each point of interest.

Slide 4

Without the assistance of a human guide, a number of options are available:

1. the use of an audio-guide designed for sighted patrons;
2. a cord to follow through the museum;
3. specially created audio-guide with AD for people with sight loss;
4. specially created audio-guide with directions incorporated.

Slide 5

An audio guide to exhibits can be very helpful but ideally needs to be tailored to the needs of people with sight loss, through AD criteria and through directions.

Slide 6

The provision of a cord to guide people with sight loss through a museum can be found in some locations e.g., Miramare Castle in Trieste. At intervals objects of interest are signalled either physically or acoustically. This service can also be extended to outdoor sections.

3

Slide 7

An audio-guide can also have built-in directions. But these must be accurate and user-friendly – this is not a simple task!

The describer needs to research the route, decide on the exhibits to stop at, time the route, etc.

Slide 8

The layout of a museum can range from one single room to a building with several floors, mezzanine floors, extensions, outdoor sections, etc.

A human guide or an audio-guide needs to provide a general view of the layout of a museum at the beginning of the tour.

Slide 9

Small cramped rooms may be difficult to navigate without knocking into exhibits. Big rooms can create a lost sense of direction.

Slide 10

As well as the exhibits, the person with sight loss needs to locate the ancillary facilities – the information desk, toilets, the café, bookshop, etc. These should be pointed out at the beginning of the tour and also indicated *en route*.

Slide 11

Strategies for prioritizing and organizing information in AD need to be implemented i.e. what to see and how to get to it.

Slide 12

Firstly establish the points of departure and arrival and explain the current positioning.

Slide 13

Decide whether to use measurements (for example, go ahead 10 metres) or steps (take five steps to the right). First follow the course yourself and with sighted people.

Slide 14

Make clear how the person with sight loss is positioned before an exhibit (from the front, back, side). This is particularly important in the case of tactile explorations (see Unit 7).

Slide 15

Be careful to be accurate when indicating changes of direction (for example, after five metres, turn right; turn left as you enter Room 14). Use objects such as handrails, benches, walls, etc.

Slide 16

Buildings with several floors need special attention (take the lift to the fourth floor; the stairs to the second floor are in front of you – take the first flight of ten steps, then turn right to take the second flight of fifteen steps; and so on).

Slide 17

In outside locations, manoeuvring can be even more tricky. When outside, for example in the park of a large museum, the distances are greater and indications such as ‘go ahead 115 metres’ are not very helpful. Use landmarks such as trees, waste paper baskets, etc.

Slide 18

The above considerations are valid guidelines for the creating of audio-guides that can be used autonomously by people with sight loss in many museum environments.

In small, little known museums, there is not usually a congestion problem. You might be the only people present, especially if a private visit has been organized.

Slide 19

However, in well-known, well-attended institutions such as the British

Museum, the enormous crowds make it impossible for people with sight loss to navigate comfortably. Here a human guide is essential.

Slide 20

In these cases, as indeed in the British Museum, a human guide (even a friend or relation) takes the person with sight loss in hand to visit the pre-marked exhibits of interest and then the audio-guide takes over. Help is also required in queues for the toilets, for the information desk, etc.

This is the final slide in Unit Six.



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