The Ackland Access Initiative

PREPARED BY

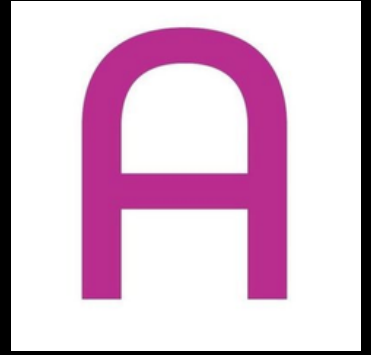Ashley Thompson, Bert Revelle,
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APRIL 2022

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Executive Summary

Background & Purpose:
The Ackland expressed a desire to develop a more welcoming initial interaction between visitors and staff. The Ackland's vision is "to become the most visited and highly regarded public university art museum, engaging everyone in the community and beyond serving UNC students, staff, faculty, and alumni through teaching and research" (Strategic plan and brand strategy, n.d.) In combination with this vision, literature suggests that it is the museum that must change, not the visitor. While the initial interaction is supportive of a welcoming environment, this must be carried throughout the museum to truly make the space accessible for all. Through this partnership, we are striving to support the Ackland in seeking more diverse audiences and visitors, making changes to accommodate comfortable visits, becoming thought leaders by playing a role in social consciousness of the community and creating a better fit between the visitors and the museum.

Goals:
We are working to develop materials that create a welcoming experience through universal design, intuitive communication, identifying those who may need particular assistance, and preemptively considering accessibility in communication and welcoming. The goals of our project are as follows:
- To help the Ackland live up to their mission to be "accessible for all"
- To increase visitors, especially visitors with accessibility needs.
- To employ a visitor service position who can take the lead on these projects and be the point person for conducting and responding to evaluation measures.

The Plan:
- Interventions in the lobby
  - Signage, accessibility resources, & a welcome cart/wall
- Interventions beyond
  - Visitor surveys, music, website changes, visitor services position, accessibility ambassadors

Program Evaluation:
This program will be evaluated through a combination of visitor surveys, staff surveys, point of count, and connection with local resources. A visitor services staff and accessibility committee will carry out future changes and dream up how to create a more accessible and welcoming space in the future.

Literature Synthesis

Introduction

The Ackland seeks to provide a welcoming initial interaction between all visitors and the front-of-house staff at the museum. Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature related to supporting inclusivity and accessibility during the first interaction in a museum. However, it is still important to frame the initial interaction within the larger barriers that exist in museum culture, assess the work that has already been done, and dive into strategies that can work towards creating accessible art spaces.

Framing the Problem

Currently, only 7% of all adult museum visitors have a disability, leaving a gap to increase the engagement of visitors with disabilities (Grohe, 2020). This number suggests a multitude of physical and psychosocial barriers that prevent people from fully engaging with museum spaces (Maldonado & Nguyen, 2020). These barriers include inaccessible entrances, spaces, and bathrooms, inability to find information, unspoken rules and expectations, and a sense of not belonging as if there was a "secret code" they are unaware of (Grohe, 2020, Bonnici, 2019). Inclusivity requires changes to the physical space but also requires becoming a space where "all visitors regardless of their abilities, are able to participate as part of the social group and community" (Silverman et al., 2012, p.15). It is important to focus on changing the museum rather than the visitor, as social inclusion projects often try to change "non-traditional" groups to fit the culture of the institution, instead of the institution changing to fit the needs of the non-traditional group (Valérie-Inés de La Ville, 2021, p. 33).

What is Being Done

There are practical ways in which museums can and have taken action to increase accessibility. Museums have altered rules to increase inclusivity, such as allowing personal items to be brought into the museum and lengthening visiting hours (Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, 2000). Museums are utilizing "mystery shoppers" as well as empirical data from customer surveys to gain feedback about the experience that their space provides (Brida et al., 2016; Museum Galleries Scotland, n.d.). This type of outside input can help target areas in need of change. For example, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis has changed the way their security guards are dressed from police-like uniforms to more casual dress following feedback that uniforms were too reminiscent of law enforcement (Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, 2000). The Toledo Museum of Art understands that people absorb information in many different ways, and responded by offering guided tours and audio guides (Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, 2000). At the Wellcome Collection museum in London, there is a wall that provides a multitude of easily accessible resources, such as magnifiers, large print guides, and audio guides (Channing, 2022). For visitors with low vision, museums have enlarged the print used on signage and educated security guards about how to guide people through the exhibits (Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, 2000). Jemma Channing, an occupational therapist employed at the Beaney Museum in London, says that "a guest's first visit to the museum begins through the website" (Channing, 2022). The Beaney takes advantage of this first interaction to ensure that their website is accessible, intuitive, and prepares the visitor for their trip.

Literature Synthesis

Role of Occupation

An occupational lens is a powerful perspective to look through when considering accessibility at the Ackland because it challenges us to break down the everyday practices and interactions of museum goers into more manageable and adaptable portions. When we examine the many ways and habits of visitors as they engage in the museum environment, the opportunities for the Ackland to adjust become more apparent.

There are many different aspects to the occupation of visiting a museum, such as managing the space, interpreting the art, and reading descriptions of art pieces, however to participate in these one must feel comfortable and welcomed into the museum in the first place. This encourages us to focus on this initial interaction as an integral part of the experience.

Further, museums have an opportunity to allow people space and activities with which to belong and engage with others, valuable forms of community building (Hammal, 2014). Therefore, visiting a museum is more than seeing art, but it is also "doing with others" in ways that build belonging, or connectedness, through everyday experiences.

Conclusion

There is a gap in the literature in regards to the first interaction of a visitor with museum staff. However, the available research on museum inclusivity at large provides a solid foundation from which to base specific interventions for the Ackland. We believe that the Ackland will benefit from the proposed interventions, chosen from an occupational viewpoint, and are hopeful to see an improvement in the welcome the museum provides.

ACKLAND
ART MUSEUM

Conversations with others!

In the quest to gather more information about this topic, we wanted to talk to someone else currently working in this field, as well as survey current staff working at the Ackland to hear how they might feel more supported. Here are some highlights below:

Jemma Channing

Jemma is an OT working at The Beaney, a museum in Canterbury, England. She is the health and wellbeing coordinator at the museum, and gave us some of the following tips on making a welcoming museum:

- Inclusivity starts before visitors even walk through the door
- People's first visit to the museum starts on the website.
- Staff training to build confidence to say hello is valuable
- Reframe rules as doing something positive for the space, make it part of the museum experience by framing it as helping the museum.
- "Museums shouldn't be about objects, they should be about people"

Staff Survey

Staff members were invited to take an anonymous survey on their thoughts about welcoming visitors to the museum, as well as where they could benefit from support. Some of the difficulties listed:

- Lack of accessibility in aspect of the museum (parking, lack of automated doors, bathroom location)
- Covid regulations (plexiglass, masks) make welcome interaction difficult
- Confusion surrounding museum rules due to lack of signage
  - Visitors feeling uncomfortable with leaving backpacks with necessary medical supplies in lobby

The results of the survey served to further inform our project proposal as well as give firsthand perspectives on staff needs and opinions.

Capacity & Needs Assessments

The Ackland has a lot of amazing things already going on! The section below defines and plans how to leverage the strengths and resources that the Ackland brings to the table. Additionally, we point out the gaps we hope to fill through the Ackland and OT student team partnership.

Resources/Strengths	Opportunities Available	How to Leverage Opporunity
Desire to make the space welcoming and accessible	The staff at the Ackland have verbalized interest and motivation to make it a more welcoming and inclusive space. They have, and are currently, interested in connecting with resources, such as OT students, to support their work towards a welcoming, inclusive space for all attendees.	The creation and enactment of the program plan will be based in and fueled by the Ackland's desire to be a welcoming space. This desire will be the drive to complete the recommendations of this program, and newly identified goals in the future.
An already existing structure for tailoring to individual/group needs for groups that come to visit the museum (K-12 and university classes)	Staff do preparation and responsive tailoring to groups coming to the museum to better meet their goals and expectations, and try not to use jargon or specialized language. They ask open-ended questions and use tactics to make everyone feel comfortable speaking up. Based on what people say, they are able to adapt the response or how they explain something.	These same techniques can be used to make people feel more welcome. They are already doing the work to tailor the experience of the visitor to the specific group or individual. This type of thinking can be used to determine what kind of welcome would be most beneficial for visitors.

Resources/Strengths	Opportunities Available	How to Leverage Opporunity
Free Admission	The museum is free of charge to visitors, and offers a wide selection of events related to exhibition, community, and university topics. Therefore, there is increased access for people who may not usually be able to afford similar activities.	The Ackland could use their community and university connections, signage, website, and social media to ensure people know about free admission.
Area on website about what to expect when planning a visit	The Ackland's website contains a page titled "Visit" where details about what a guest can expect at the museum are listed. The page contains public health guidelines, visiting hours, and some of the policies in place at the museum.	The Ackland already has a set website as well as a page where people can research before visiting. The page could be updated to reflect the current operations of the Ackland, as the page currently mostly contains information regarding Covid guidelines. The website could be utilized to provide information regarding bathroom placement, accessibility, where belongings can be stored, museum rules, etc. Additionally, it could include accessibility resources (social stories, visual priming), a list of what resources are available during one's visit, and survey links to provide feedback after someone visit's the museum.

Resources/Strengths	Opportunities Available	How to Leverage Opporunity
Resources from previous OT cohorts (information on individuals with dementia, low vision, autism or various sensory preferences, and marginalized communities)	The Ackland has the ability to look back at the programs and information provided from previous OT cohorts to incorporate into the welcoming process. The resources that have already been gathered will be highly beneficial to the Ackland in their endeavor to create a more welcoming and accessible environment.	Previous OT projects can be used to help create and maintain community connections, aid in providing accessibility resources or knowing what makes the space accessibility for a variety of groups of people, and helping staff feel comfortable and confident welcoming a variety of guests.
Various financial avenues	The Ackland operates on a budget that is supported by both UNC Chapel Hill and donations/fundraising. Although there is not much wiggle room, they have access to more funding than other organizations in the community. Additionally, staff have the ability to request budgets for various projects (such as this one) that have the potential to be accepted and funded.	The Ackland may be able to access funding from their museum budget, fundraising, grants, and university & community connections.
Community connections	The Ackland has preexisting relationships with a variety of organizations such as UNC Chapel Hill, the Marian Cheek Jackson Center, Charles House, & North Carolina Lions Club.	The Ackland can use these community connections (and new ones, such as the Beaney and other museums) to get ideas to make the space more welcoming, receive feedback on how to make the space more inclusive for specific groups of visitors, and help ensure members of the community know about any updates or changes to accessibility that happen at the museum

Resources/Strengths	Opportunities Available	How to Leverage Opporunity
Stereo Systems	Music can be played throughout the galleries and the lobby with the stereo systems already in place	Play soft music to increase the warmth of the space and encourage conversation and noise throughout
Specifically skilled staff	There are staff at the Ackland specifically skilled to potentially design signage, make website changes, and build the welcome cart	Since there are staff at the Ackland with a lot of the necessary skills to make proposed changes, money can be saved or allocated elsewhere
Preexisting thoughts of an accessibility cart	The staff of the Ackland have discussed having a cart with information and resources for guests in the lobby in the past	The momentum and preexisting thoughts of a cart may help drive the creation and maintenance of a welcome cart/wall.
Hope for a full-time visitor services staff	The Ackland has expressed desire to eventually have someone on staff that is responsible for guest experience and visitor services.	Plans to hire a visitor services staff could be accelerated to accomplish all of the suggestions to increase the welcoming and inclusive environment of the Ackland.

Assessment of Needs

Streamline the Welcome

The Ackland would benefit from our proposed program to help streamline the welcome experience for visitors to the museum, as well as to increase the accessibility of the museum to visitors. The Ackland has made many strides towards accessibility and possesses the ability to welcome many types of people, but there is no set welcoming program for guests. The Ackland has articulated a desire to be able to accommodate individuals with a variety of backgrounds, diagnoses, and needs who visit the museum.

Staffing

The Ackland welcoming staff is composed of 3 part-time students, as the Ackland has been unable to employ a full-time staff member for a visitor services position. These students also have other roles to fill, and thus cannot dedicate their full time to welcoming visitors. Determining how these student workers conceptualize their challenges, supports, and barriers to welcoming visitors to the museum would be helpful. The role of welcoming visitors to the museum, therefore, falls often to the security staff, who also sit at the front desk, and are also in charge of enforcing museum rules and safety. There is no formal welcoming training for the security or front desk staff, and the Ackland has articulated that the welcoming materials we are hoping to provide will help to fill this need.

Lack of Signage

Due to a lack of clear signage that delineates the rules of the museum, there is a tension between front desk staff who have to often correct first time visitors and explain the rules of the museum. There is a need to determine how to share this information in a way that still allows visitors to feel confident, competent, and welcome in the space.

Differing Needs

The Ackland hosts both first time visitors, and regular museum visitors who have different needs and wants at the beginning of the visit. The Ackland has determined a need to differentiate between these two types of visitors, how to provide the most appropriate interaction and how to offer each visitor what they need in an efficient way without being too obtrusive with their time.

Other Complexities within the Ackland

 For the Ackland there are many interacting layers of power and prestige on an individual, group, community, and structural level. Some examples of more specific complexities present within the Ackland are as follows:

- There is a lack of demographic information about visitors- Since there is no admission or pre-registration required to visit the Ackland, there is a lack of information that is gathered (other than observations-based conclusions) on the individuals and groups that visit the Ackland. It is more complex to try to prepare and meet the needs and preferences of individuals that there is little information on.
- Potential building move- The Ackland may be moving to a new space in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the program must support a welcoming environment to a variety of people in the Ackland's current building and in a new, unknown location.

Some examples of more specific complexities present in the larger community and culture surrounding the Ackland are as follows:

- Perception that the museum is only for students or staff of UNC- There may be a perception that the museum is not open to the community and exists primarily for the use of UNC students, faculty, and classes.
- Perception of art spaces in general- Art museums have a history of being reserved for able-bodied, wealthy, White intellectuals. Therefore, there may be additional barriers for marginalized groups to feel included in a space steeped in a history of racism and classism.
- Covid-19 pandemic- The coronavirus has complicated how visitors are able to experience the welcome. There are ever changing rules, regulations, and guidelines regarding safety for staff and guests of the Ackland. Masks and a plexiglass barrier between the welcoming attendants and guests are an additional barrier to a warm welcome at the museum.

How We Got Here

Assessment of Ackland's Capacities & Needs

Review of the current literature & conversations with others in the field

Program Plan

The Ackland's stated goals and current staff needs

Before creating our program plan, we met with the Ackland, surveyed Ackland staff, had conversations with others in the field, spent time at the museum, and reviewed current literature. The combination of these efforts eventually informed the creation of the program plan, explained as follows.

Program Plan

AN OVERVIEW

For the Lobby

- Signage
- Accessibility Resources
- Welcome Cart/Wall

Lobby & Beyond

- Visitor Surveys
- Music
- Website Changes
- Visitor Services Position
- Accessibility Ambassadors

For the Lobby

The Ackland voiced a desire to make the first interaction with visitors a warm, welcoming one! Therefore, we are proposing some additions to the lobby to help improve visitor experiences.

Content	Rationale	Next Steps	Responsible Person
Signage	Signage in the lobby will make rules explicit, reinforce information provided by staff, therefore lightening staff loaf, help reframe rules in more positive language, and give people the information they need to be successful. If people know what is expected of them, they are more likely to feel empowered and like they belong in this space.	1. Utilize language provided by OT student team 2. Hand off language ideas to on-staff designer 3. Print signage 4. Post around lobby area	The OT student team- providing language for signage The Designer- design signage that fits the Ackland brand Kelly/Ackland Staff*- Get signage printed and posted around the lobby
Accessibility Resources	The Ackland has a great start on some accessibility resources! Increasing the resources available for people with a variety of needs and preferences will allow more people to experience all that the Ackland has to offer.	1. Review accessibility resource recommendations by OT student team 2. Identify where items can be acquired or outsourced 3. Acquire resources 4. Place on welcome cart/wall or in lobby until cart/wall is available	The OT student team- providing suggested accessibility resources Kelly/Ackland Staff*- acquire resources, place in lobby, and refresh/clean as neded

For the Lobby

Welcome Cart/Wall	A welcome cart/wall in the lobby will act as a physical space to hold all of the accessibility resources and information provided by the Ackland. By having a welcome cart/wall, visitors will be able to access the information they need without having to disclose their disability. By putting all of these resources in one place, staff will not have to explain all of the resources available and provide them, therefore reducing staff burden.	1. Gather accessibility resources 2. Create a plan to build or acquire cart/wall 3. Build/acquire cart/wall 4. Put cart in the lobby 5. Put resources on the cart/wall 6. Keep cart/wall restocked	The OT student team- providing suggested accessibility resources and pictures of examples carts/walls Kelly/Ackland Staff*- Order or build cart/wall and stock with resources, refreshing and cleaning as needed

*The visitors services staff we are proposing could be responsible for the completion and upkeep of this suggestion

Along with a warm smile, eye contact, and "hello!", the above suggestions are proposed to make the first interaction in the lobby more welcoming to guests. Each of these suggests provides more information and resources to guests that allows them to both follow necessary guidelines in place from the Ackland, and explore the museum in a way that is accessible to them! By increasing how accessible they are, the Ackland is increasing how welcoming they are.

Lobby & Beyond

While the first interaction at the Ackland is a great step towards making the museum experience a welcoming one for guests, it is equally important to reinforce that first interaction with a holistically welcoming museum. Therefore, the suggestions below extend beyond just the lobby space.

Content	Rationale	Next Steps	Responsible Person
Visitor Surveys	Visitors surveys placed both on the website and throughout the museum will give guests a way to provide feedback to the Ackland. If they have a good experience, staff will have more knowledge on what made the experience so good and how to recreate it. If someone did not feel welcome or like they had access to the museum, staff will be made aware and can make the necessary changes. Providing surveys to guests will give the Ackland the knowledge they need to accomplish their goal of being welcoming.	1. Create a visitor experience survey online 2. Create QR codes linked to the online survey 3. Print QR code and place around museum 4. Place QR code on the website 5. Make a plan to routinely check survey responses 6. Enact plan to check survey responses 7. Make changes to visitor experience accordingly	1. Kelly/Ackland Staff*- create, print, and distribute survey with QR code
Music	Soft music playing throughout the galleries will allow people to feel more comfortable making noise and talking about the art. It can also make experiencing art a more wholistic, captivating experience.	1. Research music and volume recommendations 2. Create a playlist 3. Play music throughout galleries	1. Kelly/Ackland Staff*- create playlist and play music throughout galleries using current speaker system

Lobby & Beyond

Website Changes	A guest's first visit to the website is their first to the Ackland. Therefore, the website should provide a lot of information, be easily accessible, and begin the inviting tone that will be carried out throughout the museum. Increasing amount and clarity of information on the Ackland's website will help people know what to expect when on their visit. When guests feel like they know what to do, they will feel like they belong and can confidently enter the space.	1. Explore website changes recommended by OT student team 2. Hand off ideas to staff who can update the website 3. Complete suggestion updates	1. OT student team– create a list of website update recommendations 2. Kelly/Ackland Staff*– explore website recommendations and complete updates
Visitor Services Position	Creating a visitor services position will open up the capacity of the Ackland to create a welcoming, accessible space for all visitors. This person will act as a consistent resource for visitors and other staff to voice their needs and concerns in terms of the guest experience. Additionally, this person can be in charge of carrying out all the recommended changes as well as dreaming up an inviting and inclusive space for visitors well past this partnership.	1. Allocate funds for visitor services staff 2. Evaluate the suggested job description & qualities of someone with this position provided by OT student team 3. Consult with other museums that have a visitor services staff to better understand job duties 4. Conduct search for good fit for the job 5. Conduct interviews & offer the position 6. Complete training 7. First day on the job	1. OT student team– provide recommendations for job description and qualities of visitors services staff as well & provide recommendations for other museums to connect to 2. Kelly/Ackland Staff– request budget for staff or help to reallocate current funds as well as carry out recruitment, hiring, and training processes

Lobby & Beyond

Accessibility Ambassadors	The accessibility ambassadors would be a volunteer-based team that seeks to continue the work of making the Ackland welcoming and accessible to all members of the Chapel Hill community and beyond. This team would bring multiple perspectives and would be ideally representative of many marginalized groups in the community to ensure that the museum is inclusive for all. These members could build and maintain community connections, as well as form and enact recommendations for making the physical and emotional space safe for all visitors.	1. Hire a visitor services staff 2. Recruit members of the accessibility committee 3. Hold first meeting to discuss roles and expectations 4. Conduct monthly meetings to ensure progress	Visitor Services Staff*- recruit members and lead the committee

*The visitors services staff we are proposing could be responsible for the completion and upkeep of these suggestions

The above recommendations support a welcoming environment at the Ackland in less concrete, but equally important and exciting ways. These suggestions work together to ensure that visitors are being heard and that the Ackland has the support and resources necessary to respond to guest feedback and further invite visitors in. Guests will feel more free to be themselves and experience the art in a way that feels meaningful to them, making the space more welcoming for all!

The How-To

Greet every visitor that comes into the Ackland with a smile and a "Hi, Welcome!"

Inform all visitors about Welcome Cart with brief explanation

Offer to answer any questions

Our research on accessibility in museums led us past the initial interaction in the lobby. However, the initial interaction is a crucial component of an inviting environment. Visitors should feel welcomed, clear on museum rules, and informed about resources that might be able to improve their experience.

What's the ultimate goal?

Why?

THEY COULD:

- ACCOMPLISH AND MAINTAIN THE PROGRAMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED ABOVE
- COORDINATE THE ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE, WHICH WOULD INFORM THEIR FUTURE WORK.
- ENSURE THE ACKLAND LIVES UP TO THEIR MISSION TO BE "ACCESSIBLE TO ALL"
- FOSTER NEW COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS, AND MAINTAIN EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS (MARIAN CHEEK JACKSON CENTER, CHARLES HOUSE, NORTH CAROLINA LIONS CLUB, AND THE BEANEY)
- MAINTAIN ADA AND SECTION 504 REGULATIONS.

Who's a good fit for the job?

Why?

An OT!

OT's are uniquely situated to be a liaison between community partnerships, look at how people are interacting with the space, see where the limitations or barriers are, promote inclusion and belonging, and we aware of universal design and how to adapt or modify the environment to make it more accessible.

More on the Justification for OT

There are not yet many examples of OTs working in museum spaces. However, accommodations currently being made in art museums across the world reflect a client or visitor-centered view, which is one of OTs main tenets. OTs are uniquely situated to do this work, as they offer distinctive perspectives and skills that are valuable in "collaborating with museum personnel to create experiences to promote inclusion and belonging" (Silverman et al., 2012, p.16). OTs are "skilled at analyzing situations that may result in limiting occupational participation," which makes them adept at noting the aspects of museum culture that are limiting visitors (Specialized Knowledge, 2009, p. 1). Additionally, they promote health and wellness, are aware of how context can impact visitor experience, and can understand intersectionality, cultural sensitivity, and impact of environment on participation, which are all skills utilized in this work.

OTs are beginning to be utilized more in the museum space to support the use of universal design. OT collaboration with museums has resulted in use of social stories to demystify unfamiliar environments, evaluation of staff understanding of how to interact with a variety of visitors, implementation of staff training, identification of local organizations that could support staff training, and application of a strengths-based approach to enhance the social environment of museums (Price & Dunning, 2021; Silverman et al., 2012).

Some Things to Consider

IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE SUCCESS OF THIS PROGRAM

Staff Buy-In

It is important to recognize that until a visitor services staff is hired, which is likely a long-term goal, the responsibility to make the initial environment welcoming may fall on the front desk staff, gift shop staff, and gallery attendants. Therefore, it is important that these staff feel trained, valued, and empowered for the part they play in making the Ackland inviting and inclusive. Front desk staff should be trained on what resources are available for accessibility, where those resources are located or how they could be accessed, and how to reframe rules and regulations using the suggested language on the signs provided. Additionally, front desk staff should feel empowered that they have a part to play in the culture of the Ackland. They are the first, and sometimes the only face, that represents the museum that they come into contact with. They matter, and the way they interact with guests has a direct tie to how welcome guests feel and whether they are likely to return. Further, if their job responsibilities or expectations increase, they should be compensated accordingly.

Awareness of Increased Accessibility Resources

Even if one new person gains access or feels welcome at the Ackland because of the new efforts taken on by the museum, it is a success. However, the more new visitors, the better! Therefore, while it is important to improve accessibility measures at the Ackland to make it a more welcoming space for all, it is also important that people in the community are made aware of the changes so that they know they will be welcomed into the space. This may happen in a few way:

- **Website changes**- by making the resources the Ackland offers for inclusivity and accessibility clear on the website, more people seeking out the space are likely to come
- **Community connections**- community partnerships established during previous OT class and Ackland projects should be capitalized on, as well as the creation and sustenance of new community partnerships headed up by the accessibility community. If more community members are aware of what is available at the Ackland, the more likely they are to come!
- **Media**- as they happen, social media, radio, and news coverage of the changes will act as another source of information!
- **Word of mouth**- as more people visit the museum, they will share all the exciting new updates with friends and family members! Word of mouth is the best marketing.

Timeline

A LOOK AHEAD AT ENACTING THE PROGRAM PLAN

The first 3 months

1 July 2022

Print signage and place in appropriate areas around museum.

2 July 2022

Place QR codes throughout the museum for visitor survey

3 July 2022

Play soft music throughout the galleries at a low volume

Timeline

A LOOK AHEAD AT ENACTING THE PROGRAM PLAN

Around 6 months

4

October 2022

Place social story on website. Implement website changes

5

October 2022

Choose and accumulate resources for welcome cart/wall. Plan design and placement

Timeline

A LOOK AHEAD AT ENACTING THE PROGRAM PLAN

1 year from now

6

November 2022

Implement final welcome cart design with available resources

7

April 2023

Hire visitors service position

8

September 2023

Hold first meeting of the accessibility ambassadors

Budget
One-Time Costs

PROPOSAL	Resources Required	What cost includes	Low estimate	High estimate
Signage	**Time & Staffing** to design, print, place, and monitor posters **Money (or in house printing)** to print the signs	• Physical signs to place in appropriate areas around the museum.	Free- in house labor/in house printing materials	$15-45 per sign if printed off site.
Visitor Surveys	**Time & Staffing** to create surveys, update the website with survey, create QR codes, print QR codes, and place them around the museum. Additionally, **time & staffing** to review the survey responses periodically and make a plan to respond to feedback **Money (or in house printing)** to print QR codes	• Visitor Experience Survey • QR code • Printed versions of code	Free - in house printing materials	$5-10 if printed off site
Soft Music	**In-house stereo systems** to play music	• playlists/music	Free- necessary materials already owned	Free- necessary materials already owned
Website Changes	**Time & Staffing** to make recommended changes and continue to update the website as there continue to be changes	• website changes within the current website structure	Free	Free

PROPOSAL	Resources required	What cost includes	Low estimate	High estimate
Welcome Cart	Time & Staffing to build or purchase cart, and keep it clean and refreshed with materials Money to build or purchase cart	• physical cart/wall itself	Free/cost of labor if able to build in house	$200-$500

Budget

Ongoing Costs

PROPOSAL	Resources Required	What cost includes	Low estimate	High estimate
Accessibility Resources	Time & Staffing to acquire resources, place them, and make sure they are clean and refreshed Money to acquire resources	• 3 of each suggested resource listed on Welcome Cart Recommendation handout (Appendix E)	$550	$1000
Visitors Services Staff*	Time & Staffing to recruit, interview, hire, and train someone Money to pay their salary	• One-year salary for full-time staff person *Potential to fund a PhD student into this position via Dr. Lavalley	$50,000	$70,000
Accessibility Ambassadors	Time & Staffing to recruit members, lead meetings, and provide support to members	• volunteer-based team members	Free	Free

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Funding

Option 1:
The Ackland has space in their budget to make annual requests at the beginning of every fiscal year. They can submit an "ideal" budget, which may or may not be approved.

Option 2:
Due to the fact that there is a gap in the literature around creating a welcoming first interaction, the Ackland could capitalize on this by proposing a research study, and applying for research funding to support these initiatives to determine whether or no they make a difference in creating a welcoming first environment. This would be something that would be a later option, as it would be spearheaded by the visitor service position.

Option 3:
The Ackland could apply for grant funding from accessibility initiatives. For example, the National Endowment for the Arts has a program called "Grants for Art Projects" that awards $10,000-$100,000 to work on accessibility projects.
https://www.arts.gov/grants/grants-for-arts-projects/program-description

Program Evaluation

What are the desired outcomes of the program?

- To live up to their mission to be "accessible for all"
- To increase visitors, especially visitors with accessibility needs.
- To employ a visitor service position who can take the lead on these projects and be the point person for conducting and responding to evaluation measures.

Program Evaluation Possibilities....

QR Code Visitor Survey

This survey would be placed in visible locations through the museum and would allow visitors to give anonymous feedback on accessibility initiatives, and to identify remaining gaps. Potential questions could be: Do you feel the museum was welcoming? What was missing from your experience? Did you feel as though the museum was accessible to you? Were you aware of accessibility materials?

Annual Staff Survey

This survey would allow the Ackland to gauge how staff are understanding accessibility measures, how accessible they think the museum is, any gaps they see, and what can be done to better support them. Questions could include: Do you know what accessibility materials we have? Do you feel comfortable telling visitors about them? What accessibility gaps do you see still remaining? What would you like to see done in terms of accessibility

Point of Count

Rather than taking continuous demographic data, choosing one weekend day, and one weekday to take demographic data may be more feasible. This way, the Ackland is still able to measure demographic information and understand their visitors better, but it will not be undue burden on the front of house staff, or on the visitors. Potential questions:Is it your first visit? What is your race/gender/age?

Connecting with local resources

There are many intersectional groups that talk about art and accessibility in NC and in the US that could be partnered with. The Ackland could ask for future feedback and suggestions from these groups. Some examples are Arts Access Inc, Alliance of Disability Advocates (Raleigh based), and Arts Learning Community for Universal Access.

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Museum Gauges

These are examples of museums that are up doing accessibility work. They can be used as a gauge to stay up to date on what other museum's are doing in terms of accessibility, and see what is up and coming in this realm.

Examples of museum's doing ideal work that may be on a slightly larger scale than the Ackland:

The Whitney: https://whitney.org/visit/access
- includes accessibility measures such as social stories, ASL guides, assistive listening systems, wheelchairs, braille, and verbal descriptions.

MOMA: https://www.moma.org/visit/accessibility/
- QR codes for accessible digital features, MOMA Alzheimer's project, audioguides, etc.

Denver Art Museum:
https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/accessibility
- An accessibility advisors group, exhibition access guides, sensory packs, social story, sensory friendly mornings

Museums more closely aligned with the Ackland:

Gregg Museum at NC State
https://gregg.arts.ncsu.edu/about/visit/accessibility/
- automatic doors, a walker to borrow, gallery stools, large print, ASL interpreter, sensory bags to borrow

Crystal Bridges https://crystalbridges.org/access/
- Audio tours, enchroma glasses for colorblind visitors, digital resources, sensory friendly map

NC Museum of Art https://ncartmuseum.org/accessibility-and-inclusion/
- mobility devices to borrow, visual schedule, automatic doors, ASL, assistive listening, audio descriptions, tactile lead tours.

Further examples of specific accessibility projects can be found at:
https://asia.si.edu/access-toolkit/

Accessibility Ambassadors: Unpacked

Based on an initiative from the Denver Art Museum, the Accessibility Ambassadors would be a volunteer-based board of ambassadors from various communities. This group would be coordinated by the visitors service staff member. They would serve to give feedback on current accessibility endeavors by representing their communities, and inform the future work of the visitors service staff member. They would give recommendations on remaining accessibility gaps. Additionally, they would report back to their respective organizations and inform them of the work the Ackland is doing to become a more accessible space for their specific community. This group should meet monthly. Some examples of partner groups could be: The Marian Cheek Jackson Center, the Sonja Haynes Stone Center, Carlina Latinx Center, North Carolina Lions Club, Charles House, Bob Warren and John Kasson, Autism Society of North Carolina, and more.

From Denver Art Museum: "individuals, businesses, and groups who either experience these barriers themselves, who have knowledge of these barriers in their roles as support workers, or who are working in the accessibility field."

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Appendices

Appendix A

- Signage

Appendix B

- Visitor Services Position

Appendix C

- Website Recommendations

Appendix D

- Example of Social Story

Appendix E

- Welcome Cart Recommendations

Welcome to the Ackland!

We are so excited that you're here! Let us know if you have any questions. In order to preserve our art for future generations please help us by:

- Putting all backpacks in the storage room.

- Using pencils instead of pens while in the galleries.

- Not touching the artwork.

- Only eating food or drink in the lobby or Art& gallery.

- Turning off the flash on your camera.

Welcome!

We're here to answer any questions you may have, tell you more about the museum, or provide any additional materials to make your visit better. Please come talk to us!

Visit us upstairs in the study gallery. Its open to the public!

Visitor Service Position Job Description

To oversee the accessibility committee which will include accessibility ambassadors that represent a variety of needs, that will then inform the visitor's service position.

To use research and legislation (ADA regulations and section 504) to inform the implementation of new projects at the museum and to ensure compliance through exhibitions, programming, the website, and the physical space.

Contribute to broad institutional efforts to position the Museum as a welcoming, relevant, and accessible resource for people who have traditionally experienced barriers to participation in cultural institutions. (Whitney Museum)

Coordinate museum-wide efforts to advance access and inclusion across the Museum in collaboration with education staff and other departments (Whitney Museum)

General project management of Health and Wellbeing activities at the museum offered for diverse participation.

Awareness of a variety of needs that visitors may have when visiting the Ackland.

Oversee the production of additional accessible materials for visitors and maintain already existing materials (see recommendations)

Foster new community partnerships and maintain existing partnerships

Visitor Service Position

Skills for qualified candidate:
Strong interpersonal and communication skills.
Flexibility, willingness to hear input, and criticism.
Experience working with multiple individuals and organizations
Having the ability to blend the art arena and accessibility and having knowledge of both worlds.
Confidence in approaching organizations for new partnerships
Able to understand and communicate complex information in a way that multiple audiences can understand (ie: not using jargon, being able to summarize the overall message that art and culture improve wellbeing, and how)
Confidence in talking to new people – and presenting information to a range of audiences (think – visitors, other staff, outside organizations, etc)
An understanding of the barriers to participating in cultural activities and solutions for addressing these
Experience with successful bids for funding can be helpful for funding specific projects.
Experience with grant writing.
Experiences with accessibility, universal design, disability, neurodiversity, art programming.

Website Recommendations:

Accessibility tab: Making museum accessibility information easier to find by creating a conspicuous accessibility specific tab that explains parking, points of entry, restroom locations, etc. Creating a specific accessibility tab also shows that the Ackland welcomes individuals or groups who have various disabilities.

Future Plans: Provides information on upcoming improvements and changes regarding accessibility for people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities. It would also be helpful to include details on occupational therapy's professional involvement in the design process.

Social Stories: Social stories give an overview of what to expect when they visit the Ackland. Social stories are especially helpful for individuals with autism because they illustrate situations that may arise at the museum such as routines, expectations, and behavioral standards.

Rules and What to Expect on Arrival: Lets potential visitors know the rules of the museum (not touching the artwork, location of storage cubbies, no food or drink, Covid-19 policies, etc.)

Language information: Provides contact information for translation/interpreter services, if available, to help overcome language barriers.

Example of Social Story

I'm going to the Ackland Art Museum!

I am going to the Ackland Art Museum! When I see a brick building and bright pink sign that says "Ackland", I will know that I have arrived!

ACKLAND
ART MUSEUM

Free Admission!

I can use the stairs or the ramp to get to the front door.

Whenever I open the front door, I will find the front lobby. In the lobby, I will find a front desk and people waiting to greet me.
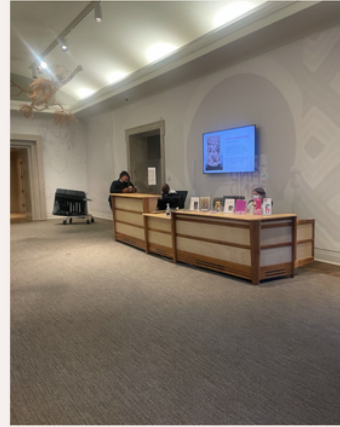
I can wave or say hello to anyone sitting at the front desk! They are there to help me, and can answer any questions that I have.

Before I can go to the galleries, there are a few things that I need to do to help keep the museum clean and safe. I will head to the storage room and drop off my bookbag in the cubbies and hang up my jacket. I will get my things back when it is time to leave! I can carry a pencil or my phone with me through the museum.

I will also find wheelchairs or walkers that can help me move throughout the museum if I need them.

Now it is time to move through the museum! There are two floors in the museum that are filled with art. I can use the stairs or the elevator to get to the second floor.
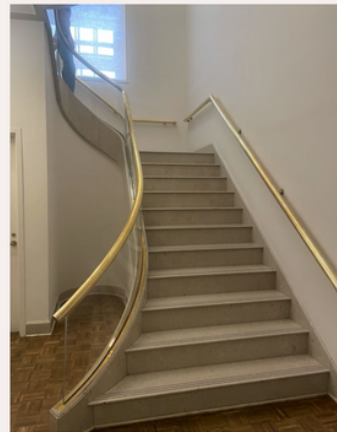
In the museum, there will be many pieces of art on the walls and placed throughout the room. To protect myself and the art, I can stand two steps away from each piece.

When I am moving around the museum, I might see gallery attendants standing around. They are here to keep the art and the people in the museum safe. If I am lost, need help, or want to ask a question, I can approach a security guard!

There may be many other people visiting the museum at the same time as me! I can share my space with the other visitors. If I ever feel overwhelmed or need a break, I can let someone know and they will take me somewhere quiet!

There are many ways to explore the art! I can use my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and my nose to smell what is around me. I am free to talk, ask questions, or make noises to express how I feel. I can even use my mind to make up a story about what I am experiencing!
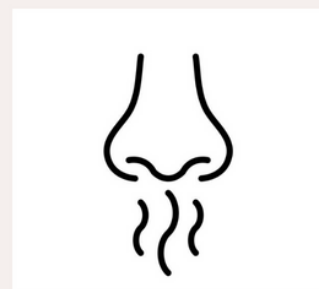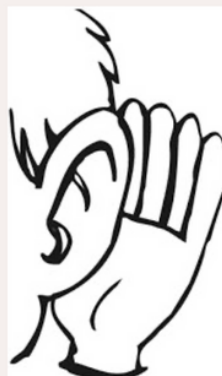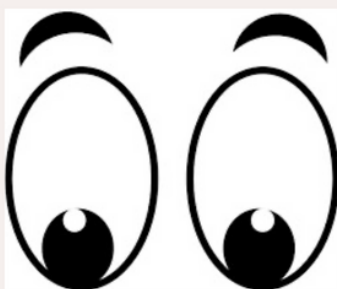
Instead of using my hands to touch the art, I can keep them by my side, hold someone's hand, clap, or play with a fidget. By keeping my hands off of the art, I am helping keep the art safe for other people just like me to enjoy!

The Ackland Art Museum is a great place for me to think, use my imagination, and ask questions. I am allowed to feel whatever I feel when around the art! I can use the packets found on the wall to learn more about the art or sketch how I am feeling!

If I am feeling hungry or thirsty, I can go back to the lobby to take a break and enjoy a snack or drink.

If I need to use the bathroom, I can find the restrooms and water fountains towards the back of the first floor.

When it is time to go, I can go get my things from the cubbies in the lobby and take them with me. I might even stop in at the gift shop! I will leave through the door that I came in.

If I had a fun time at the Ackland, I can say so or ask when I can come back again! The staff at the Ackland will be excited for me to visit again.

ACKLAND ART MUSEUM
WELCOME CART

Need	Recommendation / estimated cost	Annotation
Low vision/vision loss	Large print guides Cost: time to create guide following guidelines, cost of printing	These are useful to visitors with low vision who would benefit from an easy-to-read map through the museum and its exhibits. Guides with high contrast print could also be useful for visitors with low vision.[7] Guidelines to create accessible large print guides can be found here: https://www.acb.org/large-print-guidelines.
Low vision/vision loss	Braille guides Cost: $30/each	Braille maps of the museum can help people with vision impairments to successfully navigate the museum. The Wellcome Collection also has Braille labels for the items in one of their galleries.[9]
Low vision/vision loss	Tactile reproductions of objects Cost: free if able to use various art from exhibits	In order to ensure accessibility, there should be opportunity for tactile exploration of large themes present in the museum. This could be in the form of a piece of art that is set aside and able to be touched, or a 3D printed rendition that communicates the theme being expressed through the art exhibitions.[7]

Low vision/vision loss	Magnifiers Cost: $20/ each	These are helpful tools for those with vision loss to be able to enlarge print and navigate the museum more successfully.[9]
Mobility	Manual wheelchairs Cost: free (already owned)	A loaner wheelchair or two offered by the museum could provide someone with fatigue or limited mobility the ability to see more of the museum than they would be able to see otherwise.[7]
Mobility	Stools/folding chairs Cost: free (already owned)	Provision of accessible seating options for guests seeking to conserve energy/with limited mobility or endurance.[7]

ACKLAND ART MUSEUM
WELCOME CART

Need	Recommendation / estimated cost	Annotation
Mobility	Wheelchair accessible route Cost of printing	A guide through the Ackland indicating where a visitor in a wheelchair would be able to access the art the easiest. This would include where accessible parking/entrances/exits are.[7]
Sensory toolkit	Fidget tools Cost: $5–$10/each	These can be any number of small toys/items for visitors with sensory differences to be able to use their hands and engage touch while participating in preservation of the art.[6]
Sensory toolkit	Cue cards I want Cost: cost of printing (available online)	Cue cards can be given to visitors who express themselves nonverbally. That way, if there are emotions, thoughts or feelings to communicate, guests are able to do so.[6]

Sensory toolkit	Noise-canceling headphones Cost: $16/each	Noise-canceling headphones can decrease sensory overstimulation for more sensitive guests.[6]
Sensory toolkit	Weighted lap pads Cost: $30/each	For people with autism or other sensory differences, weighted lap pads, blankets, or vests are a great way to enhance one's ability to feel where you are in space, which can decrease anxiety and allow visitors to engage in other sensations more successfully.[9]
Sensory toolkit	Social story Cost of printing	A social story is a way to show people what the museum looks like before they enter. It helps visitors know beforehand what to expect and what will be expected of them. Social stories can help to reduce stress and increase confidence approaching a new situation or place.[9]

ACKLAND ART MUSEUM

WELCOME CART

Need	Recommendation / estimated cost	Annotation
Sensory toolkit	Wiggle seat, bright fan, visor Costs: $20/wiggle seat, $5/fan, $5/visor	Items such as these engaging sensory tools allow students to stimulate a variety of sensory needs.[3]
Hearing/vision loss	Assistive listening devices with verbal descriptions of exhibits Cost: $50–$200/each	For those with hearing impairments or vision loss, assistive listening devices can allow tours or audio components of exhibits to be more clearly heard and accessed.[7]

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