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# ACCESSIBILITY TO MEDIA, ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

## HISTORIES, PARADIGMS AND REVOLUTIONS

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# FOREWORD

Accessibility and inclusion are human rights that have consistently been invoked and upheld by major international organisations through conventions, charters, directives and regulations. The European Accessibility Act, which will apply across all European Union member states from June 2025, ensures widespread and meaningful accessibility to information, technologies and even social and cultural life for everyone, regardless of ability, leaving national governments little leeway for exceptions.

Over the past 50 years, many scholars (Grossi and Ravagnan, 2013; Stadler, Jepson, and Wood, 2022)[1] have shown that participating in cultural and entertainment activities plays a crucial role in enhancing the well-being and quality of life of people with and without disabilities. For the latter, at times, access is still limited and limiting, despite significant global progress in the last 20 years towards greater openness and an increased focus on accessibility and meaningful opportunities for inclusion.

This conference aims to assess the progress of accessibility to media, entertainment and cultural heritage, both in Italy and internationally, by discussing good practices and addressing current and future needs and opportunities. With a focus on technological development as a potential driver of accessibility, while keeping people, their diversity and needs central to the discussion, plenary lectures, individual presentations and thematic sessions aim to offer insights, models and paradigms that promote an increasingly universal, open and flexible approach to cultural accessibility in all its forms. The four workshops that precede the main program are aimed at all participants (professionals, scholars, students, managers) wishing to acquire detailed knowledge of specific areas and activities.

The conference will feature virtual and in-person sessions. Interpreting will be provided for in-person sessions. Additionally, participants coming to the conference can choose from four thematic workshops that are offered in either Italian or English. The conference is part of the PNRR SAFINA project within the Vitality ecosystem, Smart solutions and educational programs for anti-fragility and inclusivity. The University of Macerata is a partner in this initiative. It is also supported by the international Master's programme in Accessibility to Media, Arts and Culture (AMAC).

[1] Grossi, E., Ravagnan, A. (2013). Cultura e salute. La partecipazione culturale come strumento per un nuovo welfare. Milano: Springer; Stadler, R., Jepson, A., Wood, E. (2022). Introduction: Special Issue on 'Events and Wellbeing'. Event Management 26(1), 1- 5

# TICHO – Translation and new technologies at the service of accessibility in a museum in Veneto

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The increasing number of people with disabilities, partially attributable to the aging of global population and to growing interactions among people with different cultures and languages and increasing attention to inclusivity, has highlighted several barriers that hinder their full participation in social and cultural life in contemporary societies.
For the purpose of ensuring the right to tourism and to an active cultural life, established by the United Nations, it is mandatory to explore innovative and inclusive solutions that would help eliminate or overcome these barriers in accessing cultural heritage sites. It is with this objective that the TICHO project was launched, funded by the PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) within the Interconnected Nord-Est Innovation Ecosystem (iNEST). The project, which is experimental in its nature, is aimed at developing and testing new communicative, multimodal strategies that would ensure the right to museum accessibility for people belonging to four target groups: people with visual impairments, with hearing impairments, foreign language speakers and young people.
Experimental visits will focus on the permanent collection of the Palladio Museum in Vicenza and will be integrated into a digital application developed by Conform S.c.a.r.l., containing audio descriptions, Italian Sign Language videos and augmented reality content. In the spirit of inclusion and active participation of all stakeholders, researchers and project partners have involved the target groups from the earliest stages, establishing relationships with advocacy associations (UICI, Italian Association of Blind and Visually Impaired People, and ENS, Italian Association for the Deaf).
This contribution is aimed at presenting the ongoing TICHO project, the data collected and the multimodal, accessible communicative strategies that will be the object of a testing phase with target groups throughout the summer of 2025.

Keywords: accessibility; cultural heritage; translation; new technologies

***Mirella Agorni*** *is professor of English Language and Translation at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her research interests focus on the history and theory of translation, and on translation and tourism. She is Principal Investigator (PI) of PRIN DIETALY on the institutional English-language tourism promotion of Italy over the past 100 years and a senior researcher in the iNEST innovation ecosystem.*

***Federica Alabiso*** *is a research fellow at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, affiliated with the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies. Her work focuses on the accessibility of cultural heritage through linguistic mediation, particularly within the framework of the PNRR-funded iNEST project (Spoke 6: Tourism, Culture, and Creative Industries). She is involved in developing solutions for making cultural content more accessible via translation and multilingual communication strategies.*

# From Real Museums to Inclusive and Accessible Virtual Museums

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This work is part of the research carried out within the MIMIT CTE-Genova Opficio Digitale per la Cultura project and the PNRR RAISE Project (Robotics and AI for Socio-Economic Empowerment), Spoke 1 (Urban Technologies for Inclusive Engagement), which aims to develop inclusive tools to enhance citizens' quality of life through technology in various contexts, such as urban, educational, and cultural environments.

This contribution focuses on the use of Virtual Reality (VR) technologies to improve the accessibility of cultural heritage for diverse groups of people, in general, and to enhance the quality and engagement of museum visits, in particular.

Indeed, on the one hand, VR enables the creation of adaptable scenarios that can be tailored to users' specific needs, helping to overcome barriers related to sensory and motor impairments, as well as cultural differences. On the other hand, virtual museum visits can foster interest and participation, providing access to those who are unable to visit in person due to physical limitations or other conditions, such as autism spectrum disorders, which may make crowded or noisy spaces overwhelming.

In this perspective, we present an immersive and highly interactive VR application designed to provide a personalized and inclusive museum experience. The system adapts dynamically to each user's characteristics, ensuring an accessible and comfortable interaction with the virtual environment.

The setup of the virtual scene is determined by user-specific parameters, which may include cultural preferences, physical abilities, or sensory conditions. Currently, some information is directly requested from the user before populating the museum scene through intuitive questions. Among these, the language preferred and presence of color blindness. Other data, such as the user's actual height, is automatically detected via headset positional data, to adapt the scene objects positioning (e.g., pedestals, interactive buttons, text panels) accordingly.

Another key accessibility feature of the system is its flexible locomotion options. Different techniques are available to accommodate users with varying mobility levels, including those who can walk freely and those who use wheelchairs or have motor impairments.

Furthermore, to fully leverage VR's potential and enrich the museum visit experience promoting accessibility and engagement, the VR experience also includes interactive elements that allow users to explore museum artifacts in ways that would not be possible in a physical setting. Users can grab objects for closer inspection, scale artifacts to reveal intricate details, and interact without the risk of damage.

Finally, to ensure inclusive content access and comprehension, all information is provided in both text and audio formats, in the selected language, making the experience intuitive and immersive for all users, regardless of their abilities or needs.

The parameters considered for configuring the environmental variables are those we have found to be essential for ensuring an inclusive and accessible environment for a heterogeneous group of users. These have been identified using the virtual museum in its initial state (i.e., non-customizable) by observing users' needs. Additionally, some have been discussed with teachers from primary schools to accommodate students with various impairments or diverse cultural backgrounds.

An initial usability evaluation of the provided system has been conducted. Then, we plan to carry out tests with a more diversified and impaired person sample to fully assess the accessibility.

Keywords: Virtual reality, accessibility, inclusion, virtual musuem, cultural heritage

***Brigida Bonino*** *holds a Master's Degree in Mathematics from the University of Genoa and a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from CNR-IMATI and Hyperlean. In 2023, she held a professionalizing research grant at IMATI, focusing on "Graphical interfaces, methods and algorithms for visualization of heterogeneous data and 3D models of urban contexts," as part of the "House of Emerging Technologies Matera" project.*

***Franca Giannini*** *is researcher director at the Institute for Applied Mathematics and Information Technologies of the National council of Research in Genova, Italy. Taking into account the evolution of technologies and changes in working processes, she concentrated on the specification of tools and methodologies for 3D geometric model representation, analysis and synthesis. In particular she focused on the development of shape processing and modelling tools adaptable to the application needs by exploiting contextual knowledge. She has participated and been responsible for IMATI in several national and international projects. She is co-author of two patented software for automatic feature recognition for hybrid solid representation. The results of her research activity have been published in more than 140 reviewed papers presented in international conferences and journals. Her current research interests include virtual reality, natural and inclusive human computer interaction, 3D data modelling and understanding and related knowledge formalisation in applications contexts.*

***Katia Lupinetti*** *is a Research Scientist at the National Research Council of Italy (CNR), Institute of Applied Mathematics and Information Technology (IMATI), since 2019. She carries out also teaching activity on Informatics at the University of Genoa. She graduated in Mathematics at the University of Genoa getting the Annual Prize for the Best Thesis in Computer Graphics. In January 2018, she received the title of Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering conferred by both the École National Supérieure d'Arts et Métiers and the University of Genoa receiving the "Pierre Bézier" 2018 award for the best doctoral theses performed at the Nationale Supérieure d'Arts et Métiers school.*

# Subtitling a video is not enough to make it accessible! Two case studies from the ACCESS Project in Emilia-Romagna for cultural accessibility for deaf people

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Ensuring accessibility to multimedia content poses a crucial challenge for the inclusion of deaf people. The Legislative Decree 82/2022, which transposes the European Accessibility Act, states that, from June 28th, 2025, all multimedia products must be made accessible by means of subtitling as well. Nevertheless, subtitles alone are not enough for this purpose.

Since 2020, the FIADDA Emilia-Romagna (Association for the Rights of Deaf People and Their Families) Coordination conducts the ACCESs Project – Accessibility, Communication, Culture and Subtitles for deaf people. Among the initiatives that were carried out, in collaboration with the Cultural Heritage Service (Servizio Patrimonio Culturale) of the Emilia-Romagna Region, more than ten museums have adopted several innovative solutions to enhance the cultural fruition of deaf people, including accessible educational videos designed with experimental approaches.

This contribution presents two case studies, specifically developed to address the unique needs of the the museums involved, in terms of content design, timing and fruition mode. By analyzing the challenges and opportunities identified, the goal of this presentation is to define replicable best practices to make multimedia content truly accessible, beyond the notion of mere subtling and paving the way for new inclusive solutions.

Keywords: video, accessibility, museums, deafness, subtitles

***Lucia Brasini*** *graduated in Science Studies. Her main interests include arts and culture, particularly in relation with the specific challenges connected to deafness. Her social commitment (in collaboration with AGESCI and volunteer associations) has honed her organizational skills and a propensity for confrontation, dialogue and the search for shared solutions. Her sensitivity and attention to each person and his or her needs was a driving force for her Thesis on an accessible museum and for her career choices, which led her to specialize in environmental wellness, wayfinding and orientation, inclusive design with respect to perception, senses and communication.*

# The reception of the AD in action scenes: methodological considerations to measure presence, emotions and comprehension

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The action genre poses a twofold challenge for AD given its cinematographic and thematic style, which entails tighter time restrictions and the need to verbalize complex, graphic, and sensitive visual elements. The aim of this paper is to put forward a methodological framework to carry out a reception study based on a selection of audio described clips drawn from a wider AD corpus to test presence, emotional elicitation and valence and comprehension. The concept of presence was defined as a "perceptual illusion of non-mediation" (Lombard & Ditton, 1997, p. 7) and, in the case of AD, this lack of perceived mediation would imply seamlessly delivered descriptions to allow optimal user immersion. To date, the reception of the action genre has not been specifically tested, although there exists research on presence (Walczak & Fryer, 2017; Fidyka et al., 2021), emotional response (Fryer & Freeman, 2014; Ramos, 2015), and understanding (Fryer & Freeman, 2013) of AD on visually impaired audiences. To that end, an Action AD Corpus was built comprising the Spanish and English AD of the first season of Money Heist (2017), Sky Rojo (2021), Squid Game (2021) and Yu Yu Hakusho (2023) available on Netflix®. Regarding participants, the sample consists of three focus groups: sighted participants without the use of AD, sighted participants using AD without access to the visuals, and blind or visually impaired participants using AD. The first group follows the framework of Wilken & Kruger (2016), and Chmiel & Mazur (2013); and the second one adheres to proximal similarity principle by Trochim & Donnelly (2006). Measurements include the post-viewing questionnaires utilizing the ITC-Sense of Presence Inventory (Lessiter et al., 2001) to test physical presence, engagement, ecological validity, and negative effects; the Emotion Elicitation Scale (Gross & Levenson, 1995) to measure emotional response; the theory of emotion valence (Ramos, 2016) to assess the positivity or negativity of the emotions elicited; and reported self-perceived understanding (Fryer & Freeman, 2013) to evaluate comprehension. A pre-test will be conducted to identify the emotions elicited by the selected excerpts. Each interview will start with the participant data-gathering questionnaire and consent; a customized audio introduction (Szarkowska & Jankowska, 2015) to provide narrative context, setting and characterization leading up to each scene; in the case of sighted participants with AD, a brief example of AD; the screening of two randomized film excerpts evoking different emotions; and the reception data-related questionnaire. The study will also delve into ethical requirements and will seek guidance from the UPF Institutional Committee for Ethical Review of Projects to ensure adherence to best practices.

Keywords: audio description, action genre, presence, emotional response, comprehension assessment

***Jordi Cabrera*** *holds a BA in Translation and Interpreting and an MA in Audiovisual Translation. He is currently a PhD candidate and junior researcher at Pompeu Fabra University, where he explores audio description in the action genre in English and Spanish. His research interests extend to media accessibility, corpus linguistics, and reception studies. In addition to his academic work, he has 5 years of experience in press translation and subtitling.*

# Deep learning, AI agents and inclusion: guidelines towards the museums of the future

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The intersection of deep learning and AI agents seems to be one of the most exciting areas of research and development in 2025, as can be inferred from this January's announcement by OpenAI, one of the leading companies in the field.
While previous years have witnessed the cultural sector moving closer to Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, the near future will see an increasing need to develop skills and guidelines for museums to bring them closer to AI agents to optimize the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage.
This paper aims to theoretically explore these still embryonic AI agent technologies to hypothesize their possible use in museums, with an emphasis on accessibility and inclusion. The following two aspects will be analyzed through case studies and potential applications:
1. Automated identification and classification: AI agents, trained on vast datasets of images, could perform advanced recognition of artifacts and works of art, providing not only more precise chronological and cultural attributions, but also making inventorying easier for conservators and workers with immediate attributions between inventory number and work of art, even in contexts where chaos prevails .
2. Expanded inclusion and accessibility: AI technologies can greatly facilitate access to cultural heritage by more easily breaking down language, cognitive, and physical barriers. AI virtual assistants could offer personalized experiences in different languages, targeted narratives for users with varying degrees of cognitive disabilities, audio-guides, and simplified tours for visitors with physical disabilities.
If integrated into these processes, AI could cut costs and reduce time, while offering the opportunity to train internal government staff for autonomous management. For these reasons, this research aims to develop strategies for using these technologies, including ethical considerations, in order to make museum settings more accessible and participatory.

Keywords: deep learning, AI agents, inclusion, accessibility, museums

***Federico Cammarota*** *holds a Bachelor's degree in "Literary, Archaeological and Historical-Artistic Disciplines" from the University of Trieste and is currently completing a Master's degree in "Quaternary, Prehistory and Archaeology" at the University of Ferrara. In 2018, he published an article on the numismatic hoards of Epelle-Cosina in the journal "Atti e Memorie" of the Istrian Society of Archaeology and Homeland History. In 2020, he contributed to an essay to the volume "L'enigma del potere. L'immaginario politico nel cinema" (published by Mimesis). He has worked with the Capitoline Superintendency of the Municipality of Rome (Centrale Montemartini) as part of a National Civil Service project, and as an Assistant for the Promotion and Management of Cultural Services and Heritage Education for the Italian Ministry of Culture – Superintendency of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the Municipality of Venice (Palazzo Ducale). He is currently working at the Conservation Office of the Civic Museums of Treviso, where he is responsible for exhibition design, management of storage facilities, and the photographic archive.*

# The Italian Sign Language translation of art as an intramorphic process: the experience of the exhibitions at the San Domenico Museums in Forlì

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The translation of vocal languages into signed languages raises the issue of distinguishing between two operational modes: interpretation and translation (Celo 2015; Raniolo 2023). Given the material nature of the languages involved, both methods face the challenges of intersemiotic translation, which is further complicated by the lack of a writing system proper of signed languages (Fabbretti-Pizzuto 2006), often defined only in terms of performance (Bertone 2024; Raniolo 2023). Nevertheless, while interpretation occurs simultaneously to enunciation, translation allows for extended working time and begins with a written text in the source (vocal) language, which is dynamically shifted into the diverse dimensions of interlanguage (Selinker 1979). Hence, with the aim of getting closer to the target language, it undergoes a necessary adaptation to the final result in the sign language. In other words, the text in Italian undergoes a process of dynamic and gradual linguistic approaching that, preserving the integrity of the information and considering the characteristics and degrees of complexity of both languages, requires a reorganization of the text into increasingly processable forms (Berruto 1990), in order to reach the language of the artwork's recipient.

Throughout this process, Italian is gradually transformed from a written text to Exact Signed Italian (ISE) and eventually to Italian Sign Language (LIS) in a dynamic, intersemiotic, intramaterial and intramorphic process, by means of technoques and tools such as glossing, note taking and teleprompter.

The experience of Grandi Mostre at the San Domenico Museums in Forlì offers a significant case study for exploring a translation approach to the museum visit. Since 2020, Centro Diego Fabbri and Associazione Guanti Rossi have been proposing a sequence of 5 fully accessible exhibitions, featuring audio guides for blind and visually impaired people, and a guide for deaf people. The service also features audio description and translation into Italian Sign Language (LIS) of the most relevant artworks of the exhibition, with information pertaining to different sections. This structure enables complete and comprehensive museum experience, allowing all visitors to fully grasp the spirit and content of the exhibitions.

Keywords: Italian Sign Language (LIS), accessibility, art, intramorphism

***Pietro Celo*** *was born to deaf parents and earned a degree in Modern Literature from the University of Milan "La Statale" in 1993, with a thesis in Experimental Pedagogy entitled "Pragmatic Aspects of Interrogatives in Italian Sign Language." In 1999, he taught in the three-year training course for special education teachers at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeraldas. From 2002 to 2012, he had worked as a contract professor of Italian Sign Language (LIS) and Deaf History and Culture, at the Department of Language Sciences at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. From 1994 to 2016, he served as a consultant for the bilingual Italian–Sign Language project of the Cossato School District (Biella), where he coordinated the interpreter team. A literature teacher at the Carlo Porta Institute in Milan, he has also designed and delivered training courses for sign language interpreters, including programs run by the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI) and the OPPI Association in Milan.*

*Since 2006,* ***Paolo De Lorenzi*** *has been Director of the Diego Fabbri Center in Forlì, where he works on the design and realization of cultural events, managing the organizational, economic and administrative aspects of the structure. He has produced a number of plays both as an author and actor. He has also conducted theatrical workshops at various educational institutions in the area. He was director of the GAER (regional association of young artists of Emilia-Romagna) and president of the Fund for the Culture of the City of Forlì.*

***Nicole Vian*** *is a specialized support teacher at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan, interpreter of Italian Sign Language, lecturer for sign language laboratories at Bicocca University of Milan.*

# Art at your hand: Tactile Italian Sign Language as a tool for accessibility for the deafblind

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Cultural accessibility for people with complex sensory disabilities, particularly deafblind people, is still predominantly addressed through compensatory measures that are often partial and consist of a series of a posteriori adjustments that hardly integrate into a participatory perspective on culture and reflect a process of adaptation, rather than a truly inclusive design. While valuable, they do not always align with the relational, communicative, and experiential needs of this audience, and the prevailing approach continues to be compensatory accessibility.
Yet, the right to cultural participation – defined by art.30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006) – cannot be upheld without a deep reflection on the very notion of artistic engagement for those who communicate through different channels, extended timeframes, and mediated relationships.
According to a recent investigation conducted in collaboration with Lega del Filo d'Oro, about 100 000 people in Italy live with forms of deafblindness (Lega del Filo d'Oro 2024). This condition implies a variable and dynamic combination of sensory impairments, making access to visual or tactile art, as well as to music, theatre, cinema, and other multisensory experiences that are particularly complex to perceive and interpret, particularly challenging. In many contexts, barriers are invisible yet structural, and pertain to communication, spatial orientation, timing of the experience, and lack of trained mediators.
This contribution presents a critical analysis of the very notion of accessibility applied to deafblindness: multiplying sensory channels (as in the multisensory approach) is not enough, and it is mandatory to embrace an inclusive paradigm that is centered on the individual and takes into consideration their modes of communication (for instance, tactile Italian Sign Language, Malossi method, mediated and relational communication) and the possible relations with the artwork and the environment (Fresko & Resenblum, 2013; D'Alonzo 2021; Petitto et al. 2001). In these cases, communication is part of the cultural experience, not only a means to access it.
Drawing on direct experiences in museums and performative contexts and referring to good practices enacted in national (e.g. ACCESs in the Emilia-Romagna region) and international projects (e.g. WFDB 2020 guidelines), operational strategies, common limitations and opportunities for practical transformation will be exposed. For instance, the use of tactile Italian Sign Language represents both a linguistic tool and cultural device to access narration, music and performance (Quadros & Lillo-Martin, 2007; Università di Genova, 2023). This contribution proposes a critical and operational analysis on how culture can (and should) become an accessible space in a relational and technical sense. The cultural experience is not an individual, immediate event, but rather a shared construction that unfolds overtime. In this respect, the inclusion of deafblind audiences requires participatory planning that actively involves people from the earliest stages, not just as passive recipients (WFDB, 2020; CAST, 2018).
Through an analysis of good practices tested in museum and performance contexts, this contribution will present concrete strategies for cultural mediation – such as guided tactile visits, storytelling in tactile Italian Sign Language, and relational accompaniment – moving towards a model of truly accessible culture. It will also discuss persistent structural barriers within institutional contexts, along with the opportunities offered by a paradigm shift grounded in the principles of the Universal Design for Learning and inclusive pedagogy (Canevaro, 2007; D'Alonzo 2021).
Thus, moving beyond "compensatory accessibility" means shifting from retroactive accommodation to radically participatory cultural design.

Keywords: deafblindness, accessibility, tactile Italian Sign language (LIS)

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*She works as a television interpreter and international trainer. She collaborates with the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)—and is featured in museum video guides. She also works as an interpreter for the "Lega del Filo d'Oro", an Italian organization supporting deafblind individuals. She co-developed a LIS sign lexicon app and co-authored a LIS grammar book. She is strongly committed to raising awareness about the importance of LIS as a tool for social inclusion.*

# Audio description breaks down the most insidious architectural barrier: darkness. How to make a performance accessible

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Access to culture is everyone's right. TEATRO NO LIMITS was created to guarantee this right and increase the enjoyment of cultural heritage for spectators with sensory disabilities. Theater is a unique and wonderful art: since 2010 making it accessible to everyone has been the commitment of Centro Diego Fabbri, thanks to audio description.

Audio description breaks down the most insidious architectural barrier: darkness.

How to make a show accessible
Audio description makes scenes, costumes, and actors' movements, that is those silent details that allow the audience with visual impairment to fully witness the performance, "visible".

The tactile tour
It is a tour of the stage in which the audience explores and becomes familiar with the space in which the performance will take place. The company (actors, technicians, director, etc.), with the help of the audio describer, guides the spectators through the backstage, describing the surroundings. It is also possible to touch the sets, props and costumes. The tactile elements reinforce the perception and representation of the staged reality. While listening to the audio description, the audience could hear, for example, "The character picks up a vase from the ground.". In this case, many questions might arise in the public: where is the vase? What material is it composed of? How big is it and how heavy is it? Does the character struggle to lift it? Does it require two hands? And so on. Thanks to the previous touch tour, these questions find answer. The audience can thus slowly immerse himself in the atmosphere of the performance and reconstruct visual elements easily, creating a complete and verisimilar mental image.
"With the tactile tour, we become more aware of the scene during the audio description. One sees with the mind, we see, I see with my mind, I imagine the scene."

The audio introduction
Before the show, an audio introduction guides the audience through the discovery of set design, characters and plot. The introduction contains brief descriptions, directorial choices, and cultural-historical and critical-literary information to prepare the listener for the "vision" of the play.

What happens during the performance?
Blind and visually impaired audience is equipped with wireless headsets connected to the control room. From there, a narrative voice accompanies users along the narrative development of the performance, inserting itself into the pauses of the acting. The audio description text integrates itself with the theatrical script, never overlapping with the dialogue and the soundtrack. This is possible thanks to the real-time reading, which creates a perfect synergy with the performance. The long writing process that precedes the performance has the power to restore the magic and emotion of the theater.
Today, audio description is the only tool that allows people with visual impairments to access plays, flms, TV series, exhibitions and live performances.

Keywords: audio description, theatre performances

*The main objectives of the **Diego Fabbri Center** are promoting and preserving the legacy of the renowned playwright from Forlì, as well as fostering culture, including theatre performances ("Teatro No Limits", audio description for people with visual impairments attending theatre performances), and making it fully accessible to all.*
*Thanks to collaborations with major cultural institutions, including Fondazione ATER, Fondazione ERT, Fondazione Piemonte dal Vivo, Fondazione TSU, Ravenna Festival, and the Plautus Festival in Sarsina, the Center has provided audio descriptions for more than 250 theatre performances for blind and visually impaired audiences.*
*As part of its broader commitment to accessibility, the Center has also promoted and produced audio descriptions for films, exhibitions, guided tours, and museum visits.*

# Anchoring meaning to fictional worlds: challenges and creativity in HE audio description Training

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Although studies on audio description (AD) within the field of audiovisual translation (AVT) have gained momentum over the last decade (Perego, 2019), research in AD in Greece remains extremely scarce. Furthermore, as opposed to SDH which, arguably, is now offered more systematically on the Greek television, AD provision is still in its infancy. Drawing on insights from film studies as well as audiovisual translation and media accessibility (e.g., Schaeffer-Lacroix, Reviers and Di Giovanni, 2023), this paper will report on the main findings of an exploratory study designed to identify the main challenges faced by university students when carrying out AD of excerpts, inter alia, from the TV series Milky Way (Kekatos, 2023), a teen drama which often breaks away from standard TV storytelling conventions and experiments with cinematography. More specifically, the student sample consists of 3rd and 4th year Greek undergraduate students attending the elective Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility course offered in the School of English Language and Literature at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. Audio-describers need to ensure that salient elements of the mise-en-scène are conveyed in the AD so that blind and partially sighted audiences can establish where and when the film/TV series is set (including any travels across time and space) and become familiar with the characters (Fryer 2016). A skillful use of person, space and time deixis is essential to this end (Desilla, 2024). Through the data elicitation methods of questionnaires and follow-up interviews, the challenges encountered by students and, importantly, any intuitive and/or creative solutions will be brought into sharp relief. At the same time, the case-study will shed some light on the potential role of the language of the AD (i.e., English or Greek) in the degree of creativity demonstrated by the students.

Keywords: media accessibility, audio description, deixis, pragmatics, training

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# AN ACCESSIBLE HOME: The journey of the Fondazione Teatro Ragazzi e Giovani Onlus

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Fondazione TRG is a cultural institution with a diverse audience base: children as young as three participate in its activities both through school programs and accompanied by their families, thereby engaging individuals across all age groups.
The specific competences of youth theatre, combined with its unique ability to convey complex content in an evocative and poetic manner, enable this expressive form to establish an immediate and meaningful dialogue with audiences of all kinds. It is precisely this broad cultural engagement that prompted TRG to undertake a deep reflection on the themes of accessibility and inclusion, with the goal of initiating meaningful and lasting change – not only within the theatre setting. This journey has unfolded in three steps:
Step one: investigation and research into the meanings of accessibility and inclusion, conducted in collaboration with local stakeholders and guided by institutions and foundations actively engaged in the field.
Step two: the sharing of tools, best practices, and innovative approaches with theatre and culture professionals, facilitated through a series of meetings and a national conference, In-forma, organized in collaboration with Assitej Italia.
Step three: the creation of accessible performances through the integration of sign language and audio description directly into the stage production.

Keywords: theatre, accessibility, audio description, sign language

***Casa Teatro Ragazzi e Giovani ONLUS*** *is a cultural institution in Turin dedicated to promoting theatre for young audiences. Since its inauguration in 2006, it has become a central hub for youth theatre in the region, hosting over 240 performances annually. The venue offers a diverse program of performances, workshops, and training for children, teenagers, families and schools. Managed by the Fondazione Teatro Ragazzi e Giovani ONLUS, Casa Teatro is also the Italian headquarters of ASSITEJ, the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People. The foundation collaborates with local and national institutions to promote cultural accessibility and inclusion, making theatre an engaging and formative experience.*

# Improving museum accessibility through textsimplification, explanations in Italian Sign Language (LIS), multimedia, and multimodality: The case of the National Archaeological Museum of Campobasso

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Within the framework of lifelong learning, museums are considered key spaces for informal education, since they provide several occasions on which the individual can engage in educational and social experiences (Cirillo, 2012). Nevertheless, museums often present both visible and invisible barriers. The former pertains to physical accessibility, the latter pertains to the accessibility of the texts presented, which are frequently complex and difficult to understand for people with disabilities, low educational attainment, or newcomers to the Italian language. The focus of this project was the issue related to museum content accessibility.

This contribution presents the accessibility project implemented at the National Archaeological Museum of Campobasso, which addressed four key factors: text simplification, the use of Italian Sign Language (LIS), multimodality, and multimedia. The outcome of this process consisted of eight exhibition panels displayed in strategic locations in the museum (each equipped with QR codes providing access to multimedia resources) and also available online via a virtual tour developed by a project partner.

With regard to text simplification, the original museum captions were summarized and simplified according to the linguistic simplification guidelines for administrative texts by Fioritto (1997) and Piemontese (1991) and to some aspects of the guidelines for plain language writing (Sciumbata 2022). The difficulty level of the texts was assessed using Corrige and DyLan Lab, tools developed by different research groups and based on mathematical formulas and linguistic complexity metrics, considering morphosyntactic and lexical parameters. The main goal was to obtain texts for the eight panels summarizing the original captions and texts available in the museum, to measure their complexity index and to enhance it. The main challenges in the creation of accessible texts were mainly related to the use of technical terms, pertaining to the field of archaeology, and toponyms, that were not always recognized by Corrige.

Once the 8 texts in plain language were completed, additional versions were developed to accommodate the needs of people with limited access to written texts: simplified texts were then recorded, for the purpose of making them accessible not only to people with reading difficulties, but also to blind and visually impaired people. Written and recorded versions of the translations into English were included.

In addition, the panel texts were translated into Italian Sign Language (LIS). It is increasingly evident that the availability of sign language explanations or guided tours for deaf people (Martins, 2016) is gaining momentum, as demonstrated by initiatives at institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and the British Museum in London, which offer guided tours led by deaf guides using sign language. Similarly, the translation into Italian Sign Language has been adopted within the framework of the SIGN ME IN project (Pioggia e Sardella, 2024), which featured the Italian Sign Language translation of some of the exhibition panels at the Museum of Earth Sciences in Rome to enhance accessibility for deaf signers.

For the purpose of improving content accessibility, time frame and location in the museum, each panel features a timeline indicating the historical period relevant to the artifacts displayed in the Museum. Each panel highlights the timeframe in which the artifacts displayed in the corresponding room are located, as well as images of some of the artworks cited in the text.

Keywords: museum accessibility, plain language, Italian Sign Language (LIS), multimodality, multimediality

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***Giuliana Fiorentino*** *is full professor in general linguistics and public speaking at the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education of the University of Molise. She is the author of several volumes and essays, including some interventions on linguistic complexity.*

# Enhancing accessibility in digital museum projects with DiPA Tool

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The intersection of digital innovation and accessibility in the cultural sector is rapidly evolving, influenced by regulatory frameworks such as the European Accessibility Act and the increasing demand for inclusive digital experiences. This presentation introduces the DiPA Tool1 (Digital Project's Accessibility Tool), a web-based platform developed by Fondazione Kainòn ETS to support museums in evaluating and improving the accessibility of their digital projects. DiPA leverages generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to offer customized recommendations grounded in international guidelines, serving as an empowerment tool that guides users in initiating or refining their approach to accessibility.
The talk will explore how Italian museums are adapting to digital transformation and accessibility requirements, particularly in response to institutional and funding incentives. It will critically examine four key areas assessed by DiPA: Project Design, Target & Stakeholders, Technologies, and Facilitations, offering different insights into accessible digital project planning. Each of these four perspectives contributes to a broader strategy for inclusive digital design in the museum sector.
Furthermore, this discussion extends beyond the Tool itself, emphasizing the need for a sustainable and participatory approach to accessibility in museums. The conclusion will present strategies for fostering a research and practice community, emphasizing the importance of collective knowledge-sharing and collaboration among museums, researchers, and accessibility advocates. It will call for continuous investment in digital accessibility and highlight key benefits. Ensuring fair access to cultural content by incorporating accessibility from the initial stages of project design benefits both museums and their visitors. On one hand, it enables institutions to comply with regulations while optimizing related adaptation costs. On the other, it broadens audience reach, enhances the digital experience, and fosters greater engagement and loyalty. The DiPA Tool serves as both a practical framework and a research initiative, contributing to the ongoing dialogue on accessibility in cultural heritage. As museums position themselves as inclusive and innovative institutions, embracing digital accessibility becomes an essential, forward-thinking strategy.
Keywords: accessibility, digital innovation, museums, artificial intelligence, cultural heritage, co-design.

1 To access the DiPA Tool website and try the tool: <https://dipa.fondazionekainon.it/>.

Keywords: accessibility, digital innovation, museums, artificial intelligence, co-design

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# The Role of the European Union in Ensuring Accessibility of Media, Entertainment and Cultural Heritage: European Paradigms and Socio-Legal Perspectives”

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This paper aims to explore the extent to which the European Union (EU) ensures and promotes accessibility of media, entertainment and cultural heritage for persons with disabilities, and interrogates accessibility a “European” normative paradigm. It investigates the way in which diverse pieces of EU legislation - including the European Accessibility Act, the Web Accessibility Directive and the Audiovisual Media Service Directive - interact, overlap and complement each other in promoting access to culture for persons with disabilities. It also discusses the role of the new Directive on the European Disability Card, approved in November 2024, in promoting access to culture for persons with disabilities and explores the extent to which an array of other EU initiatives - such as cultural programmes, the New European Bauhaus – can further accessibility of cultural goods and services. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its wide-ranging human rights obligations will be used to contextualise and critically examine this “jigsaw” of EU laws and policies. In doing so this paper brings together legal analysis with findings of qualitative research conducted as part of a wider socio-legal European project entitled ‘Protecting the Right to Culture of Persons with Disabilities and Enhancing Cultural Diversity through European Union Law: Exploring New Paths – DANCING’, funded by the European Research Council. This project, as its title suggests, explores the right of persons with disabilities to take part in cultural life as an essential aspect of cultural diversity in the EU blending legal analysis, qualitative methods and arts-based research.

Funding
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Keywords: European Union Law and Policies, European Accessibility Act, European Disability Card, EU Funding, Socio-legal Research

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# For a culture without barriers: Collective enjoyment, cultural rights, and social solidarity in the Italian legal system

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Within the Code of Cultural Heritage, despite a systematic framework that seems to place fruition and valorization on separate levels (Arts. 102 and 112 Cod.), it is not possible to situate the former on a level of functional autonomy with respect to the latter, and the latter with respect to the traditional function of heritage protection. In fact, in the Code's general principles themselves, fruition is defined by the Code as the final element of enhancement. Furthermore, a functional confluence is discerned within the same code principles between protection, which is called upon to guarantee protection and preservation "for purposes of public enjoyment," and valorization, which also includes support and promotion "to interventions for the preservation of cultural heritage."

This convergence is far from useless, because the notion of cultural property remains unitary, and the prerequisite of any valorization is the conservation and protection of the property, while the ultimate goal of any operation on cultural property is collective fruition. In fact, the notion of valorization admitted by a democratic and pluralistic system such as the Italian one can only be circular: it starts from fruition, transits through a model of valorization also understood in a revenue sense, but to the benefit of the community, in the end, it must still return. In other words, for example, increasing access fees to cultural assets, developing additional services, increasing sponsorships, can represent a significant management strategy intended to seek greater profit, to the extent, however, that all of this is tied to the greater supply of the cultural asset, that is, its wider public enjoyment.

This is even more significant at a time when an organizational model and a doctrinal paradigm is emerging and it sees in the institutes and places of culture (starting with museums), ex art. 101 Cod., a tool for the valorization of assets, increasingly oriented to the enjoyment of specific "rights to culture." The talk will highlight the role of all those stakeholders and recipients of rights, for the realization of a perspective of authentic social solidarity. And above all, it will try to explain why this appears to be the only possible reconstruction for a model of cultural heritage that actually conforms to and implements the design of the Italian Constitution.

Our Fundamental Charter, in fact, within its fundamental principles (Article 9), refers not only to the "promotion" but also to the "development" of culture. With thi regard, on the one hand: a) to the indispensable support to marginal and peripheral cultures, i.e., those less acclaimed expressions of cultural life, which would otherwise risk (deviating from the view of kulturelle Trägerpluralismus) falling into oblivion; on the other b), to a model of cultural heritage that constitutes a factor of civil progress and cultural development of the entire political citizenry.

All this inescapably calls for an inclusive cultural policy that cannot continue to marginalize more vulnerable social categories, such as disabled people, from the universe of recognizable opportunities in the sphere of cultural heritage enjoyment. On the contrary, in the name of "equal social dignity" and equality of starting conditions, it obliges institutions to realize an effective "right to diversity" in the cultural sphere, strengthening the protection of the weak and removing economic and social obstacles that prevent full individual self-determination. All of this is done having as a key interpretive reference the development of the human person and the realization of principles of substantive equality, which are the foundational pillars of Italian constitutional democracy.

Keywords: Cultural heritage law, Cultural enhancement, Accessibility and inclusion, Equal opportunities, Democracy building

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# Opera North's Accessibility Approach: History and Current Trends

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Opera companies have a long tradition of pioneering accessibility in music and live performance. In the UK, the performing arts sector is particularly committed to fostering inclusion and breaking down linguistic and sensory barriers. While accessibility features have expanded, especially following the Equality Act of 2010, balancing innovation with practicality remains a challenge.

This presentation explores Opera North's approach to accessibility, tracing its historical development and examining current trends. We will analyze how the company addresses accessibility through a multifaceted lens that considers financial, cultural, linguistic, and community-specific dimensions as part of an integrated ecosystem that aims to balance entertainment, artistic ambition, and education.

By examining Opera North's engagement strategies in relation to cultural and social trends, we will identify how accessibility has evolved, redefining its scope and incorporating new perspectives. We will discuss how accessibility extends across different stages of the production process, focusing on audiovisual elements and paratexts that shape both the conception and delivery of performances. Finally, we will highlight key initiatives that integrate accessibility within the production, observing how solutions designed for people with disabilities also enhance the experience for all audiences, regardless of their circumstances.

Keywords: opera, integrated accessibility, paratexts

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# AD by stealth: integrated and traditional AD in a tale of two puppet shows

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Audio Description (AD) has been defined as “the principal means of bringing arts and heritage to life” (VocalEyes, n.d.) for people who are blind or partially blind (BPB). It is a form of oral translation where “oral delivery is the principal means of the communicative act’” (Fryer, 2024). The target user is largely (but not always solely) dependent on AD for their enjoyment of and engagement with the original. This is because people who are BPB can also engage directly with the original’s dialogue, music and any ambient sound. They may also have been given prior tactile and kinaesthetic access to the stage, props and costumes via a touch tour.

AD is traditionally added once the production is complete. More recently integrated and participatory approaches have been encouraged whereby the AD is incorporated from the start with the describer(s) collaborating with the artistic team.

In this presentation I will illuminate the pros and cons of each approach with reference to two puppet shows staged in the UK in 2024 – one with traditional AD (TAD) and one with integrated AD (IAD). AD is especially important in puppet shows because they occupy a place on a spectrum of live performance somewhere between theatre and dance - the puppets themselves make no noise so there is little or no dialogue or other ambient sound cues with which the BPB audience can engage. While the directors of both shows were supportive of AD and keen to make their show as accessible as possible, in the TAD approach the show was modified by an additional narration that was open to everyone, thereby transforming the experience of the sighted audience, whereas in the IAD approach the show was modified from inception with changes to the script and the soundscape. Although this also transformed the experience of the sighted audience, they would not have been aware that those changes had been made. One partially-blind describer, Chloe Clark, calls this AD by stealth.

Keywords: Integrated Audiodescription Puppet Plays

***Louise Fryer*** *has a doctorate in Experimental Psychology from Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research interests include accessibility and immersion in audiovisual media. She was a senior teaching fellow (2017 – 2020) in the Centre for Translation Studies at University College London, convening the course in Audio Description for the MA in audiovisual translation. She was a partner in the research project ADLAB PRO (2016 – 19). She is the author of An Introduction to Audio Description: A Practical Guide (Routledge, 2016). With the blind aerialiste and drag performer, Amelia Cavallo, she co-authored Integrated Access in Live Performance (Routledge, 2021) based on research carried out for Extant – the UK’s leading theatre company run by and for actors who are blind or partially blind.Her current interest is in integrated access, whereby access provision (AD, signing etc.) is thought about from the start and not simply added at the end of the creative process.*

# Urbs Salvia Smart: Accessibility and innovation for inclusive archaeology

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Can an archaeological park become accessible through technological innovation? Access to and participation in cultural heritage are significantly limited by physical, cognitive and sensory barriers that affect fruition for individuals over the age of 65. The project for the Archaeological Park of Urbs Salvia is aimed at transforming the visit experience through the integration of immersive technologies, inclusive communication strategies and interactive spaces, in line with state-of-the-art practices in the field of digital accessibility and inclusive design.
This proposal revolves around three key elements:

- Technology in the service of accessibility: the use of outdoor beacons, mobile apps featuring augmented reality and guided digital tours allows visitors to explore the site autonomously and receive personalized content.
- Spaces for socialization and well-being: smart benches, equipped rest areas and sensory paths create an accessible environment and promote dialogue.
- Accessible communication strategies: audio guides, adapted narration and immersive digital tours make the park a space open to all, enhancing active participation in cultural heritage.

In an era where artificial intelligence, virtual reality and emerging technologies are redefining our relationship with cultural heritage, this project presents a replicable model of digital accessibility and innovation for cultural heritage, establishing Urbs Salvia as a leading example of inclusive tourism and cultural well-being.

Keywords: accessibility, technology, inclusion, cultural tourism, innovation

***Alessandro Giuliani*** *is an archaeologist and PhD student at the University of Macerata, under the supervision of Prof. Roberto Perna. His research, conducted in collaboration with Dr Sofia Cingolani, director of the Archaeological Park of Urbs Salvia, is part of the larger VITALITY project, dedicated to accessibility and inclusion in cultural contexts. The focus of his work is the development of innovative solutions to improve the enjoyment of archaeological parks by over 65, through the use of immersive technologies such as outdoor beacons, augmented reality and assisted digital paths. Part of his research has been illustrated in the 2024 and 2025 editions of TourismA - Exhibition of Archaeology and Cultural Tourism in Florence, contributing to the debate on technological innovation applied to accessibility in archaeological sites.*

***Sofia Cingolani*** *holds a PhD in Roman Archaeology in the Maghreb and Cyrenaica at the University of Macerata. Since 2007 she has been working in the department of archaeology and history of Greek and Roman art at the University of Macerata as a scholar and member of the archaeological missions.*

***Roberto Perna****, Archaeologist, Researcher at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Macerata, deals with ancient topography and management of archaeological and cultural heritage. He has carried out numerous projects and excavations in Italy and abroad, and in particular he is Director of the Museum System Association of the province of Macerata and Coordinator of the Archaeological Mission of the University of Studies of Macerata near Hadrianopolis (Sofratikë - Albania).*

# Cultural accessibility and management sustainability: The role of emerging technologies in ongoing experiments in the metropolitan area of Naples

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In today's context, cultural institutions can no longer limit their work to cultural heritage preservation and promotion,
In today's context, cultural institutions can no longer limit their work to preserving and promoting cultural heritage and need to redefine their role as key stakeholders in both social (Santagati, 2019) and economic development, in order to meet the needs of increasingly diversified audiences, tackling physical, cognitive, sensory and economic barriers (Iodice & Bifulco, 2024) that hinder access to culture. A truly sustainable management model must be capable of meeting the needs of all stakeholders and actively engaging the audience (Bifulco & Russo Spena, 2016). It is essential to adopt audience engagement strategies that transform the public from passive viewers into co-creators of cultural experiences (Simon, 2010).

A stakeholder-oriented approach and an efficient use of new technologies are key factors not only to ensure financial sustainability for cultural institutions, but also to make culture equitable and accessible (Ciaccheri & Fornasari, 2022). Active audience engagement occurs along three main lines:

· Personalization of the user experience by means of digital tools that offer tailored content based on individual visitor needs.

· Interaction and active participation, through experimental transmedial storytelling tours (Bonacini, 2010), workshops, and co-creation initiatives that allow the audience to feel an integral part of the museum.

· Accessibility and inclusion, by eliminating sensory, cognitive and architectural barriers to make cultural experiences available to broader audiences (Cetorelli & Guido, 2017).

Besides improving the fruition of cultural heritage, these tools enhance financial and managerial resources, contributing to the creation of a more resilient museum management model, in which Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Perini & Tencati, 2011) becomes a strategic driver for inclusion and the enhancement of cultural resources.

Technological innovation as a tool for accessibility and sustainability

Emerging technologies represent a crucial resource to overcome barriers to cultural access and simultaneously make heritage management more efficient and sustainable. In this respect, Naples positions itself as a lab for experimenting new integrated public-private solutions, leveraging the opportunities offered by the PNRR (Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan) in compliance with the stimuli from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 agenda.

Among the main innovations adopted in cultural institutions in Naples are:

· App development, particularly by increasing the use of gamification to address new target audiences (Mandarano, 2019).

· Virtual reality and augmented reality for immersive fruition: VR and AR applications enable to recreate historical settings and offer immersive experiences to people who cannot physically visit cultural sites (Colombo, 2020).

· Multisensory technologies for accessibility: by means of 3D prints and tactile panels, people with visual impairments can access artworks (Caruso, 2011).

· Digital totems to support inclusive fruition.

In addition to these tools, machine learning algorithms allow for content and tour adaptation depending on individual preferences, enhancing the visit for people with sensory or cognitive disabilities, creating tailored experiences and increasing their engagement. These interventions not only foster accessibility (Ciaccheri, 2022) but also support a sustainable management model in which digitalization optimizes resources, broadens audience reach, reduces operational costs and enhances the social impact of cultural institutions.

Some of the advantages resulting from the adoption of technological solutions include, for instance, a decrease in operational costs, since the creation of digital twins (D'Isa, 2024) reduces the need for physical maintenance by digitally simulating wear and optimizing investments in preventive conservation. In addition, data analytics systems further enable the collection of visitor preference data to better align cultural offering with audience needs.

In this perspective, the development model developed in the Metropolitan Area of Naples represents a valuable example of virtuous creation of sustainable economic models that combine public and private investments to ensure the continuity of accessibility initiatives.

Conclusions: towards a scalable model

The Neapolitan experience proves that cultural accessibility is both an equity goal and a key element for the innovative, sustainable management of cultural heritage by means of a more inclusive, digital and resilient fruition model, that can meet the needs of an increasingly diversified audience. The introduction of artificial intelligence, virtual reality and tools for experience personalization, through active listening to audience needs, transforms cultural institutions into smart, interactive and accessible spaces, reducing barriers and maximizing engagement, while generating positive impacts on both institutional development and the surrounding community.

This contribution presents an analysis of future perspective for technologically advanced, accessible, and sustainable culture, examining how the strategies implemented in Naples can serve as a scalable and replicable model for other urban and cultural contexts, both in Italy and internationally.

Keywords: accessibility, management, sustainability

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# Participa(c)tion in cultural heritage: The multisensory falla

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The giant falla – made up of ninots (caricature pieces) - is the main feature of a festivity celebrated in spring in some towns of the Valencian Community in Spain (UNESCO, 2016). Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948) prescribes equal access to culture for all, hence the need to study access for the blind and partially sighted to the Valencian Fallas. As a festivity, The Fallas may be regarded as a sociological phenomenon (Ariño Villarroya, 1992), which increases interest within accessibility. Given the sculptural nature of a falla, its audio description takes the form of an audio guide that can be complemented with multisensory experiences, in the same way as artworks exhibited in museums (Fineman & Cock, 2022). In accordance with accessible filmmaking approaches (Romero Fresco, 2019), this study is based on participatory action research, which means that all actors involved actively participate in the research and that actions are evaluated through reception studies (Eizagirre & Zabala, n.d.).

As part of a preliminary step of the action phase, this paper presentation delves into how the children's Valencian falla Cronista Vicent Beguer i Esteve (Torrent, València) will be made sensorially accessible for the blind in March 2025 by a team made up of blind people, accessibility experts, local artists and Fallas authorities. An enriched audio guide will be complemented by reliefs, scents and edible ninots. Once the falla is erected, blind people will be invited to visit it and evaluate the resulting audio guide through a survey. The results would be applicable not only to access to the Valencian Fallas but also to access to museums and similar festivities.
falla; audio guide; multisensoriality; participatory action research

Keywords: falla; audio guide; multisensoriality; participatory action research

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# Enhancing Audio Description Through Mental Imagery and Embodiment

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AFor blind and partially sighted audiences, dance as an art form remains largely inaccessible. Audio description (AD) serves to bridge this gap by narrating the on-stage action, including movements, facial expressions, costumes, and settings, to convey key visual elements and enhance accessibility. However, traditional AD guidelines advocate for objective and neutral descriptions, often failing to capture the aesthetic essence of the performance (Schaeffer-Lacroix, Reviers & Di Giovanni, 2023). To address this limitation, alternative and more subjective AD approaches are being explored to enrich the experience for non-sighted audiences, foster cultural participation, and evoke stronger emotional engagement (Karkou et al., 2017).

Beyond body movements—such as spatial direction, posture, and dynamics (Geiger, 2005)—dance encompasses narrative elements (Fryer, 2009) and offers profound aesthetic experiences. Scholars therefore call for enriched AD (Neves, 2016), incorporating descriptions of facial expressions, gestures, emotions, and poetic, visually evocative language (Margolies, 2015). By creating a balance between artistic form (i.e., choreographic details) and dance narrative, enriched AD enables recipients to form mental imagery, interpret stories, and experience aesthetic appreciation (Holsanova, Suwalo-Grimberg & Weidelt, 2023). Innovative approaches include integrating blind dancers into performances and embedding AD within the artistic presentation itself (Reviers, 2024). Additionally, emerging research explores audience reception of new AD practices and software-based solutions for AD delivery (Hermosa-Ramírez, 2020). These developments enhance not only comprehension and imagination but also empathy, engagement, and emotional resonance in experiencing choreographic performances (Fertier, 2017). Yet, what might such an enriched AD of dance look like in practice?

Grounded in theories of mental imagery and embodiment, I will explore how enriched AD can make dance more vivid and engaging for visually impaired audiences. Research indicates that sighted individuals watching dance internally simulate and re-enact movements, experiencing them through kinaesthetic empathy (Bläsing et al., 2012; Bläsing & Zimmermann, 2021; Hagendoorn, 2004). Seeing dance triggers memories and sensations of movement. The critical challenge is how to create a similar embodied effect for non-sighted audiences. How can AD facilitate immersion in the atmosphere and emotions of dance?

I argue that AD enhancing mental imagery and embodiment is highly beneficial for users (Holsanova, 2021), enabling them to engage with the artwork and immerse themselves in its emotional landscape (Perego, 2019). Concepts of imagery and embodiment are well-established in sports and dance education, with research on visual and kinaesthetic imagery in athletic training (Callow & Hardy, 2004) and tactile-kinaesthetic imagery in dance improvisation (Batson & Sentler, 2017). While visual imagery invites audiences to imagine movement visually, kinaesthetic imagery allows them to "feel" the movement through perceived muscle sensations. Studies indicate that dancers strategically employ both visual and kinaesthetic/motor imagery (Bläsing et al., 2012), yet no research has directly examined their effects within AD of dance.

In my presentation, I will propose a framework for enriched AD based on embodied cognition, visual, and kinaesthetic imagery. Through concrete examples, I will illustrate how such AD can be structured and discuss methods for evaluating its impact for non-sighted audiences.

Keywords: enriched audio description, dance, embodiment, visual and kinaesthetic imagery

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# Audio description meets terminology. How to make artworks accessible in museums: challenges and strategies

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Over the last decades, accessibility and inclusion have become key priorities internationally in many sectors (cf. UNCRPD, European Disability Strategy, European Accessibility Act), including culture. WithWhit its focus on cultural heritage and democratic participation, article 12 of the Faro Convention encourages institutions "to improve access to the heritage, especially among young people and the disadvantaged, to raise awareness about its value." Similarly, the new definition of 'museum', recently adopted by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), reveals the public and social function of such cultural institutions: "Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability" (ICOM 2022). In these contact and translation zones, in these spaces of cultural translation and transfer (Mertens and Decroupet 2024), multiple translation and mediation processes (intralingual, interlingual, intersemiotic, and intrasemiotic translation practices) take place. As an access service and an instance of intersemiotic translation aimed mainly – but not exclusively – to blind and visually impaired visitors (Bartolini 2021), museum audio description (AD) participates in these processes. It plays a crucial mediating role, by removing barriers that prevent full access and enjoyment of cultural heritage while also meeting the social and educational needs of the museum. However, the specificities of art language, often combining specialised and domain-specific terms with evocative, symbolic, and metaphorical elements requires, further mediating efforts. The peculiarities of art language may indeed result in complex and terminology-dense ADs that may hinder full access to the artwork and cultural artefacts. This contribution seeks to explore and analyse, from a descriptive perspective, the strategies adopted in museum ADs to address art-specific language and terminology. After outlining the multidisciplinary theoretical framework that combines Translation Studies (TS), in particular Audiovisual Translation (AVT) and Media Accessibility (MA), and the more recent Accessibility Studies (AS) (Greco, 2018), with research in Museum Studies (MS), the analysis will focus on a corpus of ADs from French museums (Centre Pompidou, Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, and Louvre-Petit Galerie) that integrate ADs with other access tools and services and adopt different approaches to audio description. Drawing on the analysis of the different strategies, the paper will also discuss the potential and benefits of museum AD and its mediation of art-specific language and terminology for a wider audience of museumgoers.

Keywords: audio description, terminology, museum accessibility, inclusion

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# New insights in AD delivery: comparing two genres

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Audio description (AD) is "the acoustic verbal description of the visual elements of any cultural (static and dynamic) product for the benefit of people with visual impairment" (Perego 2019:333). But is there a need to customize AD guidelines per genre? "Even if the British ITC guidelines point out that documentary films benefit less from AD than fiction films as information in non-fiction films is mainly conveyed through the auditory channel (ITC 2000: 6)" (Lintner 2018:62), it seems that each genre has specific challenges to overcome in AD. In this paper, we will compare AD in animation and documentary films as film mediums. More specifically, the results from reception studies conducted for 5 foreign stop-motion animation films targeted to the Greek audience (Karantzi 2023) showed that the (para)linguistic choices, technical aspects, and voicing strategies affect emotional activation and enjoyment, while touchable objects (e.g. pre-screening touch tour) along with AD could encompass a more inclusive, engaging and entertaining experience for the audience. Extensive research was made not only on voice delivery and reading speed and style but also on AD information load and priorities and multisensory approach. On the contrary, new challenges arose when audio described a documentary. How could repetitions be handled in AD when the original narrative and image are about the same thing? What happens in the case of naming characters and describing non-relevant scenes? When and how do you voice AD when soundtracks and imposing music play? Should the AD be "minimal"? Given the fact that AD "is not a stand-alone text but makes sense only as part of an audiovisual product, namely as part of a larger multisemiotic communicative act" (Reviers 2017:39), it appears to be a need for specific AD guidelines – or adjustments to the existing ones – per genre to weave AD among sounds for B/VIP audiences better. Last but not least, it's important to investigate the potential role of Artificial Intelligence (AI-enhanced technology) in the AD process and voice delivery, evaluating the final product for the target audience.

Keywords: audio description, audio subtitles, multisensory approach, documentaries, AI, voice delivery

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# How can incorporating all the senses during the act of drawing connect people with vision loss or blindness as well as fully-sighted people to themselves and their surroundings in fresh ways?

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How can incorporating all the senses during the act of drawing connect people with vision loss or blindness as well as fully-sighted people to themselves and their surroundings in fresh ways? In the ten-minute prerecorded video, I will take the viewer/participant through an interactive drawing workshop based on the work I do in Drawing as Seeing (DAS), a course I teach in Italy for people with any level of sight, as well as at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met).

As a part of the experience, I will invite members of the conference to draw during the video, shifting the presenter/audience relationship to cocreation in a conference setting. Viewers will become participants. I will ask those present to have a drawing surface available (it could be a notebook or table) as well as a pencil, and preferably, masking tape.

In Drawing as Seeing as well as at the Met, international participants both with and without sight connect with Cultural Heritage sites novel to them as visitors, including wayfinding along cathedral floors, touching museum objects and wall reliefs, and capturing antique surfaces through tactile drawing in historic Siena, igniting discovery and producing unconventional artworks worthy in their own right, rather than the conventional sketch expected of a museum visit.

Drawing itself is transformed, utilizing experimental materials and implementing all the senses, focusing on process not product. At the same time, the results are inventive, defying conventions of what is good drawing, what people with low or no vision are capable of and what we can expect from a museum experience, where drawing is often viewed as a byproduct rather than being central to the experience.

Drawing is a gathering of data and knowledge. At the same time, the act of drawing heightens our perceptual awareness in multisensory ways, grounding us in the present. This approach challenges the notion that people with low or no vision have limited appreciation of and "ability" with drawing. Finally, it enables all who participate to slow down and engage with cultural heritage settings on a deeper and more interactive level, transforming the traditional expectations of museum goers as passive recipients of data or information into a felt relationship, in harmony with their setting.

Keywords: Drawing, multisensory, process-oriented, sculpture, tactile

***Pamela Lawton's*** *2019-20 "Multisensory Drawing In Siena" Italy project awarded her a U.S. Fulbright Scholar grant at the Siena Art Institute (SART). She propelled her own artmaking into tactility, incorporating her Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met) low-and-no-vision drawing students' perspectives. She innovated workshops for diversely sighted people at the Uffizi Galleries, the Palazzo Strozzi, and the Benaki Museum (Athens). Her "Drawing As Seeing" class led her to author a chapter of the same title for The Bloomsbury Handbook of Drawing Research (2026), Bloomsbury Press. International exhibitions include Galeria Nacional, Costa Rica, Galeria Isabel Ignacio, Spain, and, in New York, the Met print shop, Pierogi, and Tibor De Nagy galleries. Lawton was an old World Trade Center Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Artist-In-Residence. She created a post-tsunami Sri Lanka study-abroad class through New School University, introducing skill-based art lessons to process trauma. She teaches at the Met, Manhattanville College, and SART.*

# Film students and audio description: results of a francophone inclusive media training Pilot Project in Quebéc, Canada

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The « Formation en Médias Inclusifs: Audiodescription/Vidéodescription et Sous-Titrage par Reconnaissance Vocale » is the first Francophone initiative of its kind in Canada. This pilot project, conducted from 2022 to 2023 at the Université de Montréal (Quebec, Canada), was funded by the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund. This talk outlines the genesis of the training program, its objectives, curriculum, and the outcomes observed among both teachers and students.

Genesis: The idea of developing a French-language training course in inclusive media emerged from our participation in the advisory committee for the Inclusive Media Course Series at Toronto Metropolitan University (Canada), led by Professor Deborah Fels. This invitation highlighted the potential of film studies to contribute to research on audio description and to the training of audio describers within the film student community.

Objectives: The training had two primary objectives: first, to train audio describers and live subtitlers (using respeaking techniques) to meet the demands of Canadian broadcasters for French-language content. In 2016, the CRTC mandated that, by September 1, 2019, all major broadcasters must provide videodescription for all eligible programs aired between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. (prime time), seven days a week.

Course curriculum: The pilot training project consisted of three courses: Introduction to Audio and Video Description, Introduction to Voice Recognition Subtitling, and Inclusive Creation: Theory, History, and Practice. The first course provided an overview of the history of audio description and studies on its reception, with a focus on developing technical skills such as scripting, narration, recording, and quality control.

Results: Feedback from both teachers and students affirmed the importance of such training within the undergraduate film studies curriculum. In addition to acquiring technical skills, which students viewed as an asset for entering the job market, they emphasized the need to incorporate such training into the core curriculum.

Keywords: Inclusive Media, Audiodescription, Training Program, Broadcasting Accessibility, Curriculum Development

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***Santiago Hidalgo*** *is the director of the CinéMédias Laboratory and co-director of the Cinema and Technology series at Amsterdam University Press. He also co-edited The Blackwell Companion to Early Cinema (Wiley, 2011) and edited the volume Technology and Film Scholarship: Experience, Study, Theory (Amsterdam University Press, 2018). In addition, he is co-editor, with Bernard Perron, of the issue of the journal Cinémas, titled "Editing Through the Prism of Change". His current research focuses on the cinematic experience and the notion of film consciousness. His doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of André Gaudreault at the University of Montreal and submitted in 2016, is titled The Possibilities of 'Film Consciousness': A Formulation in Search of a Theory. He is also interested in children's film reception, a topic he explored notably during the organization of the Canadian Film Studies Association panel (Toronto, 2017) titled "From Primary Schools to University: The Study of Film Reception in Educational Environments." At the CinéMédias Laboratory, he continues his research on reception and film consciousness through the PREC (Research Program on the Cinematic Experience). Santiago Hidalgo is currently a member of the scientific committee of TECHNÈS.*

# Film students and audio description: results of a francophone inclusive media training Pilot Project in Quebéc, Canada

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This research explores the intersection of audio description (AD) practices and Korean cultural content, specifically focusing on the challenges and opportunities in making Korean visual art accessible to global audiences. The study examines current AD practices in Korean audiovisual production, investigating how cultural-specific elements are conveyed through verbal description. By analyzing the availability of audio descriptions within streaming platforms, the research identifies key challenges in translating Korean cultural concepts and historical context into accessible verbal descriptions.

The study particularly emphasizes the development of standardized terminology for Korean-English audio description, addressing the gap in existing streaming platforms when displaying South Korean content to global audiences. Through a systematic analysis of AD availability in Korean content and the global availability of translations, the research proposes a framework for consistent and culturally sensitive audio description inclusion.

Furthermore, this investigation evaluates the impact of audio description on cultural accessibility, examining how effective AD can enhance the appreciation and understanding of Korean culture through media among diverse audiences. The findings of this study contribute to the growing field of accessibility in cultural heritage and arts, while also addressing the specific challenges of cross-cultural communication in audio description. The research concludes with practical recommendations for AD practitioners, streaming platforms, and policymakers, aiming to improve the accessibility of Korean cultural content while preserving its cultural authenticity and artistic significance.

keywords: Accessibility, South Korea, Media, Translation, Inclusion

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# Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality as tools for inclusion: legal profiles and regulatory perspectives

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR) are shifting the paradigms of social, educational and labor inclusion, offering innovative tools to break down barriers related to disability and marginalization.
The use of these technologies makes it possible to expand access to services, digital environments and cultural activities, encouraging the active participation of vulnerable groups. However, their increasing dissemination raises complex legal issues, such as the protection of personal data, the prevention of algorithmic discrimination and the liability in case of violation of fundamental rights.
This paper aims to analyze the applicable legal framework, with particular reference to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the European Directive 2019/882 on accessibility requirements for products and services. While digital accessibility emerges as a key principle for ensuring equal treatment in the technological age, there are still open questions about personal data protection profiles, with particular attention to the processing of biometric and sensitive data in the context of immersive technologies, in light of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the principles of proportionality, minimization, and transparency.
In addition, the risk of algorithmic bias is addressed, with reference to the non-discrimination obligations enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the provisions contained in the proposed Artificial Intelligence Regulation (AI Act).
Special attention is devoted to the metaverse, which, through the integration of AI and VR, offers new scenarios for social and labor inclusion, but also sets unprecedented challenges in terms of data protection, accessibility, and legal regulation, requiring a balance between innovation and the protection of digital rights.
With regards to legal liability, the article examines the civil and criminal implications related to the use of AI and VR for inclusive purposes, highlighting critical issues related to technological malfunctions and unintentional discrimination. In addition, the role of regulators and European institutions in outlining regulatory standards to ensure equitable and ethical technological development is analyzed.
In conclusion, the paper proposes a set of regulatory recommendations to foster responsible implementation of immersive technologies through inclusive policy tools, incentives for the development of accessible solutions, and sanctioning measures for non-compliance with accessibility obligations. Finally, it reflects on the possible configuration of access to AI and VR as a new emerging right to be included in digital and social inclusion strategies.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligenc, Virtual Reality, digital inclusion, accessibility, data protection

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# Inclusive Language and Disability Representation. Promoting Respect and Understanding

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This presentation explores the critical importance of inclusive language and disability representation, aiming to foster respect and understanding in society. We begin by defining inclusive language and discussing its value, particularly in relation to disability, highlighting how it promotes respect and understanding. A historical context will be provided, tracing the evolution of terms used to describe disability and explaining why certain terms have become inappropriate.
We will then delve into the principles of inclusive language, contrasting person-first language with identity-first language, and emphasizing the avoidance of euphemisms and derogatory terms. Practical examples will illustrate common phrases and their inclusive alternatives. The presentation will address common misconceptions about disability and inclusive language, identifying well-meaning but harmful language pitfalls.
The session will offer practical steps for incorporating inclusive language into daily life, supported by guidelines and resources for further education. Finally, we will conclude with a summary of key points and final thoughts, emphasizing the necessity of ongoing learning and advocacy for inclusive language and accurate disability representation.
Through this comprehensive session, the presentation aims to equip attendees with the knowledge and tools to contribute to a more inclusive and respectful society.

Keywords: inclusive language, disability representation

***Verónica Morales Beltrán*** *is a language and accessibility professional and has been a localization professional in the videogame industry for 12 years. She discovered the world of accessibility in 2022. In less than one year, she holds the CPACC and the ADS Certifications. She currently works as a digital accessibility consultant at Adesso Mobile Solutions in Cologne, Germany. Besides working on making the digital ground a more inclusive and accessible one, she is also a speaker at events organized by IAAP (SME Webinar: Starting your Career as an Accessibility Professional) or GALA (Article and Videos about Accessibility for Localization Professionals).*

# Audio description and the comic book medium: a practical case study through Yugo Limbo's 'Viscera Objectica'

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With regards to accessibility, the comics art presents fewer resources, among which the absence of homogeneous guidance compared to visual arts can be noted[1]. Contemporary offerings for the latter consist mainly (leaving out tactile and multisensory approaches) in the transposition and translation of visual, performative or audiovisual works of art through audio description for visually impaired audiences; the content is created through special guidelines established by the lending institution and its context[2].
This shortcoming with respect to comics is due to the absence of an equally standardized practice on the local, European[3], or global level.
The gap is partially filled by the actions of individual entities, whose availability of material through digital archives serves as a partial solution to the problem, given the issues regarding the quantity and continuity of available material[4].
Examples of ways of accessing the medium include transposing individual volumes into audiobooks, or more universal approaches as reported by Paul Spencer's digital experiment "Comica11y"[5] for the Humaan company.

Another alternative is found in design approaches based on the remediation of PDF files themselves[6], or through the use of technologies such as alternative text[7] and transcripts[8], which can be easily read through assistive devices, including screen readers.
The practical goal of this paper is the application of the audio descriptive technique generally reserved for the audiovisual and artistic field to the comic book, thus producing a case study that will later be analyzed in the stylistic, linguistic and necessary choices to deal with the topics of the original work.
The audio description will be written using as a reference the original work entitled "Viscera Objectica" by contemporary American author Yugo Limbo, published in 2024 through independent publisher Silver Sprocket.
This choice was made to give space to a contemporary LGBTQ+ author whose content is directly influenced by his identity. The independent matrix of the final work also serves as a fulcrum to move away from serial publication, with popular modes of interpretation already established in contemporary culture.
The content of the main audio description will be preceded by a brief audio introduction, in which the theoretical notions for audio description for the performing arts or for the audiovisual sector of a serial nature will be put into practice, following the guidelines cited in "Creating an Authentic Experience: A Study in Comic Books, Accessibility, and the Visually Impaired Reader"[9] ; i.e., the NNLS guidelines for "Comic Book / Graphic Novel Description"[10] .
The analysis of the introduction and audio description will be done separately in order to explore the key points and techniques implemented to best transpose the content and themes covered within the work.
In this case, given the work as a single, self-contained volume, an introduction was chosen to lend support to the storytelling and create a sense of immediate relationship between the user and the content. The choices for the various actors of the work, whether speaking or not, will be further justified in the appropriate chapters.
The audio description will also be extended to cover and back cover, given their belonging to the complete work.

Finally, this paper will address the issue regarding the dissemination of accessible print of this medium for visually impaired audiences.
The work involves the proposal and elaboration of a possible alternative to the print medium and ends by proposing an archival matrix solution, through an ex-ante working framework focused on the co-creation of audio descriptive material and the ways of distributing the accessible material. All of this will be done in concordance with the principle of free choice of experience of the medium for users, maintaining the focus on its target audience, but without abandoning the concept of inclusivity. The goal is the transposition of content for a given audience, but this must be accomplished without alienating possible secondary targets.

Keywords: audio description, accessibility, comic strips, people with visual impairments, queer

[1] “In addition to those for television and movies, there are also guides for the description of
live theatre, artworks, and even dance, but no equivalent document exists for comic books.” Osolen, R. S., & Brochu, L. (2019). Creating an Authentic Experience. The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion (IJIDI), 4(1), pp.108–118, pp. 109.

[2] For the categories mentioned above, the following examples of guidelines localized to the individual entity are proposed:
Hutchinson, R. S., & Eardley, A. F. (2020). The Accessible Museum: Towards an Understanding of International Audio Description Practices in Museums. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 114(6), 475-487.”, pp. 475 - 487;
“Audio description style guide v2.5 Netflix”https://partnerhelp.netflixstudios.com/hc/en-us/articles/215510667-Audio-Description-Style-Guide-v2-5 ;
Snyder, J., Rowland, W., Charlson, K., & American Council Of The Blind. (2014). The visual made verbal : a comprehensive training manual and guide to the history and applications of audio description. American Council Of The Blind, Inc., ch.3, “Audio Description Training: The Four Fundamentals”, pp. 123-248.

[3] “The degree of precision of this coding determines the accessibility of e-book files, in particular regarding the qualification of the different constitutive elements of the work and the standardised description of its structure. [...] Specific features of special volumes like comics, [...] should be considered in the light of all applicable accessibility requirements.”
Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services, (41).
(EUR-Lex - 32019L0882 - EN - EUR-Lex, n.d.)

[4] “My joy with comics, however, was short-lived. I quickly discovered that the issues (or chapters) in the comic-book archive were random. Sometimes I would find the first issue of a great story, but I had nowhere to go from there.”
Panel by Panel: Comic Book Access for the Blind. (2016). Nfb.org.
https://nfb.org/sites/default/files/images/nfb/publications/fr/fr35/3/fr350306.htm

[5] humaan.com/comica11y. (2018). Humaan.com. http://comica11y.humaan.com/
[6] “Its particular media hybridity, in contrast to cinema or television for example, should be noted as being instructive in the number of new varietals it has produced and the level of remediation it is subject to.”
McGarry , C. (2019). COMICS BOOKS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: UNDERSTANDING TECHNOLOGICAL CO-EXISTENCE THROUGH POST-MEDIUM SPECIFICITY. (p. 14) [PhD Thesis COMICS BOOKS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: UNDERSTANDING TECHNOLOGICAL CO-EXISTENCE THROUGH POST-MEDIUM SPECIFICITY.].

[7]“There is the issue of reading order if the text is separated from the image, meaning the device reads the text separately from the image description.”
The Accessiverse: On Accessible Comics. (2022, May 11). EPUBSecrets. https://epubsecrets.com/the-accessiverse-on-accessible-comics.php

[8] “For comics with a lot of subtlety, complexity and visual detail, it might be desirable to provide more information than is typically included in a transcript. In this case, a full description of the story would provide the best experience for people who can’t see all of the visual details.”
LastCallMedia. (2019). Accessible comics. Last Call Media. https://lastcallmedia.com/blog/accessible-comics

[9] Osolen, R., & Brochu, L. (2020), pp.108–118, pp. 110-115.
[10] NNELS. (2017). public:nnels:etext:comics [BC Libraries Coop wiki]. Libraries.coop. Aggiungi corpo del testo

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# Japanese-Italian relations. Making art accessible to visually impaired visitors in museums

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In 2022, the U.N. Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concerns over the Japanese education system as an increasing number of disabled children are not able to attend regular schools. The Japanese government was called on to create and adopt on national scale a quality inclusive education system and reverse its current one of segregated special education. On the other hand of the spectrum, Italy was pointed out by the U.N. as one of the ideal examples for its long history of "full inclusive education" adopted since the 70s. For many years, Japanese scholars and educators have been visiting Italy to learn from its unique approach. Among Japanese social educational institutions, while the school education situation will not change overnight as it will take time to shift systems and approaches, museums are experiencing a more repentine change and have the potential to contribute and lead in making Japanese society more accessible and inclusive. In order to achieve such a goal, Japanese researchers and museum educators are often looking to the Italian educational approach in their museums and institutions as unique examples.
This paper will present some of Italy's good practices of inclusive approach for visually impaired audiences that institutions such as: Museo Tattile Statale Omero, Istituto dei ciechi Francesco Cavazza, Federazione Nazionale delle Istituzioni Pro Ciechi ONLUS have implemented and the various ways in which they are adopted and integrated into the art museums in Japan.

Keywords: Accessibility for Cultural Heritage

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# Subtitling Sign Languages: State of Art and New Frontiers

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The subtitling of sign languages is an emerging area of audiovisual translation (AVT) and media accessibility (MA) that remains largely underexplored despite the increasing recognition of sign languages worldwide. Traditionally, subtitling has been defined as an interlingual translation practice that transfers spoken dialogue into written text for an audience unable to access the original aural content (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021). However, the unique visual-spatial structure of sign languages necessitates a departure from conventional subtitling methodologies, prompting researchers and professionals to rethink subtitling strategies to accommodate sign languages as source languages.

Up to the present day, most studies on media accessibility have traditionally focused on subtitles for the Deaf and hard of hearing (SDH). These studies primarily adapt spoken language dialogue for accessibility, rather than rendering sign language into text. Sign language subtitling remains a niche area within mainstream production, with limited debate on the specifics of this process. Only a few experimental projects have explored the intermodal translation of sign languages into written subtitles, and there is little standardization across different media platforms and languages. The lack of standardized guidelines for subtitling sign languages highlights the need for more extensive research, audience feedback and professional initiatives. Together, these could provide a framework for better practices and professionalization in this area. Given that this field is underdeveloped and under-researched, there is a strong call for a user-oriented (Greco 2016), inclusive (Uzzo 2023a, 2023b, Perez 2023), and participatory (Di Giovanni 2018, Di Giovanni 2022) approach. This approach should bring together experts and professionals from the fields of Deaf Studies, Audiovisual Translation and Sign Language.

The proposed study aims to showcase such initiatives as well as their relevance. It presents the state of the art in two observed regions: Slovakia and Italy, reflecting on traditional, hearing-rooted subtitling strategies versus more inclusive subtitling approaches for sign languages that respect the visual-spatial and communicative specifics of sign languages in films. Gaining insights from Deaf community professionals, film industry representatives, subtitlers, and viewers, the study will examine how these approaches impact accessibility, viewer experience, and the overall effectiveness of sign language subtitles, with the main focus on the film festival environment. Under the auspices of the international project SubSign - Subtitling Sign Languages, the study will highlight identified best practices, propose guidelines for more inclusive subtitling, and emphasize the importance of collaboration between linguistic, cultural, and professional stakeholders in advancing the field.

Keywords: Media accessibility, audiovisual translation, subtitling, sign languages, user-centered approach, inclusion, participation, inclusive media landscape

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*His areas of research are Audiovisual Accessibility, with a focus on Subtitles, Subtitles for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing, Closed Captions, Audio Descriptions, and Film Festivals. He is also interested in Sign Languages, in particular Italian Sign Language (LIS), and in the intersection of Deaf Studies and Media Accessibility. He is a trainer and a practitioner of subtitling, SDH, CC, IS (Inclusive Subtitles), and AD for institutions and universities in Italy.*

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# The impact of culture and accessibility of destinations in the experience economy

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The entertainment industry and the experience economy have various common points connected to the purpose of travel and the motivation of tourists. Culture, both tangible and intangible, plays a vital role in shaping tourist experiences by offering amusement, aesthetics (such as architectural monuments), education about local lifestyles in the destinations, and escapism (escape from the routine everyday life). Included in the presentation are two key processes related to culture and its consumption in attractive destinations: absorption and descentdescend. Authenticity is essential, along with travelers' openness to new cultures and the local population's receptiveness to visitors. The report explores hospitality and strategies for addressing the water, environmental, overcrowding and mass tourism crises with examples from Spain, Dubrovnik, Southeast Asia and more.

The presentation examines culturalexamines related to cultural heritage challenges in preservation, public engagement, facilitating tourism development, and the integration of modern strategies and technologies. The report highlights innovative approaches for inclusion, emphasizing the role of new technologies. Key points included are enhancing visitor experiences and advancing destination attractiveness. Various aspects of cultural sites accessibility are analyzed: firstly, information accessibility, secondly, physical accessibility of sites and monuments including road infrastructure, and lastly, historical aspects of the exploration, conservation and socialization of archaeological discoveries. Included in the presentation as a case study are findings and field research from studying Thracian tombs, a vital part of Bulgaria's cultural heritage. Insights from this research can be applied to cultural sites in other countries and historical contexts, serving as a starting point for discussions and fostering exchange of good practices and further research.

Keywords: Tourism, entertainment, culture, accessibility, experience economy

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# Redefining the museum experience starting from accessibility: The project for the Museo Città di Ostra

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The evolution of technologies and the entry of AI into the design flow chart is pushing digital design in offering new services and products geared toward a broader target audience. In this sense, great benefit is derived from Cultural Heritage-related projects that redefine spaces and modes of interaction between works of art, environments and public (UNESCO; 2023).
The methodology underlying Service Design and socio-economic research come to our aid in reformulating a new mode of interaction that is accessible, usable, enjoyable, equitable and useful.
In these terms, there is a kind of Copernican revolution whose center is no longer the affordance of the product, but the human and his or her feeling. It is the public itself, with its own lived experience, aspirations and frustrations, who moves the design of the solution to a more complex level.
In this regard, new logics find reference for inclusion (Tiribelli, Pansoni, Frontoni, and Giovanola; 2024), thus helping even small city museums to create a new museum experience offer and to expand their target audience.
This is the case of the design required for the Città di Ostra Museum (Italy, AN), which saw the design of a new visiting experience starting not from the works of art but from its target audience.
In these terms, maximum attention was given to people suffering from deaf-mutism and color blindness (Cherukuru, Manuel, Lauer, Scheitlin, and Bhagchandani; 2021); guiding the interaction towards two types of audiences: a) the first is intended for school kids and involves the interaction with interactive games and a GPT Agent, b) the second is oriented towards a more mature audience thanks to moments of hypermediality also through QR codes and AR.
This is developed through the usage of a tablet with a special app. The device is provided by the museum together with a kit of accompanying tools (cardboard) that are complementary to the visiting experience.
Therefore, with this paper we intend to present to the scientific community the methodologies, the exploratory research data and the design of the pilot for the Città di Ostra Museum in order to share its insights and future steps of production, and to offer an example of good practice in cultural computing.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, accessibility, GPT Agent, affordance, user-centered, cultural computing

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# Experimental multimodal creativity in audio description. A heart rate study on objectivity and subjectivity

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The appropriateness of subjectivity over objectivity (and vice versa) in audio description (AD) is an ongoing debate without a clear consensus, where two opposing perspectives, the professional and the academic one, seem to collide. Whereas some professional guidelines support the view that an objective AD is the advisable option, some scholars have explored the benefits of more creative alternatives (Kruger, 2010; Fryer & Freeman, 2012; Soler Gallego & Luque Colmenero, 2023). Meanwhile, part of AD research is making inroads into experimental methodologies, proof of which can be studies on AD and eye-tracker (Krejtz et al., 2012; Kruger, 2012; Orero & Vilaró, 2012; Di Giovanni, 2014; Mazur & Chmiel, 2016), text-to-speech AD (Szarkowska, 2011), the automatic generation of AD (Hasegawa-Johnson et al., 2017), or physiological measurements applied to AD, such as heart rate (Jankowska et al., 2022; González & Jankowska, 2024), or cortisol levels (Ramos Caro, 2015; Ramos Caro, 2016; Rojo López et al., 2021), among others. In this vein, our proposal presents an experimental pilot study using a heart rate sensor to measure 20 partially sighted participants' response to different combinations of subjective and objective multimodal elements in some AD clips. To do so, objective and subjective multimodal elements from an AD clip from Netflix's Money Heist were analyzed following Romero-Muñoz's (2023) proposal that any AD displays a certain combination of objective and creative elements within its script. Afterwards, objective components were turned subjective (and the other way around), which resulted in two versions of Money Heist's clip in subjective-objective terms: the original and the manipulated one. Both versions were recorded by a professional studio, which eventually yielded four AD: the original AD recorded by a man, the original AD recorded by a woman, the manipulated AD recorded by a man, and the manipulated AD recorded by a woman. Participants were randomly allotted one of these four possibilities, they filled in orally a demographic questionnaire, a presence test (ITC-SOPI), and a comprehension questionnaire followed by a semi-structured interview. Throughout the procedure, an UPTIVO Belt-D heart rate sensor was attached to the participants' chest to measure beats per minute, average heart rate, maximum heart rate, minimum heart rate, etc. Moreover, the UPTIVO Belt-D allows the measurement of beats per minute every few seconds of a given clip, so that the fragments (whether objective or subjective) giving rise to higher heart rate levels can be located. Results were triangulated with the questionnaires and interviews to obtain empirical data about the combination of subjective and objective multimodal elements in AD that induces higher heart rate and presence levels, the elements that both enable better comprehension and are better considered by users. Future research following this pilot study, which should be applied to a more appropriate number of participants, could have a considerable impact on the debate over subjectivity in AD, since data would provide empirical evidence about an immersive combination of objective and subjective multimodal components in AD scripts to be considered by guidelines.

Keywords: multimodality, audio description, subjectivity, heart rate, experimental research

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# Rethinking Accessibility through the Embodied Experience. An Ethical Inquiry

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Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes the need to eliminate sensory, physical, and cognitive barriers that may impede the full social and cultural inclusion of individuals with disabilities (United Nations 2007). In line with this mandate, museums and cultural institutions are working to eliminate barriers and become fully accessible. Nevertheless, their efforts have been criticized for oversimplifying the concept of disability and not fostering a full cultural participation (Barnes 2003; Cachia 2012; Sandell and Dodd, 2020; Siebers 2008, 2019; Titchkosky 2011). Among the critical issues, a fundamental tension emerges: while efforts to promote inclusion focus on removing discriminatory barriers for people with disabilities as audiences, these efforts often fall short when considering people with disabilities as artists. Disability art is frequently categorized as "outsider art" (Maclagan 2009) or confined to the realm of the therapeutic (Napolitano and Sicca 2024). This categorization perpetuates a diminished or 'othered' perspective of disability identity, ultimately resulting in a fundamentally discriminatory view.

At the core of this unresolved tension is a reductionist approach found in both literature and social inclusion policies, which have predominantly treated accessibility as a matter of providing accommodations within existing structures. The inadequacy and limitations of this perspective become evident when considering the demands of disability activists and groups whose identities and self-conceptions may conflict with these established structures and institutions. This highlights that the challenge of ensuring accessibility and cultural participation cannot be reduced to simply removing barriers that impede intellectual, perceptual, or logistical access. Instead, it requires a deeper social transformation that critically examines and challenges established structures and values (McArthur and Palmer 2015; Hamraie 2017; Fazeli 2020), particularly as these often serve as repositories of entrenched power dynamics and sources of coercion (Oliver 1990; Titchkosky 2011).

The present contribution starts from such critical stances and seeks to identify key theoretical challenges within cultural inclusion. We argue that these challenges are rooted in two primary questions: How can we conceptualize an identity-building process that respects the specificity of individuals while avoiding stigmatization? How can we develop a theory of accessibility that transcends the 'assistance' rhetoric embedded in the notion of accommodation?

We explore such questions through a conceptual apparatus inspired to the phenomenological turn that has recently animated Disability Studies and Disability Arts debate (Barnes 2003; Sandahl 2020; Siebers 2019), advocating for the centrality of lived experience as a form of agency, which is significant on an ethical and political level. We argue that this perspective provides a theoretical foundation for rethinking accessibility beyond assistentialist or accommodation-based approaches. Specifically, we believe that the emphasis placed on "lived experience" within this theoretical framework should be complemented by a reimagining of the concept of self-determination, one that underscores its inherently relational nature (Kittay 1999, 2020; Titchkosky 2011).

Starting with the need to acknowledge and recover lived experience, we view the relational nature of identity construction in a radical way - not only on a subjective/individual level, but also on a social level. This approach provides the conceptual tools necessary to overcome the reductionist constraints embedded in the current notion of accessibility.

To present our position, we will proceed as follows. Initially, we explore literature that has dealt with the historical and cultural processes leading to contemporary theories on cultural accessibility and the cultural understanding of disability. We then analyze significant works within Disability Studies that focus on artistic production and cultural accessibility for people with disabilities, highlighting how the renewed focus on the corporeal dimension has led to a rethinking of the embodied experience of people with disabilities, generating new ways of structuring meaning and accessing the world, as well as fostering social coexistence. In our conclusions, we emphasize that the process of cultural inclusion and the removal of physical, cognitive, and other barriers that hinder cultural accessibility for people with disabilities cannot be achieved by suppressing any controversies that arise. On the contrary, highlighting cultural heritage as a site of contestation and a vehicle for communicating urgent social and political demands, we discover new ways of signifying the environment where new forms of meaning-making and social coexistence can emerge. To emphasize our research hypothesis we will develop a case study based on the 'Tactum' project developed by the choreographers Agnese Lanza and Giuseppe Comuniello, first presented in 2018 for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities at the Uffizi Galleries in Florence. It centered around the famous Roman sculpture Arianna Dormiente.

Keywords: accessibility, disability studies, embodied experience, museum studies

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# Redefining Data Boundaries in Museums: Navigating Indoor Visitor Tracking for Enhanced Exhibition Experiences

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The digital evolution in the museum sector has introduced new possibilities for enriching the visitor experience by merging digital and physical elements to create multisensory and interactive exhibition paths (Bautista and Balsamo, 2011; Russo and Peacock, 2009). This transformation is driven by the adoption of advanced technologies for research, documentation, education, communication, and outreach, proposing new challenges and opportunities for exhibition space design (Simon, 2010; Drotner and Schroder, 2013). The ability to effectively balance digital and physical elements becomes crucial to ensure a seamless and immersive museum experience (Petrelli et al., 2016).

In an era characterized by the pervasive integration of data systems, museums are increasingly embracing data-driven technologies, such as indoor visitor tracking, to reshape exhibition design and foster deeper engagement. In this context, visitor tracking emerges as a valuable tool for generating detailed behavioral data, offering unique insights into movement in the museum space and interaction with exhibits (Damala et al., 2019). These data not only allow in-depth understanding of visitor preferences and behaviors but also provide a solid foundation for designing more responsive and personalized exhibit experiences (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Recupero et al., 2019).

Using real-time data to create context-aware communication strategies could help museums tackle today's difficult subjects by partnering with visitors on citizen science initiatives. Encouraging civic involvement and mutual understanding, interactive displays, responsive information, and augmented reality experiences enable spaces for debate and collaboration across disparate groups. This research trajectory could express the contemporary museum transformation from traditional collection-focused models to visitor-centric, constructivist approaches (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Simon, 2010; Recupero et al., 2019).

As museums become part of the broader "turn to data" in public institutions, interoperability between systems becomes key in leveraging the full potential of visitor tracking technologies. Public museums face complex challenges in integrating data from multiple sources while adhering to legal frameworks like GDPR, balancing personal data protection with the efficient operation of museum services. Issues of privacy, ownership, and transparency in the use of visitor data are significant considerations that institutions must navigate. As museums increasingly leverage data to enhance visitor experiences, it is crucial to maintain ethical standards in data collection and usage, ensuring that the dignity and rights of visitors are respected

The results of this study could highlight the effectiveness of a data-driven approach in understanding visitor dynamics and designing exhibits that facilitate a more engaging and accessible museum experience. For example, analysis of movement paths can reveal areas of congestion or neglect, while interactions with specific exhibits can indicate points of greatest interest or confusion. These insights are valuable for optimizing exhibition spaces and ensuring that digital innovations in museums remain aligned with the public good (Damala et al., 2019; Recupero et al., 2019).

In conclusion, this paper will explore the potential of interoperable data systems in museums, contributing to the evolving conversation on the ethics and impacts of data integration. As museums increasingly rely on data to enhance their public services, it is essential to examine who benefits from such initiatives and ensure they align with inclusive, transparent, and ethical practices in data flow integration.

Keywords:
Visitor tracking, visitor studies, Interactive exhibit, Timing & Tracking, Exhibit design.

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# Accessibility in Animated Cartoons: The “Cartoon Able” Project

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Ensuring accessibility in children's media is crucial for fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities in entertainment and education. A significant initiative in this field was undertaken by Puntidivista, a publishing house based in Rieti, which launched the “Cartoon Able” project. This initiative led to the creation of Lampadino e Caramella nel MagiRegno degli Zampa, an animated series designed to be fully accessible to children with special needs. The first five episodes were conceived by Puntidivista and brought to life by the animation studio Animundi at Cinecittà in Rome.

The project set a new standard in accessibility by integrating multiple features tailored to different audiences. For blind children, audio description was implemented; for visually impaired viewers, a specially designed font and optimized subtitles were introduced. Italian sign language (LIS) was incorporated to support deaf children, while soft colors and uncluttered backgrounds were carefully selected to accommodate children on the autism spectrum. Following the initial episodes, Rai Kids acquired the rights and continued the production of the series. However, some modifications in production, while not drastic, compromised certain accessibility features originally ensured by Puntidivista.

This presentation aims to analyze whether and to what extent Rai Kids has maintained the accessibility criteria established by the original project. Additionally, it will explore the potential for an English adaptation, which could not only make the series accessible to an international audience but also serve as a language-learning tool for Italian children studying English. By evaluating the evolution of Lampadino e Caramella, this study seeks to highlight best practices in accessible animation and propose strategies to enhance inclusivity in audiovisual media.

Keywords: accessibility – inclusivity – animated cartoons – children with special needs – AVT

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# “L'ombra vede". A multisensory and inclusive exhibition on the artist Enzo Cucchi

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With the national exhibition “L’ombra vede” (“The Shadow Sees”) starring Enzo Cucchi, one of the most important contemporary artists from Marche region, the Omero Museum intends to bring to life a cultural event that is totally accessible and innovative both in the way the work of art is enjoyed and in the way it is organized, set up and communicated.

The first aspect to be analyzed is the enjoyment of the work of art. The cultural operation promoted by the Omero Museum intends first of all to propose and enhance multisensoriality in the artistic and aesthetic sphere. The moment we enjoy the work of art relying almost exclusively on sight, anesthetizing the other senses, leads to a costant impoverishment of our relationship with reality, and consequently with the enjoyment of art. In doing so, we give up a great deal of information and stimuli that come from reality, especially when it comes to the touch. In museums and art exhibitions there is often a “no touching” rule, but in many cases this means the automatic exclusion of people with visual impairments, who make their touch the main channel of knowledge of reality, denying them the right to enjoy art and beauty. The exhibition, by mutual agreement with the artist, mainly features sculptures of different materials, which can be enjoyed tactilely by the public. The presence of graphic-pictorial works involved their embossed translation. As with the discipline of visual or image education that exists in schools, an education in “touch” is also necessary for touch. This fundamental aspect is also contemplated and dealt with in the exhibition event. A special dark environment will allow the public to enjoy a unique experience to awaken its senses and to become aware of them, experiencing the enjoyment of some sculptures exclusively through hands. This experience will be a sort of introduction to a multisensory fruition where the entire sensoriality is involved in the relationship with the work of art, allowing for a total, intimate and immersive aesthetic experience.

The second aspect to be analyzed is the way in which the museum object is set up and thus presented and communicated. The enhancement of multisensoriality and diversity is initially communicated through a very special visual and tactile invitation, with accessible text, also in Braille. The exhibition is divided into particularly scenic environments, aimed at realizing an inclusive and engaging narrative of the artist's poetics. Some of the sets, such as the artist's atelier, and exhibition supports were realized in collaboration with the Liceo Artistico of Ancona, in order to actively including locals. A set evoking the country barnyard and rural life, Enzo Cucchi's source of inspiration, allows the public to pause and to enjoy the exhibition in a different and productive way, increasing pleasure, interpersonal relationships and opportunities for learning and knowledge. Catalogs of the artist can be consulted, some of his poems read, knowledge gained on the theme of tactility in art, and additional itineraries to be experienced within our Region to discover other works made by the artist. The latter theme is also conceived with the intent to promote the knowledge of the area, creating added value and identity in collaboration with local and cultural realities, for example the Municipality of Morro d'Alba, the artist's birthplace. To this end, a special visual and tactile map with the places Cucchi visited in the Marche region has been created.An additional space is dedicated to manual skills and creativity, allowing young and elder visitors to try their hand at some multisensory activities and leave their own mark on the exhibition.

The communication and narration of the exhibition is diverse and multimodal and makes use of modern technologies, resulting in an inclusive and accessible exhibition to all audiences. The important collaboration with RAI Public Utilities led to the creation of a fully accessible information video, with audio, subtitles and translation into Italian Sign Language. A presentation of the exhibition was made using Augmentative Alternative Communication strategies for people with complex communication needs, thanks to collaboration with a professional in the field. A special multisensory catalog of the exhibition is being studied and implemented.

Finally, special and inclusive educational and didactic workshops have been studied, aimed mainly at schools but not only, in order to concretely access the poetic world of Enzo Cucchi.

Keywords: inclusion, multisensory experience, art, accessible communication

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# Bridging the Gap: The Evolving Role of Theatre Captioners in Poland”

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Captioning for Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences in Polish theatres is not a new concept, but until recently, it remained a rarity—often limited to one-off events. Only a handful of theatres offered captioned performances on a regular basis. However, with the introduction of accessibility-focused legislation and dedicated government subsidies, more theatres are recognizing the importance of inclusivity and actively working to welcome audiences with diverse needs. This shift has created exciting new opportunities for subtitlers and captioners, yet the nature of live theatre presents its own set of unique challenges.

One of the key issues is the lack of standardized guidelines for theatre captioning in Poland. Unlike in film and television, theatre captioning is not yet an established profession, leaving captioners to navigate the field by adapting existing subtitling practices, gathering viewer feedback, and refining their approach through hands-on experience. Additionally, theatre captioners must collaborate closely with directors, actors, stage designers, and technicians—balancing creative visions with the essential needs of Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers. They must also remain mindful that captions are visible to hearing audiences, ensuring they enhance rather than disrupt the overall theatre experience.

In this presentation, we will share our experiences as theatre captioners, highlight specific challenges we have faced and the solutions we have developed, and propose ideas for academic research that could help make theatre captioning more effective and widely adopted.

Keywords: theatre, surtitling, captioning, SDH (Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing)

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# Japanese museums and senior visitors: innovative case studies for inclusion and well-being

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In a society such as Japan's, the oldest in the world, museums clearly emerge as key spaces for promoting well-being and active aging, thanks to the role that art can play from a salutogenic perspective.
This paper aims to analyze three cases of Japan's best practices: the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum's Zuttobi Project, the Showa Era Lifestyle Museum in Kitanagoya and the ArtsAlive organization.
The Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum's Zuttobi Project involves elderly people, including those with dementia, in art activities carried out in collaboration with health and welfare agencies in order to foster interpersonal relationships and contrast isolation.
The Showa Era Lifestyle Museum in Kitanagoya applies the reminiscence method with objects from the Showa era (1955-1964), stimulating memories and intergenerational dialogue, also through Reminiscence Kits for those who cannot visit the museum in person.
The ArtsAlive organization, through its ARTRIP program, offers activities for elderly people with cognitive fragility, creating synergies between museums and health institutions.
Chosen from among the many important museum activities present in Japan, these initiatives show how museums can transform themselves into effective tools of cultural welfare and inclusion.
Therefore, the paper aims to highlight the value of these projects, hoping to inspire Italian institutions to adapt them in order to enhance the museum experiences of older visitors and redefine the social role of cultural institutions.

Keywords: Museology, Active ageing, Japanese museums, Wellbeing

***Luca Torelli**, born in Trento in 1987, graduated from the University of Trento, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in Cultural Heritage and a master's degree in Art. Subsequently, he obtained a master's degree at the University of Macerata in Training, management and preservation of digital archives and he is currently enrolled in a PhD in Training, cultural heritage and territories at the same university.*

# Creative Approaches to Theatre Accessibility: Mapping Community-Driven Professional Strategies

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Theatre has long been a powerful medium for storytelling, cultural expression, and creative engagement. By opening their doors to audiences of various backgrounds, theatres create a space for creative dialogue and exchange. However, despite an increasing number of initiatives in some regions, the diverse needs of different audiences yet continue to be overlooked. In Central and Eastern European countries, such as Slovakia, access to theatres often remains limited, relying mostly on ad hoc, short-term projects initiated by individual cultural institutions with varying levels of expertise (Secară & Perez, 2022). In this context, theatre accessibility is typically approached through a top-down model where accessibility measures are implemented as isolated solutions at the end rather than as an integral part of the creative process. In terms of sensory access, this approach applies not only to accessibility of theatre spaces but also to the accessibility of theatre performances. Access provision remains inconsistent and scarce, while Slovak theatres report a lack of expertise and a need for professionals in the field (Verebová, 2023). But does this actually mean that there are no professionals of this kind in the country?

Building on previous research on the needs of theatres and accessibility professionals in cultural context in Slovakia (Verebová, 2023; Verebová & Perez, 2025), the authors of this proposal turn their attention to community-driven theatre accessibility initiatives in the country. The focus lies on inclusive, creative, community-driven solutions developed by visually and hearing-impaired professional teams, exploring their expertise, development, and strategies in integrated accessibility design (Fryer & Cavallo, 2022). The proposal presents two case studies featuring creative professional teams embedded in their communities –one within Deaf culture and another from a professional Blind theatre and audio description group. Via interviews with the professionals from both groups, authors reveal community-driven solutions that bridge the gaps left by legislation, cultural institutions, and institutional policies. Recognizing the potential and overall impact of proactive and user-centered approaches (Greco, 2016, 2018), the authors aim to highlight the transformative power of bottom-up accessibility strategies in fostering more inclusive theatrical experiences.

Keywords: thatre accessibility, inclusion, participation, community-driven initiatives

***Eva Verebová*** *is a third-year full-time PhD student at the Department of Translation Studies, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, and a member of OPEN Research Network. In her research she deals with accessibility of theatre performances in Slovakia with the focus on captioning for the D/deaf and hard of hearing audience. She has collaborated with members of the Deaf community in various forms within as well as outside academic contexts. In practice she focuses mainly on subtitling for prominent film and theatre festivals in Slovakia.*

***Romana Chantal Čuláková*** *is currently a PhD student at the Department of Translation Studies, Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. Her PhD thesis, Theatre Audio Description for Blind and Partially Sighted Audiences: Transfer Strategies in Inclusive Performances, focuses on the creation and implementation of theatre audio description (AD) in Slovakia. She has also collaborated on the topics of inclusion and accessibility outside academia, particularly through her involvement with the international film festival One World.*

***Emília Perez*** *is Associate Professor at the Department of Translation Studies, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. Since 2019, she has been a member of the Executive Board of the European Master's in Translation network (EMT). In 2020 she set up the EMT working group on AVT and media accessibility training in Europe – presently broadened into WG on Audiovisual Translation, Accessibility and Inclusive Communication – which she leads to the present day. Since 2021 she is a member of the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation Executive Board. As a trainer, access coordinator and invited expert she has been cooperating with several international projects, events and initiatives (e.g. One World Film Festival 2020-2025; Programme Board Member of the One World Festival 2022-2025; the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Parliament, Luxembourg (2020-2025); SubSign 2024-2025). For over a decade, she closely cooperates with the Slovak Deaf community, mainly in accessibility of cultural events and spaces.*

# Database of Non-Professional Audiodescriptions for People with Visual Impairment

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The 2021 census reveals that 10.9% of people in Portugal live with at least one impairment, including approximately 23,400 who are blind. This starkly contrasts with the limited availability of audiovisual products with audiodescriptions in European Portuguese, despite Portugal's ratification of European Union directives aimed at enhancing media accessibility. Notable directives include the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (updated in 2018) and the Accessibility Act of 2019, which outlines requirements for accessible products such as websites, applications, and mobile services. In response to this gap, we have pioneered the development of a unique database dedicated to audiodescriptions created by students, trainees, and other professionals who choose to contribute on a voluntary basis. The primary goal of this accessible database is to offer an expanded array of audio-described content for blind individuals and those with visual impairments, aiming to mitigate the current scarcity in Portugal.

The platform provides information about what audiodescription is, in which venues, contexts and media outlets you can find audiodescription, where training in audiodescription is offered in Portuguese and the database abovementioned. This includes 1) excerpts or whole films with their audiodescription embedded and access to the audiodescription script, and 2) a comment section for previously registered users, whether people with visual impairment or not. This latter feature underscores our commitment to addressing the unique challenges faced by the community. Beyond serving as a resource for individuals with visual impairment, this platform also serves as a valuable tool for researchers and educators. Additionally, it has a secondary aim: to provide students and trainees with meaningful experience, addressing their frequent, verbally expressed concerns about the necessity of published work for job opportunities. The database offers a diverse range of audiodescribed dynamic and static content, including films, series, short films, animations, artwork, among others, which can be filtered by year, type, and theme.

This presentation aims to showcase the database and its objectives and impact on the Portuguese community. It also aims to create contact points with other researchers in countries with a similar necessity, fostering collaboration and the exchange of best practices in media accessibility training.

Keywords: Media Accessibility; Audiodescription; Inclusive Database; Training; Community needs.

***Catarina Xavier*** *is Junior Researcher at the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon. She is also a Researcher with the Research Group on Reception and Translation Studies at the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies (since 2007). She holds a PhD in Audiovisual Translation (2019), a corpus and questionnaire-based study focused on taboo in subtitling. Her research has looked into Audiovisual Translation, Translation Studies, Translation of Taboo, Subtitling, and Translation Norms. Recently, she has directed her research interests towards taboo within accessibility (SDH and AD). Alongside publishing in journals of top-quartile publishers (e.g. Target, Perspectives, Babel), she has also been called to review articles regarding the intersection of taboo and translation or literature.*

***Cláudia Martins*** *has been a Senior Lecturer at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança since 2001, teaching both Language, Linguistics and Translation Studies. She was a researcher in various research centres, but is now a member of the IPB's Transdisciplinary Research Centre in Education and Development, where she is in charge of axis 3 on Citizenship, Contexts and Public Policies. She's a doctor in Translation with a thesis focusing on museum audiodescription. Her research deals mainly with Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility, although she also focuses on terminology, phraseology and paremiology, and minority languages.*

# Good practices to facilitate the fruition of cultural heritage for people with deafness: Italian and German experiences and future developments

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Among all the types of disabilities taken into account in museums, deafness is one of the so-called invisible disabilities and, for this reason, is most often hardly or not considered at all.
But which are the major problems people with deafness encounter in museums to enjoy cultural heritage? What basic good practices can facilitate their active participation in our cultural institutions?
This research aims to identify which good practices can help favour the museum fruition of audiences with hearing disabilities, starting from the study and the analysis of Italian and German projects that have been realised in the last few years or that are in progress, such as the ACCESs Project in Emilia-Romagna (Italy) or the work of some individual German museums or institutions such as the LWL Kultur in Nordrhein Westfalen (Germany).
By comparing what has been achieved in these case studies, it is possible to draw up a first list of good practices useful for facilitating access to museum heritage for people with deafness and to lay the foundations for further future developments in museum mediation.

Keywords: Deafness, Museums Accessibility, Good Practices, Comparison between Italy and Germany

***Anna Zanchi*** *(Bergamo, 1998) is a PhD candidate with a specific interest and research focus in museum accessibility and deafness. After the achievement of a M.A. in Visual Arts at the Alma Mater Studiorum University di Bologna, she is currently enrolled at the Institute of Art and Visual Culture at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg in Germany and working on her PhD Project entitled "Living the Museum: Practices to Improve Museum Accessibility for People with Hearing Disabilities Based on German and Italian Experiences". Her project aims to investigate the best practices in Italy and Germany that museums can adopt to permit full access to the cultural heritage of people with hearing disabilities, involving the local communities of deaf people and some museums in both countries.*