Appendix 2a: Discussion Document towards an Evaluation of the HSBC Money Gallery
for Disabled Visitors
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Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. This document provides a baseline for further advice from disabled people who may or may not have been users of The British Museum's HSBC Money Gallery. It is based on my personal experience with disabled people in The British Museum and the HSBC Money Gallery during 1997 and 1998 as well as published good practice guidance. It is not based on the findings from targeted evaluative strategies such as questionnaires, interviews, observation etc. It can only be considered as a preliminary review of the issues involved. However, it must be remembered that it is in the details rather than the broad principles or issues that access for disabled visitors to a gallery stands to succeed or fail. Nevertheless, given the limited resources available for evaluation, it is hoped that the report can serve as a draft discussion document that will assist in developing a useful remedial and qualitative evaluation of access for disabled visitors to the HSBC Money Gallery, that can in turn inform useful and realistic developments.

1.2. The document is based on the social, rather than individual and medicalised model of disability, by which I hope that individual difference in interest levels, abilities and needs etc. can be celebrated and accommodated for the benefit of all, disabled and non-disabled visitors. The social model is promoted by most disabled people[1] and disability organisations, in the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) itself and its published guidance, the Museums and Galleries Commission in its guidance, and the recently published National Museums of Scotland's guide to designing exhibitions to include disabled people.[2] A person's disability is seen as a result of the social and environmental barriers erected by society that should and can be dismantled, rather than as a result of the individual impairment. However, this approach is not intended to deny the reality of a person's impairment, but, rather, to suggest ways of working towards real inclusion of disabled people. Our society is diverse and if full access for the diversity of disabled people is seriously considered in an exhibition gallery, many more people in society in genera, will also be included.[3]

1.3. I have chosen to structure this document under the following headings, with each heading followed by a checklist of important (but not exhaustive) considerations. I then go on to comment, where information is available, on the items on a particular checklist. However, neither prioritisation nor feasibility are considered or appropriate at this stage. There is also some repetition under these headings.
a) Physical access
b) Sensory access
c) Intellectual access
d) Emotional/psychological access.
e) Representation of disabled people and disability

1.4. The external environment in which museums operate has changed and continues to change, since the HSBC Money Gallery was planned. There have been changes in Educational, Social and Cultural policies, funding structures and criteria, and legislation, amongst other things, that now require museums to look more closely at the needs of a much wider audience and 'include' disabled people. The Government has now published a timetable for the implementation of the remaining parts of the Rights of Access to Goods, Services and Facilities, in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. From October 1999 reasonable changes will be required to policies, practices and procedures and the provision of auxiliary aids or services by alternative methods. In 2004 service providers will be required to remove physical barriers. Further progress can also be expected in the formation of a Disability Rights Commission and in the enforcement of the existing legislation. However, it is the 'spirit' of the law that is important, and although there will be some cost implications, access for disabled visitors to galleries in general has more to do with changes of attitude than costly physical alterations. The wish to evaluate such a new

gallery should be seen as an important marker of that change of attitude within The British Museum.

1.5 The Gallery was designed to offer access to a wider audience than the 'traditional' scholarly visitor.[4] Amongst the aims for the gallery the display was intended to address the interests of all types of visitor and communicate with children, casual visitors, academics etc.[5] However, although disabled people were certainly considered during the planning process, no formal consultation took place, staff had no access to Disability Awareness and Equality Training, nor were Access Audits so widely accepted as today is good practice. Internal expert advice was not available, there was no Access Co-ordinator, nor was it common practice to seek other relevant advice externally. The design concept was also limited by the architectural features of the space and the gallery's location as a main thoroughfare of the upper level of the Museum. The gallery, as the 'public' face of the Department of Coins and Medals was, however, seen as one element of a broader strategy to improve public access to, and knowledge about, the Departmental collections.[6] The gallery had to meet the broad design traditions of the Museum, (although the house-style is itself now in the process of change), but it was underpinned by an 'inclusive' approach to sharing the departmental collections beyond the scholarly community. Moreover, this 'inclusive' approach has been clearly demonstrated subsequently in the Department's response to access initiatives in the Museum.

2. Physical Access

Checklist :
    Emergency egress (exits and escape provision)
    Front of house staff training in disability awareness and equality
    Routes to gallery/way finding
    Floor surfaces/colour contrast/lighting
    Seating/rest areas/toilet facilities for gallery
    Signage/orientation to and in gallery
    Visitor flow/circulation
    Position, height, shape of showcases
    Object display, position, height, layout
    Exhibition texts – position, height, layout.

2.1. Emergency egress

2.1.1. Physical access for disabled visitors must not be considered separately from Emergency Egress. Although this is a Museum-wide rather than departmental responsibility, consideration of the latter must underpin any evaluation of all forms of access. A Deaf Consultant on the Museum's Disability Advisory Group commented on

how vulnerable and insecure he felt on his first visit to the Museum, as neither signage nor procedures were clear or obvious (see also Way finding). Wheelchair users and visitors with learning disabilities on the same advisory body explained that they feel very vulnerable in such crowded galleries, with the limited lift access, and no clear emergency egress signage or procedures.

2.2. Staff training (a Museum-wide issue)

2.2.1. An on-going programme of Disability Awareness and Equality Training for staff, appropriate to the different levels and specialisms within the Museum, is now in place. This is crucial for all staff, at all levels, who have contact with visitors. A bad experience while trying to park, or when asking for directions, (as has happened several times to my knowledge) can ruin a visit before it has even started. Departmental staff also need the training to ensure they deal appropriately with disabled visitors (and staff), either on the phone or face-to-face.

2.3. Routes to the gallery/way finding

2.3.1. The British Museum web-site is helpful, both for information about the gallery and general access information for the Museum. Many younger disabled people use the Internet regularly and this medium will become an increasingly important source of information. However, the access information available is not yet related to specific galleries. The HSBC Money Gallery pages do not contain specific access information, nor information about handling sessions etc. The Department of Coins and Medals could provide the 'model' for the development of gallery specific information, particularly given its plans to develop the interpretative strategies on offer to visitors.

2.3.2. The Museum is a large, complex and crowded building, and the existence of the HSBC Money Gallery is not obvious when entering the building.

2.3.3. Access for wheelchair users or those with other mobility impairments to the upper floors is particularly difficult at present, with only a staff lift in service. Full and independent access to the upper floor should be available in the future (see Great Court Access Audit and plans).

2.3.4. The gallery has level access once on the upper floor.

2.3.5. Signage throughout the museum is somewhat idiosyncratic in both positioning, content and style, although improvement is on-going. Many visitors find locating the gallery difficult (particularly from the North entrance) and there is no tactile signage for visually impaired visitors.

2.3.6. While the gallery has been planned for entry at either end (which in principle is excellent), this two-way traffic can itself cause problems, and entry from the North entrance is complicated.

2.3.7. The gallery's position as a main thoroughfare, which increases congestion, can impede the view of cases, objects and text, particularly for wheelchair users and children. While the use of higher level texts, and the positioning of the cases and objects, improves viewing for many visitors, wheelchair users or children would find it difficult to read the higher levels of text or look at the higher objects

[4] See articles by J. Cribb and A. Burnett *CCNB Newsletter* No 14 Jan. 1997.

[5] See 'Aims for the Gallery' British Museum, Dept. C&M document).

[6] See J. Orna-Ornstein, 'Beyond the Money gallery', *CCNB Newsletter*, No. 14, Jan. 1997, 3.

without neck strain. To avoid neck strain, viewing is necessary from an appropriate distance, but other visitors often make this difficult. Other visitors can also hinder getting sufficiently close to read the lower level texts, and view the lower objects. For some visitors the very useful theme titles and 30-word captions are just too high, or too distant to read.

2.3.8. A choice of wayfinding strategies is lacking (this is a museum-wide as well as a departmental issue).

There are many people who finding interpreting and following plans/maps difficult or impossible. Many people also cannot interpret text-based signs. Symbols are useful, but must be used with care given the lack of a standardised system.

There is a large print version of the Museum plan available from the Information desk, and an escort with limited training can usually be pre-booked when requested by a disabled visitor. There remains some confusion over booking such escorts and the time delay can be frustrating (further development of trained escorts and procedures for booking is required). No large print or tactile plans of the gallery are available as yet, and nor are Braille or audio based information.

2.3.9. The Gallery Guide dispensers are too high for wheelchair users to reach.

2.4. Floor surfaces/colour contrast/lighting

2.4.1. The surface is both shiny and slippery, which can make negotiation difficult for visually and mobility impaired visitors. It also creates high ambient noise levels for hearing impaired visitors that can also confuse or distress those with learning disabilities.

2.4.2. Contrast between floor and walls is adequate, but inside the cases the 'dressing' colours create problems in distinguishing the numbers of the objects. While there is good reason to ensure and support the intention that the objects are dominant and the focus of attention, the current numbers are very small and there is difficulty in matching the numbers to labels. A compromise needs to be sought to ensure the primacy of the (frequently small) objects through an alternative strategy for identification (see also Intellectual access).

2.4.3.There are no tactile pathways, nor indicators of case position for blind and visually impaired visitors (this reflects current Museum-wide policy).

2.5. Seating/rest areas/toilet facilities

2.5.1. There is a total lack of seating or rest spaces. The café is on the ground floor and far away.

2.5.2. The accessible toilets are on the ground floor, and difficult to access from the gallery.

2.6. Visitor flow/circulation

See the comments above.

2.6.1. Visitor flow and circulation is clearly limited by the gallery position and shape, and the freestanding cases have understandably been sited to encourage visitors to 'stop and look' rather than just pass through. However, for wheelchair users, others with mobility impairments or families with children in buggies it can be difficult to follow anything other than a linear path

2.6.2. Although it is useful to have choice of entry points to the gallery and circulation (the thematic and chronological layout clearly offers this), for many people with learning difficulties, and other visitors with limited literacy and/or knowledge of the subject, there is not sufficient guidance (see also Intellectual access). When I accompanied two adults with learning disabilities on a visit to the Museum, their first choice of gallery was the HSBC Money Gallery (see comments on gallery concept) but they were very disappointed when they got there that they could not read the Introductory Panel (although both have literacy skills), and also that they did not know where to start. The pictorial timeline, that may provide orientation for visitors with literacy skills is actually positioned to be behind a visitor on entry (visible on exit!), so is easily missed, and the basic 'theme' information in the wall cases is very high (see comments below on reading age), and thus also easily missed.

2.7. Position, height and shape of cases

See also comments above, limitations due to position and architecture also acknowledged.

2.7.1. The Museum has followed the guidance now available on optimum viewing bands for displays (750-2000mm from FFL), with small or more detailed objects and main text falling within a narrower band of 1200-1600mm above FFL1. However, although most of the objects in the wall cases have been mounted to afford good visibility, and the displays are sloped where possible to assist viewing, some of the more significant (and small) objects for non-specialist visitors, e.g. the milk teeth, are positioned at the highest level of display. Given the density of the displays this makes for difficulties for both children and wheelchair users.

2.7.2. The low free-standing cases that contain spectacular hoards are very successful, both in terms of their height and as a means of attracting visitors. However wheelchair users have to view these objects sideways on, and could feel obstructed by the through flow of visitors.

2.7.3. The density of display, in the wall cases in particular, and lack of guidance available on 'key' objects creates confusion and exhaustion for some non-specialist visitors. They can tire from trying to absorb the contents of one case, particularly given the lack of seating or rest area (again, a Museum-wide issue).

2.7.4. The tall free-standing cases create further problems for short and/or young visitors and wheelchair users in that everything on shelves above the case base level is inaccessible or difficult to view, or has to be viewed from a distance. The curator leading the exhibition team was well aware of this problem, but could find no solution.

2.7.8. None of the cases have an overhang or toe space for wheelchair users (this is a Museum policy issue).

2.8. Exhibition texts

See also advice on optimum viewing bands above.

2.8.1. A clear hierarchy of text is available, and the

Information panels are largely well designed with good contrast and font size. However label copy is in too small a font, is very dense and is difficult to match label to object.

2.8.2. The colour contrast between the object number and case dressing is negligible, which makes identification impossible for visually impaired visitors and very difficult for many others.

2.8.3. (See also 4.3.) The 30-word captions for each case are very useful and in a sufficiently large font. The colour choice could, however, have provided better contrast, and their position is rather high (see comments above).

2.8.4. Although much thought was clearly given to positioning and content of exhibition texts, there are problems for many visitors. Moreover, the contextual information that includes colour photographs exclude many visually impaired people. Clear and simple line drawings are needed, also text that does not require such high literacy levels. Helen Coxall's work on museum texts is very helpful.[7]

2.8.5. There are many alternative strategies for delivering information in a variety of formats that would improve access for many disabled and non-disabled visitors. Facilities that could be offered to the public include audio-tapes, random access CD-ROM wands, hand-held texts and quizzes.

However, for any supplementary strategy to be successful, a limited number of key objects have to be chosen, and the objects themselves have to be easily identified and found in the gallery. These key objects must take account of position, lighting, size, general interest etc. and there will inevitably be a compromise between curatorial choice and access needs.

3. Sensory Access

Checklist :
    Display methods
    Tactile access
    Visual access
    Auditory access
    Colours and lighting
    Verbal description availability.
    Atmosphere

3.1. Display methods (see also earlier comments)

3.1.1. The HSBC Money Gallery is a formal and traditional gallery, with all the objects behind glass. Museum house-style clearly has an influence and the small size and value of much of the collection do present considerable security concerns.

3.1.2. There are no objects for 'touch' or interactive engagement with the objects through multi-media. This reflects Museum-wide policy, but a number of museums now display objects secured in cases with armholes designed in the glass. For objects that are sufficiently durable or suitably treated, this method provides 'touch' opportunities while preserving object security. However security systems are increasingly diverse and sophisticated, and conservation concerns can also be overcome with choice of material, protective coatings etc.

3.1.3. There are methods that do not compromise either security, conservation or 'tradition' and that can offer multi-sensory access. Multi-sensory access has been shown to benefit all visitors, but is essential for blind and visually impaired visitors.

New technologies such as multi-media, virtual reality, 'talking labels' and exact replicas (The British Museum has in-house expertise in this field) are available. If the 'real' object cannot be made available for touch, a replica or model could be incorporated. Some museums have developed trolleys, that can offer supervised 'handling' and other activities based on 'handling collections'.

Tactile graphics and text (Braille) are now in use in the Museum's Parthenon Introductory Gallery alongside casts of objects. Further development and application, once evaluated, of these innovations in Museum display methods will, hopefully, follow.

3.1.4. There are a variety of other strategies, such as the use of re-enactors, that can enliven the display methods and provide multi-sensory access.

3.2. Tactile Access

See also 3.1.3.

3.2.1. There is no tactile access to any object in the gallery, nor to any supplementary interpretative materials available at present, but independent and 'instant' strategies for tactile access need to be considered.

3.2.2. Pre-booked 'behind-the-scenes' handling sessions for groups are available and there are plans to develop appropriate and actively target handling sessions for visually impaired visitors. (The department has written an open letter to *New Beacon* magazine inviting contact from interested parties.)

3.2.3. These handling sessions will be developed further, but there are significant problems over competing demands on the Coins and Medals Students' Room. The new Education Centre will open up tremendous opportunities for development of these.

3.2.4. The British Museum pioneered permanent Touch Tours that can be accessed without prebooking and independently. They are extremely popular and have been used very effectively with adults and children with learning disabilities, also severe levels of multiple impairment (note the Highbury Grove visits).[8] However, the latter groups did require face-to-face and trained guiding. Perhaps a limited 'touch tour' of few objects could be developed in the HSBC Money Gallery, with support materials available in one version for the general visitor who is visually impaired, and another suitable visitors with learning

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[7]See H. Coxall in Durbin G. (ed), 1996, *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning.*

[8]Information on the visits and exhibition of students' work is available from The British Museum, Dept of Education, Access Office.

disabilities?

3.3. Visual access

See also previous comments on height, position etc.

3.3.1. Care was taken in the gallery planning to position and display the objects behind glass, as though 'holding them in your hand'. However, the density of objects on display and labelling can cause confusion and the identification of 'key objects' would be very helpful to focus attention.

3.3.2. I have not had an opportunity to check glare or reflection from the glass for visitors with a degree of visual impairment.

3.3.3. When guiding a blind visitor around the gallery last year, the good lighting and position of the hoards, allowed him some visual access to them. If 'key' objects are chosen and supplementary interpretative methods developed that include raised line drawings/tactile graphics with full audio-description, visually impaired and blind visitors will have a greatly enriched experience and be permitted considerable access. Moreover, sighted visitors, with or without other or additional impairments[9] can also benefit from such provision.

3.3.4. Magnifying glasses are available in the Museum and may be useful for visitors to the HSBC Money Gallery for the small and detailed objects (they also enhance label text.)

3.3.5. Colour photographs, while providing helpful contextual information for many visitors, can exclude visitors with visual impairments. Clear line drawings offer better access.

3.3.6. For many deaf people English is not their first language, and the literacy level required for the contextual information is rather high.

3.3.7. In any future developments to enhance interpretation of the objects, colour coding could be introduced as a 'navigation' aid for visitors.

3.4. Auditory access

Note previous comments on ambient noise levels, audio-description etc.

3.4.1. Currently there are few opportunities for visitors who find reading text difficult, or those who are visually impaired and require audio-description.

3.4.2. There is a system available in the Museum for face-to-face gallery talks etc. that offers induction loops and hearing enhancement for hearing-impaired visitors.

3.4.3. New technologies offer potential to enhance choice and range of relevant auditory input, but the needs of deaf visitors must be considered. Any audio-guides that are developed should have a script version for deaf visitors, and sound enhancement/induction loop facilities if possible. Note that audio-tape guides cannot offer random access or different levels of information.

3.4.4. Clashing sound, which can be both disruptive and

[9]90% of visually impaired people are over the age of 60 years, and 6 out of 10 of these potential visitors have additional impairments, many of which are age-related.

disturbing can also be avoided with new technology, e.g. individual telephone-style handsets for multi-media, talking labels etc., or personal 'wands'.

3.4.5. Currently there is no regular face-to-face gallery talk programme for the HSBC Money Gallery. Such a programme could provide a valuable introduction to the collection for non-specialist visitors. The needs of a variety of disabled visitors could be met with such a programme. For example, BSL interpretation for deaf visitors, verbal descriptions for visually-impaired visitors and those who find the exhibition texts difficult to access, learning-disabled visitors etc. Storytelling sessions for adults and children, performance, workshops, gallery talks etc. can all enhance auditory access.

3.5. Colours and lighting

See also previous comments.

3.5.1. Light levels are good in the gallery, but should be checked with visually impaired visitors.

3.5.2. Colours should also be checked with visually impaired visitors for contrast and with learning-disabled visitor. There is potential for colour coding to assist in interpretative strategies (see below).

4. Intellectual Access

Checklist :
  Gallery concept
  Publicity materials/marketing/information
  Interest levels
  Language
  Labelling (content, placement, format, layout, design)
  Information panels (content, placement, format, layout, design)
  Alternative formats
  Auxiliary aids
  Object display methods/layout
  Supplementary interpretative strategies, e.g. publications/guided tours/storytelling/performance etc.
  Audio-description
  Verbal description
  Assistive hearing
  Sign language
  Interactive possibilities
  Technology – multi-media/audio-visuals/CD-ROM etc.
  Education programmes, materials:
    Face-to-face
    Distance learning
    Formal v. informal
    Differentiation
    Lifelong learning opportunities
    Learning style/pace

4.1. Gallery concept

4.1.1. 'Money' is an excellent choice of concept, as it has a relevance and meaning to the majority of visitors whatever their age, interest level, or ability.

4.1.2. History is more difficult for visitors with learning disabilities, but also presents problems for many other

visitors who have had limited formal and statutory educational opportunities. The timeline is helpful for those able to read and interpret it, but note comments on its position.

4.1.3. However, by starting with the present day and personal experience, ideas of the 'past' and 'difference' can be acquired, even if no detailed chronological awareness is possible (note previous comments about orientation in the gallery).

4.1.4. The gallery concept, with its broad geographical and historical coverage, also offers excellent opportunities for raising issues of cultural diversity.

4.1.5. The thematic approach makes for a choice of different entry points to the exhibition, and were designed to meet different interests and abilities. However, some of the themes are expressed in terms not readily understood, and the reading level required of the short captions is beyond some visitors (note also that more than 60% of The British Museum's visitors are foreigners most of whom do not have English as a first language).

4.1.6. The clear identification of 'key objects' and pictorial contextual information could enhance the thematic structure considerably for many disabled visitors.

4.2. Publicity materials/marketing

See also wayfinding, web-site etc. under physical access.

4.2.1. Alternative formats required for existing materials, e.g. leaflet, Gallery Guide.

4.2.2. The Gallery Guide pioneered a new and much improved design and content for Gallery Guides in the Museum, but alternative formats are required.

4.2.3. The marketing potential for a wide variety of audiences has not yet been fulfilled, given the accessible and relevant subject of the gallery. There is much unexploited visitor potential using existing resources. The HSBC Money Gallery provides an excellent introduction to the rest of the Museum's collections and could be used more with children with Special Educational Needs/disabilities in mainstream and Special Schools, adults in Further Education Colleges, Community Centres and supported housing schemes.

4.2.4. The coverage of the gallery and its education/interpretation programmes in a variety of educational publications beyond the scholarly journals, has been significant and should continue and develop.[10] Disability publications such as *Dail Magazine, Deaf News, Disability Now* could be approached, and also assist in this evaluation.

4.3. Language

See also earlier comments on reading level, terminology etc.

4.3.1. Although considerable efforts have been made to appeal to a broader audience than the scholarly community, the language of the gallery and existing

publicity materials and Gallery Guide assume a literacy and pre-knowledge level that excludes a number of disabled and non-disabled visitors. (The children's book, *The Story of Money*, which was published as part of the gallery project, offers a much easier introductory level text for many beyond the age of childhood.)

4.3.2. The 30-word captions require an approximate reading age of 13 years,[11] and the labels 14/15 years.

4.4. Labelling

See also 2.8.1.

4.4.1. As has been said, the labels in their content, position, size, density, layout etc. create difficulties for many visitors.

4.4.2. No alternative format provision available as yet.

4.4.3. If 'key objects' are identified, the labelling style could be different and take account of issues of readability, clarity, colour coding to match other materials[12], contrast etc. to meet the needs of a variety of disabled visitors.

4.5. Information Panels

See 2.3.7, 2.8.1, 4.4.2. but further consultation required.

4.5.1. There is a good mix of text and graphic material, but note earlier comments about colour photographs and font size for visually impaired people, reading levels required, and position.

4.5.2. The introductory panels are well positioned at both ends of the gallery and provide a useful; explanation of the exhibitions etc. Audio versions would be helpful for many disabled visitors, and a simple script version with key object information and identification for others. Many deaf visitors have literacy difficulties as a result of the barriers they encounter at school with literacy teaching.

4.5.3. Note earlier comments on the position and content of the illustrated timelines.

4.6. Object display/layout

Note earlier comments.

4.6.1. Although serious efforts have been made to engage the non-academic visitor, the number of objects on display, as well as their unfamiliarity and small size, can be both confusing and intimidating for many visitors.

4.6.2. The identification of key objects, with enhanced interpretation, will greatly improve access for many disabled and non-disabled visitors. We all have to have our basic comfort needs met before any motivation to learn can occur (see Maslow' hierarchy of needs[13]), we all learn in chunks (there are limits to how many pieces of new information we can absorb), and we all need the learning to be meaningful and relevant to existing experience(visual

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[10]For example, *Junior Education Magazine, Times Educational Supplement, GEM News, New Beacon.*

[11]The Fry test was used here on a sample. Note *The Sun* newspaper, which, whatever one's opinion of it, is designed to be easy to read (but not intended for those without or with limited literacy skills) aims for a reading age of 11/12 years.

[12]For example a coloured border could correspond to a particular theme, historical period or geographical region, and relate to other interpretative materials, e.g. quiz/guide for people with learning disabilities/literacy difficulties.

[13]See L. Dierking and G. Hein in Durbin (ed.) 1996.

cues to context are very important).

4.7. Alternative interpretation strategies/education programmes and materials

See also previous comments.

4.7.1. The exhibition does offer a limited mix of face-to-face and distance learning, and formal and curriculum driven teaching, as well as informal and scholarly learning opportunities.

4.7.2. The design of the numbering system for the objects and existing labels should be reconsidered in due course to assess alternative or compensatory information strategies. Many visitors who can and want to access the existing information have expressed their frustration with the subtlety of the present system.

4.7.3. The distance-learning opportunities are extended by The British Museum Press publications available, as well as a Gallery Guide, family trails, and teachers' resource pack. Further developments with CD-ROM or digital technology could offer improved access for disabled visitors.

4.7.4. The currently available family trail, although good in principle, is very difficult to complete as the objects are difficult to find and involve criss-crossing the gallery (this is a problem given the congestion and location).

4.7.5. A gallery activity that depends on 'visual clues', requires little or no written responses, and is appropriate to different age groups would be useful.

4.7.6. The Gallery Guide must be made available in alternative formats as soon as possible.

4.7.7. Consultation with disabled people, and reference to the Museum's Action Plan on Disability, is required to develop relevant activities, programmes and materials. This needs fairly urgent consideration with the October 1999 deadline for the implementation of the remainder of the DDA's section, the Rights of Access to Goods, Services and Facilities.

4.7.8. A Departmental/Gallery action plan could include further publications, guided tours for target audiences e.g. sign-interpreted and hearing-assisted for deaf people (a programme is already in existence for some collections/departments), performance, workshops, lectures, more diverse gallery activities etc.

4.7.9. Storytelling/performance/demonstrations would offer access to a wider group of disabled and non-disabled visitors (the 'Travelling Mint' sometimes used in the Museum is very popular).

New technologies such as the existing CD-ROM, the Museum's planned COMPASS system etc. have potential to offer improved access for disabled visitors and diverse interest levels.

4.8. Audio description/verbal description/assistive hearing/sign language

4.8.1. These services are currently lacking in the Money Gallery.

4.8.2. Audio-description is deliberately distinguished from verbal description, although the content may be identical. Audio-description can be independently accessed from tape, CD-ROM, talking label etc. by any visitor without staff involvement, whereas 'verbal description' is used to describe delivery on a face-to-face basis by an appropriately trained member of staff or volunteer. Both require specialist training and advice, but are essential elements in access to such a gallery for visually impaired visitors and have the potential to offer access to a range of different levels of interest in disabled and non-disabled visitors, on an individual, *ad hoc* basis or for groups.

4.8.3. Sign language interpretation is potentially on offer on a one-off basis if required through contact with the Access Office, but as yet no regular programme is available.

4.9. Interactive possibilities/technology

See also previous comments.

4.9.1. Interactive learning opportunities benefit everybody, but are essential for many disabled visitors. There are a variety of strategies that could enhance the handling and behind-the-scenes programme currently on offer. The development of a gallery talk programme and gallery activities targeted at different audiences could improve the interactive experiences for a variety of visitors (further consultation required as in 4.7).

4.9.2. There is no interaction at present based on information technology. Any plans to introduce a permanent IT workstation should follow published guidelines.[14]

4.10. Alternative formats/auxiliary aids and services.

4.10.1. These areas have all been discussed above, but with October 1999 set as the date for the implementation of the remainder of Part111 of the DDA (1995), these issues plus the development of appropriate policies, procedures and practices beg urgent attention.

4.10.2. The Gallery and Department has a good record of providing for a variety of audiences, but proper consultation with disabled people and discussion on what is currently available will be invaluable in planning to meet the new legal requirements.

4.10.2. Currently available printed materials such as the leaflet and Gallery Guide will need to be available in alternative formats.

4.10.3. Auxiliary services for visually-impaired visitors currently excluded by the display methods will have to be on offer, e.g. tactile diagrams of key objects, Braille and audio/verbal description.

4.10.4. Sign interpretation and hearing enhancement will have to be potentially available for any public programme/event.

4.10.5. A simple guide/ activity sheet or similar will need to be available for learning disabled visitors.

5. Emotional/Psychological Access

Checklist : (note earlier reference to Maslow's hierarchy of needs).

Attitudes

Safety/security

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[14]For example Nolan, 1997.

Basic comfort needs
Welcome
Confidence
Atmosphere

5.1. Attitudes of front of house staff

See also 2.2.

A full Disability Awareness and Equality Training Programme is now available for all British Museum staff. It must be on-going and offer different levels of training relevant to staff responsibilities. The Department of Coins and Medals could have all their efforts to be inclusive undermined by a visitor who experiences inappropriate behaviour in another part of the Museum. I experienced a member of staff approaching me in the canteen to tell me that wheelchair users should be banned from entering the Museum. Much discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping of disabled people remain in our society.

5.2. Safety/security needs

See also 2.1.

5.2.1. The Gallery is not too large and has no hidden or concealed spaces, and visitors cannot become lost or disorientated within the gallery itself. The exit is also clearly visible. However, Museum-wide issues such as emergency egress, congestion and visitor flow that have been considered earlier will have an impact on visitor perceptions of their personal safety and security.

5.2.2. Warding staff, with their potential for personal contact, are often concealed from view beyond the entrance and exit to the gallery.

5.2.3. There is an internal telephone immediately outside the HSBC Money gallery. Therefore internal communication is possible and assistance can be summoned.

5.3. Basic comfort needs

See 2.5.

There is an urgent need for seating somewhere in the gallery, and clear signage for the toilets and cafe as they are so distant. The Great Court scheme will greatly improve the situation.

5.4. Welcome

In principle this is in place, with the introductory panel, and existing publicity. However. attention should be given to alternative formats, the web-site, Museum-wide way finding etc. Further advice and consultation is required.

5.5. Confidence

Again, in principle, the gallery was planned to empower a wide audience, which is excellent. It also has the potential to provide a non-threatening introduction to the unrivalled, but often intimidating, building and collections of The British Museum. Although the subject is confidence-building in its relevance and language, much remains to be done for many disabled visitors. The gallery assumes a significant level of literacy in English, previous experience and knowledge of museums in general, and no hearing, visual, mobility or intellectual impairment.

5.6. Atmosphere

5.6.1. The gallery is light and airy, but at the same time formal and traditional. This can be intimidating for visitors, particularly those are who unfamiliar with the museum or who are disabled.

5.6.2. The gallery is also often crowded and hot (note Maslow and comfort needs).

6. Representation

To be developed (note 4.1.4.).

7. Useful resources

Nolan. G. 1997. *Designing Exhibitions to Include People with Disabilities,* National Museums of Scotland.

Durbin G. (ed.), 1996. *Developing Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning,* Group for Education in Museums.

Gateshead Access Panel, 1997, *Designing to Enable,* Gateshead Access Panel..

AAM, 1998, *Everyone's Welcome: The American with Disabilities Act and Museums,* American Association of Museums.

MGC 1993. *Disability Resource Directory for Museums,* Museums and Galleries Commission, also 1997 supplement.