Accessibility Guidelines for Presenters and Moderators

This document is intended to make presentations and conference sessions more accessible to AIC members with a focus towards those with disabilities. This also makes the presentations and sessions more inclusive of all members including participants with different learning styles and non-native English speakers.

Keep in mind disabilities may not always be visible or obvious. It is also important to recognize that some issues of accessibility for speakers, moderators, and attendees may conflict or may not happen as outlined below. Resources and further reading are included at the end of the document. It is important to **ask people if they need accommodations** far enough in advance of the event so the accommodations can be made, ideally at registration.

General:

- **Face the audience and do not obscure your mouth.**
  This is important for those who use speech reading techniques.

- **Use a microphone whenever possible.**

- **Speak clearly, use simple language, and try to avoid idioms, unnecessary jargon, and undefined acronyms.**
  Idioms can be particularly difficult for those with cognitive disabilities to interpret and may be taken literally. Additionally, they are often geographically specific, making them less comprehensible outside that region.

- **Provide trigger warnings for sensitive material and topics.**
  Sensitive topics might include human remains, excavation of burial materials, or photographs of specific groups.

- **Use gender neutral language when possible and appropriate.**
  The use of gendered pronouns (his or her) can exclude non-binary people. "They" is increasingly acceptable for both plural and singular gender-neutral pronouns.

- **Keep to your allotted time.**

Presenters, Speakers, and Panelists:

Projected Presentations:

- **Presentations should be easily read from the back of the room.**

- **Use sufficient color contrast for visuals.**
  Avoid busy backgrounds and lots of pattern. Be mindful of how colors appear to those who are colorblind, especially red/green and blue/green.

- **Use an easy to read font.**
  Sans-serif fonts, such as Arial, Verdana, Helvetica can be easier to read; avoid complicated and fancy fonts. Italics and underlining can sometimes make the text more difficult to read, so should be used sparingly or omitted.

- **Maintain large font sizes for titles, bullet points, and other important text.**
  Font size should be kept above 18 pt to be legible with headers between 36-44pt. Keep in mind that the appearance of a font's size can vary greatly by typeface.

- **Provide minimal text on each slide.**
  Try to stick to only a few points or bullets.
  Less than 6 lines of text in a block is recommended.

- **Keep text away from edges or bottoms of slides.**
  Text near edges and bottoms of slides are harder to read from a distance, can be obscured by audience members, and are more likely to be cut off by projectors.

- **Do not use color of text as the only means of differentiating information.**

- **Use slide templates.**
  Templates provide a hierarchy to the information on a slide so that screen readers can read the elements of a slide in the intended order. Templates also make it easier for slides to be turned into outlines. Inserted text boxes can be read out of order by screen readers and should be used judiciously.

- **Incorporate audio description and alternative text of important images, graphs, and charts on your slides; videos should be closed captioned.**
  For example: "After aging, all samples showed increased yellowing and darkening." vs. "As you can see, the samples didn't age well."
  Alternative text (Alt text) is used by text-to-speech software to describe an image.

- **Avoid flashing lights or quickly changing graphics.**
  Flashing lights can cause issues for those with chronic migraines or epilepsy. If these need to be used, provide a warning to the audience at the beginning of the presentation then again right before they appear.

- **Use Microsoft Accessibility Checker.**
  Microsoft PowerPoint has a built-in Accessibility Checker that can identify issues for screen readers and other Assistive Technologies. It is a good check for presentations that will be distributed in other formats but should not be relied on solely to check for accessibility of presentations.

Poster Presentations:

- **Use sufficient color contrast for visuals.**
  Avoid busy backgrounds or lots of pattern. Be mindful of how colors appear to those who are colorblind.

- **Use an easy to read font.**
  Sans-serif fonts, such as Arial, Verdana, Helvetica can be easier to read; avoid complicated and fancy fonts. Italics and underlining can sometimes make the text more difficult to read, so should be used sparingly or omitted.

- **Maintain large font sizes for titles, bullet points, and other important text.**
  Titles should be visible from 10 – 15 ft (3 – 4.5 m) away.

- **Offer to describe the poster for attendees who are blind or have low vision.**

Moderators & Session Chairs:

Before Sessions:

- **Arrive early.**

- **Review room for obstructions to mobility.**
  Rooms are set up to facilitate mobility, but items may have shifted during or between sessions that impede aisles and access to microphones.

- **Check in with speakers and panelists beforehand.**
  Read through the provided biographical information at least once beforehand.
  Be mindful of pronouns and pronunciation of names of speakers and places.
  Remind speakers to look at time keepers.

- **Make adjustments to microphones before talks begin.**
  Show speakers how to adjust standing microphones to match their height and how to use the remote for slides.
  Remind speakers using a lavalier microphone not to cover it with neckties / scarves / necklaces.
  If a separate microphone is provided for speech-to-text software, make sure all panelists use it otherwise, no transcript is generated for the user.

- **Ask everyone to turn off or silence their cell phones and to disable Bluetooth.**
  Some Bluetooth devices interfere with speech-to-text softwares.

- **If a sign language interpreter is present, make sure they have a clear line of sight and remain visible at all times.**
  Ask presenters to allow extra time for inspection of visuals after they are done speaking as people using interpreters cannot examine slides while they are watching the interpreter.

During Sessions:

- **Repeat questions / have speakers repeat questions.**
  Avoid asking, "did everyone hear that?"

- **Remind everyone to use microphones and state their name.**
  If question cards are provided, let the audience know where to find them, and how to submit them.

- **Ask for clarification on jargon or acronyms.**
  Audience members will have diverse experiences and backgrounds and may not be familiar with the terms.

- **Pay attention to the body language of panelists and presenters.**
  They may show non-verbal signs they would like to speak- feel free to call on them directly.

- **Monitor the pace and audibility of talks.**

- **Do NOT move panels ahead or start talks early.**
  Attendees may be moving between sessions and rely on concurrent sessions to remain on time.

Resources and further reading:

British Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia friendly style guide

Web Accessibility In Mind, Contrast Checker

Vision Australia, Colour Contrast Determinator

Three tools to help you make colorblind-friendly graphics

Coblis — Color Blindness Simulator

Web Accessibility in Mind, PowerPoint Accessibility

Special Interest Group on Accessible Computing, Accessible Presentation Guide

Society for Disability Studies, Accessibility Guidelines for Presentations

Microsoft Office, Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities

Microsoft Office, Accessible PowerPoint template sampler
Microsoft Office, Present with real-time, automatic captions or subtitles in PowerPoint

Web Accessibility Initiative, How to Make Your Presentations Accessible to All

United Nations. Gender-inclusive language in English

Purdue University Online Writing Lab, Using Gender-Neutral and Gender-Inclusive Language

This resource has been compiled from multiple resources and edited to fit the needs of the AIC community. EIC would like to acknowledge the help of Sarah Reidell, Suzanne Davis, Rebecca Kaczkowsk, and Sally G. Kim who shared resources, provided guidance, and/or reviewed the document.