

ASSOCIATION OF MIDWEST MUSEUMS

Tech Workshop 3: Accessibility in Digital Collections

4/29/2021

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## Tech Workshop 3: Accessibility in Digital Collections

4/29/2021 2 p.m. (ET)

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Zinnia: Welcome to all. You have to ensure that collections are accessible and participation by all. This is the last technical training workshop in module one of the Digital Empowerment Project. Nationwide initiative organized by the six U.S. regional museum associations that is dedicated to providing free self-paced training resources for small museums. This inaugural series of online trainings and resource toolkits focused on that digital media and technology topics is made possible by funding from the Institute of Museum and Library services. My name is Zeni Willits and I am the executive director of the museum conference. My pronouns are she, her. I'm a light-skinned white female with shoulder length reddish-brown hair, which I let go curly today due to the high humidity down here. I am wearing black-rimmed glasses that are often referred to cat eye style. I am wearing an olive green V-neck sleeveless dress and I'm sitting with a backdrop of my home office, which is basically a desk and computer. As a host of today's session I would like to convey a few things to our attendees before we begin the program. The digital empowerment leadership team chose digital accessibility and inclusion is the first module in recognition of the fact that as often the interaction with persons with impairments or disabilities and attitudinal and environmental and technological barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. To prioritize digital accessibility is to actively work to break down those barriers. This first foundational model has provided training on how to integrate accessibility and inclusion into digital programs, social pages, and websites are also in this era of virtual meetings. Digital spaces may substitute our physical sense of place. It is important to reflect on the land we each occupy and honor the indigenous people who have called it home. I am speaking to you from Charleston, South Carolina the historical homelands of the Natchez peoples. Wherever we are let us acknowledge all into into general nations as communities their elders both past and present as well as regional generations. We recognize organizations and those of our

members were founded within a colonizing society that perpetuated the exclusions and erasures of many native peoples throughout the U.S. and beyond. Ask you to reflect on the place where you reside and work and to respect the diversity of cultures and experiences that form the richness of our world and our profession. Now just a few housekeeping notes before he introduced today's presenters and get started. First the best place to view the session and realtime is on the Museum learning hub website under the watch live at tab at Museum dot dash dot hub.org here you can see the chat and questions that other attendees are posting. I would also like to acknowledge today's ASL interpreter who will be on the left side of your screen. And let you know that captioning for today's program is embedded in a box just below the YouTube player on our website with controls to adjust your experience. The best way to continuously refine our craft at the Museum learning hub is to listen to our attendees, and we ask that you share your candid feedback with us. Following today's program, you will be sent a link to a satisfaction survey. Thank you all to who have completed the survey so far. These will only take a few minutes and will greatly improve our work going forward. We encourage you to post questions to our presenters, which will be addressed at the end of the program after the presentations. Please type your questions in the chat and a digital empowerment team member will be gathering them. We will get to his many questions as time allows. However, we likely will not be able to address all the questions that come in during the live session. Other questions may also arise after you reflect on the program, for this reason we have set up an online community forum for raising questions, posting answers, and connecting with their fellow museum practitioners on the Museum learning website, which again you can find at Museum dash hub.org. If you're looking for help between these programs please visit this forum. Just create a login and post your questions. A member of our community or our student technology fellows will get back to you. Finally, to stay connected with us and be aware of future programs, please follow us on social media and I know our team members will be posting links in the chats throughout the program. Finally, it is my pleasure to introduce today's instructors, Sina Bahram and Corey Timpson. Sina is the president of Prime Excess Consulting, which is an inclusive design firm your key is an accessibility consultant, computer scientists, researcher, speaker, and entrepreneur. Corey is the

principle of design and he is a thought leader and experience design and inclusive museum discourses within the cultural sector. You can learn more about our presenters from their full bios which are available on the Museum hub website. I am thankful for the time that each has devoted to the session and I am pleased to turn the floor over to Sina and Corey for the presentation.

Corey: Thank you, everybody. It is a pleasure for us to be back for a third session. The session is titled "Tech Workshop 3: Accessibility in Digital Collections" and I'm just getting my screen share set up. Like the previous sessions, we are going to go through slides as quickly as possible and then open up things to conversation so we can have as much conversation and discourse as possible. Can I get some feedback from anyone on the team that you can see my slides and that they are advancing?

Sina: I would offer, Corey, but having the blind guy give you confirmation is a bad idea.

Corey: To start off with our ethos again. If you have attended the last two sessions you have seen this already and the concept is that rather than designing and developing something and then figuring out how to make it accessible we want to consider all vectors of human difference from the onset. This is for collections and information management at our at-large. No matter what the composition of that collection ends up being if it is archival, 3D objects, digital assets, intangible heritage, we want to think about the this ethos and the idea of what are we collecting and how are we managing that collection in the later on when we think about how to manage that collection, we are already set up to being a good position. Even when we are crafting or developing a policy we try to did we try to follow this ethos.

Getting to collections management practice. There is a potential tension that exists between visitors who have access needs and those who are responsible for the preservation of an object, conservation requirements around an object and really being a steward of that object's preservation over time. That tension may exist but it does not need to be the case where that tension is negative. It is how can we understand those scenarios that maybe the object finds itself in the middle of and use that in a positive way.

The point is basically that collections policies can impact inclusion. When we think about environmental sensitivity et cetera and how we treat our objects and care for

them. What we do with them, if we can make deliberate decisions around how we are acquiring, how we are managing the collection, and how we are presenting it, then we can think about inclusion and access in a positive manner. Some of the early things we want to be think about is representational. If we look at the Boston where the only collected new art from women artists. They are trying to balance and make a greater equitable balance within their collections at large. Representational inclusion, we are thinking of historically marginalized groups and communities. Are we thinking about how we ensure our representation on the artist side, on the donor side, within those collections. That maybe leads us to think about our acquisition objectives as we start to lay out protocols and objectives that our policies fall within. And when we end up choosing objects and archival material let's think about the groups that are often not as represented is well represented as they could be.

We want to focus on evidence-based consideration of what can be accessed, who can access things, how people can go about accessing things within the collection, and what is safe. And if we are deliberate around these and understanding what can be accessed and which ways, we can really start to think about how we make our collections accessible to a larger audience. We want to provide clear messaging and communication around an object's restrictions, and this is important. A lot of museums have touched stores we don't want everyone touching the object at all times, but what are the scenarios in which we can facilitate a different modality of access to an object than just the visual modality?

We want to create policies and tactics within the scenario that do not contradict preservation but acknowledge preservation requirements and also facilitate accessibility. So providing clear messaging and communication with the staff and public is important to ensure that tension that exists is a positive one, is used constructively, but not to create a barrier for access.

Sina: A couple examples on that previous point. Imagine someone using that phone, but not to take pictures just because there is a magnifier out on their phone and they are able to use that as an assistive technology. So having a flat un-nuanced no phones allowed in the gallery but does not help the preservation. So we can talk about whether a flashlight is admissible certain objects have lighting restrictions, others do not, so in a

lowlight environment could you use your phone is that kind of assistive technology. Things like this go a long way to adding nuance but a lot more inclusion at the policy level and then through staff to be implemented. Talking about documentation and registration. Let's think through, for example, what are those things those pieces of knowledge that we gain during the documentation practices and registration practices of objects that can be instrumental for enhancing visual descriptions and other accessible information about objects? That is not only helpful for visitors with disabilities, but makes the objects, the information we have about objects helpful for everyone. Imagine that you have an object and we will see an example in the next slide. Think about its weight and how it was being handled. How did it feel to the touch, how was the balance, how is the temperature? Was a cold or warm to the touch? What are the ornate details that would translate across modalities? Was rough, smooth, these kinds of things. Also thinking about the general condition of the object. Doesn't look pristine, aged? Talking about things like patina when we talk about blades and other objects of that nature. These physical properties we don't often think about them a lot in terms of maybe something the visitor would be interested in that they really can enhance our descriptions of objects and make them more multisensory even if the object itself is not able to be touched for preservation reasons. What we see on the slide are some swords as objects and questions with scabbards and thinking about those previous properties I mentioned, think about the weight, balance, how it feels to the touch, these are pieces of information we could include to arrive at an enhanced description of the object, but again not only I as a blind visitor to a museum but Corey would be interested in as well even though he can see the object behind glass.

In regards to preservation what is the knowledge we can use knowledge that we gain during the research and preservation practices that can enhance our descriptions and conveying of knowledge? Think, for example, of the tools that are used. We don't often think of this is accessible or making things more inclusive but imagine the kinds of information someone can infer from tools. "there is this object with many feathers on it and the small tweezers were used in the act of preparing the object for display or preserving something about it." Think about the remnants or fragments that would come up during these processes that themselves could act as tactile pieces. These are

the type of things we don't associate with necessarily something we would put on display, but if we do think of how to creatively like that we can make it a much more inclusive and accessible experience. On this next slide we see arts and conservation tools so we can see goggles and brushes and knives and picks in these kinds of things and it can give you a sense of scale in the sense of the practice, which by the way, again not only interesting from an accessibility perspective but enhances the experience for all visitors. The next example we see on the slide these are some bricks from a turret of a historic house in Joplin, Missouri, in addition to some tiles from the roof. We are at this project site and we saw a pile of this stuff sitting outside basically waiting for folks to come and take it away to the dump. We immediately had the reaction of "hold on, let's capture a few of these pieces, don't throw that away because it will be gold when you want to let somebody touch something that is a 30 feet above them on the roof and it is not practical to let them go touch this on the exterior of this historic house we have these tiles that can be touched and can be learned as say tactile learning objects that can enhance accessibility".

Corey: Probably the question we get where the topic that we discuss the most when it comes to inclusive design and accessibility in, and collections is that tension between environmental conditions and accessibility. We are all familiar with with lighting scenarios and humidity and temperature controls how they sound in the spaces, all of these things. Often the default is object in a case behind glass out of reach. It is important to realize that if we are deliberate in our consideration of each one of these things, then we can now only have a safe conditions for the object but create greater access to the object as well. So like Sina mentioned the previous tactics can surface a lot more information for collections and provide access. Let's keep on that theme and think about light management. In many galleries there is often a lot of glare, which can be disruptive for a lot of visitors who are trying to see the objects. If we think strictly about how we manage lights, reduce glare reduce sensory loads, and not site lighting things in one way and not another. So we can actually assist inclusive design and accessibility of a space overall by thinking deliberately about lighting conditions in the lighting additions can help us and not be a contradiction.

Sina: Sorry to interject. We just had a client a 14 person museum it does not have to be hard. The facilities manager went around adjusting lighting after a lecture we gave. To them this was not a 20,000-dollar project just a couple hours adjusting the lighting just to enhance in the way that Corey is talking about. Don't think that this has to be an entire project to make a massive difference.

Corey: There is digital interventions that can take place. These do not have to be extensive interventions. They can be the fact that people are walking around with mobile devices in their pockets and how do we take advantage of that? Sina already mentioned the ability to zoom on something and explore details or use the flashlight as needed. This is a more elaborate example what we want to show it because the buzz is everyone is talking about augmented reality and VR and this is one use case. This production that we developed cost \$12,000. Pretty expensive for a lot of small museums, but this type of technology is only becoming cheaper and cheaper. We did this project about four years ago. Now there is technology like in AR kit, which means augmented reality can be done on a cost-effective manner and less specialized knowledge so it's only getting better. We just want to focus on the lesson here. These textiles were in a climate controlled case and what we were restricted by low light conditions and the temperature control and you have to peer into the case to see the object of. Wilson have limitations in how much we can put on the artifact label. So we can see iPads to the left of it we created in augmented reality to help enhance the access to these objects under a low lighting condition. What does that mean? It means you can image recognize the artifact. So we high-res photograph the object, puts it in a digital environment, in this case it was a map but it could be a web browser these days. The camera of the app allows users to pinch and zoom and view the fine details of the object that they would not otherwise be able to see very easily through the glass. It also meant that we could surface visual description on the iPads for visitors with low vision or blind who cannot see the object. We can add supplemental interpretation. If you can see the details, there are blue hot spots on that can be clicked and you can hear an oral history of by the creator of the object to tell a story. We increase access for everyone increase accessibility, it facilitates inclusion because everyone can do it together and we are further able to add interpretation that we can fit on the artifact wall. In addition

because its image recognized anyone can use the image it does not have to be the actual artifact itself. Educators in the classroom could use this as a learning tactic or tool with their classroom. We are increasing access in that way by engaging a remote audience through digital means of people who were not able to make it into the museum in person. It does not have to be augmented reality. That was a fancy way of doing it, but there is no reason we can't have objects just digitized or imaged and put into our website and made available through the mobile app. If we have the rights like the copyright to be able to do so, we can make this content available. Digitally. To very remote audience. If there are rights restrictions around things that we can get financing and do things like geo-fence the content and make it available digitally but say only accessible if you are using the museum Wi-Fi and then we can manage the rights restrictions that we may be confronted by.

Sina: Turning our attention to visual description, which we mentioned that an earlier one of these webinars. We thought it would be good to highlight this as a concept. All visual visual description is is the use of the language to describe what is visually been depicted. The reason this is important as it provides or can contribute to providing an equitable experience for someone who is unable to see the object or prefers another modality like text or audio to know what is going on. What we want to be careful of is a visual description is not the same thing as a caption. When you go to a website and there is a caption under a photo, maybe it says "Grand Canyon 2015." That is a caption available for everyone. I can access it on my computer using a stream reader because it reads it to me. Other folks like Corey can see it. That's fine as a caption. A visual description, sometimes may have heard the term alt text that is a description of what is happening in the image for someone who is unable to see it traditionally. Turns out by the way that these visual descriptions are helpful for everyone not just people who cannot see the photo or cannot see the object. Noting here that this is often times field in a content management system. From TMS and other content management systems there is a field to provide this information so that we can make these objects more accessible especially to those with low or no vision. Visual descriptions I apologize. It is to remember that when we think about visual descriptions, we have all sorts of variants. One quick note that we can talk about more in the Q&A session that there are

short and long visual descriptions, all these different types of describing objects, that is in the practice of it. We are just surfacing the concept of describing something. Let's look at an example of that. So we have for IT reasons we are going to play the audio from my phone so I will hold this close to the camera and let's see if it does. One second forgive the phone usage but you do at least get to hear a screen reader in action, which is cool. I'm to hit play and I'm going to hold this up to the microphone. "This painted portrait portrays a portrait with jet black skin with a thin paint brush painter's palette. She is shown in a three-quarter pose facing directly at the viewer. Her face, which is central to those square composition stands out against a large white canvas almost blending into the pitch black background to her right. Closer inspection reveals, however, that her skin is subtly rendered with various shades of contours and highlights. She wears two large hoop earrings and an oversized boxy high colored fabric. Her voluminous hair black with an ultra sheen rises and thick coils on top of her head. The canvas to her left shows a partly finished paint by number self-portrait. Her likeness is broken up into smaller segments with pale blue lines and numbers. She has outlined many of the segments and filled them and with colors from her palette: orange, blue, yellow, pink, green, brown. She uses brighter more vivid colors to paint her paint by number on the canvas using the bright orange and greens rather than the mustards and maroons that are on her jacket."

Sina: That is the Museum of contemporary Art Chicago, called coyote visual description platform. We can talk more about that in the Q&A. We just think that that is so cool because it is an example of a visual description yes, but it is incredibly artistic and beautiful description to try to bring more equitable experiences and access to these objects, which are primarily thought of as visual.

Corey: To emphasize, it is not interpreted. It is not interpretive. It is a visual description so when we run visual description workshops, that is always the biggest point for us when we do those workshops, we pick items from the collection that Sina and I do not know because people who are more familiar with the item with the artifact from the collection end up adding natural insights into the visual description that and then get into interpretation. And one of the meetings we had this morning Sina remarked that he and I have no idea what people were talking about because it was not

apparent in the image of the artifact itself, but were things that the staff understood because they work with the collection a lot. Just to note that that is one of the critical points within this concept.

Sina: That's a great reminder between interpretation and visual description. Visual description is "say what you see." A good rule of thumb. Noting time, turning our attention to discourse. Essentially a lot of discourse these days happens online. It happens in a digital sphere. Whether it's Twitter, social media like Instagram Facebook as well as things like blog posts or media longer form social media. When we are capturing these materials and content for thinking about preservation and conservation, it is important to make sure we are not just capturing that tweet with an image in it. We are also capturing the visual description the someone has on it so on platforms like Twitter and Instagram you can visually describe just like you heard from my phone playing that audio file. You can type in the text for an image that you're posting, making it more accessible to someone who cannot see. Capturing that info in addition to the post itself is really critical. Of this information is not only helpful because at this part of the piece and should be captured of course and can also help you make these objects more accessible when you go to present them to the public, but does this also helpful to future museum professionals because that this an additional source of information about the object itself. In terms of data and information management, there is a lot more to the collection than the physical objects like we have been talking about. There is the associated data with it like the metadata, who sent to the tweets on a digital object, or the provenance. These things that we're familiar with in museum practice, social media posts, web pages, content of that nature. There is intangible. Corey always makes this key distinction. Think of a dance from indigenous peoples when you think of a dance like that only a video capture of it may be documenting it sure, but it is not preserving it's because the intrinsic aspect of the dance is the interpretive qualities and interpretation itself that the individual performing that dance brings to that piece of intangible heritage. Just having a video file is not enough. Think about this and preservation practices so we do not accidentally perform these erasures that sometimes happen. Also thinking about the systems we use and we will see some examples of these on the next slide, these systems all contribute to the accessibility of the material

we are talking about. Some support visual descriptions, other support magnification, other support having the text be accessible, not just a photo of the text, so we want to make sure we are thinking about the systems and how they participate in our digital ecosystem to facilitate accessibility. In terms of metadata, we are creating and collecting and managing the data across all these different systems. Examples briefly and then we can talk about specifics in the Q&A are things like collections management systems, digital management system talk about the objects and provenance digital asset management system maybe the things that serves up those photos and files and does a little bit of rights management for you. Content management system maybe the thing that manages the website or an enterprise-wide and then of course archival and library management systems for information specific to that domain. You have all these different kinds of systems may have one program that does it all and that is fine but then how do we consider and prioritize conclude inclusion in the accessibility into the systems when we are using them so we can make our collections more accessible? Corey, over to you.

Corey: Quickly shifting gears. you have probably heard about open access and the cultural sector in the past eight years but gaining a lot of traction the last three years and then, of course, last year the Smithsonian launched its open access program. The concept behind open access is access in general, so who has access to data and how and this is a consideration for inclusion as well. Open access is a mechanism by which research outputs are distributed online. They are normally paired with creative commons and open licensing model that removes restrictions with use and reuse and starts to get around some of those issues that we were talking about earlier that would require something like geo-fencing. Open access is something we should all consider if we are a steward of the public's collection of its heritage, then open access is a really important tactic in facility to ensure that we provide the public with access to their own collections. Why does it matter? That is what we are talking about is increasing access to human knowledge and. This is one of those museum responsibility core museum responsibility. How to involve that trust relationship. As people expectations and our behaviors change over time it then certainly open access is having its moment right now. We want to be careful, though, because we have all sorts of biases build into the

legacy of the systems and infrastructure that we are using and we want to ensure that we do not perpetuate bias as we make things open. This is something for us to consider. Sina mentioned this idea of larger institutions having content management systems that manage more than their website. Something that we fully believe in is this idea of enterprise content management that some of those systems that you may or may not use that Sina just ran through is really when we think about inclusion and the access make deliberate decisions about the nature of those systems, how they share information with one another or share information in general, and know that further down the line we want to have as few barriers as possible not only in our intentions, but how we can actually execute those intentions. Even just removing the museum subject from the equation and thinking about things and purely data and information terms, we want to be as interoperable between systems and information sources as we possibly can be so when we want to do something years from now that we have not even thought of, it is going to cost us a lot less time and money to do whatever we need to do. Enterprise content management and the methodology around that concept is going to help us get there.

And this is details on that, I don't think we need to get too far into content enterprise management on this talk. Just to say that you do not have to have expensive content or collection management systems in order to take advantage of this. You may be using a database, you may using an Excel spreadsheet or Google Sheets or something and the idea is always to think about it is just data and information and how are we going to best use that in the future. We are not quite sure so it's be as open and flexible as we can. Feeding into some final thoughts.

We mention this in the previous two sessions, but when you are thinking about your website, use WordPress over other platforms. The main thing is the word WordPress comes with a content management system so back to what we were just talking about that may help structure some of your information and your data and if you're surfacing collections through your website, that this well in the way that you could use that data information in the future. Put as much as you can on your website. If you can put label information, visual descriptions and artifacts online, then that is great. At the Corning Museum of Glass they have the factory labels for the objects on the website and then

and gallery they let you know where you can find online. That is great because now they've just made their artifact labels accessible because everyone's mobile device has a screen reader and can read the text for those who cannot see or hear or see or view the label. This bottom point is what we this is session on digital collections. We talk about the different aspects of the collections but that's because we consider all collections to be digital. Even if it is a 3D object that may not be digital, all of the associated information and data around an object is digital. Of it being written or composed on a typewriter it is born digital in Word or Google doc so let's consider things digitally because that is only going to allow us to to distribute the information in more ways and make sure that information is more accessible. Ultimately, your museum is built upon your collection so if we can ensure that the collection is inclusive and accessible, we're going to go a long way toward ensuring that our programs are inclusive and accessible. The work through which we manage our collections and the assets are critical in this context. Visual description is likely not in everybody's workflow but when we are cataloguing an object if we can have a part that fills out the visual description then it is there for when we want to and need to use it. When we consider our museum logical practices in the process of the inclusive design we can enable greater accessibility, which means we can extend our reach and satisfy many strategic performance measures that we have it for our organizations. With that, we can jump into the discussion.

Zinnia: Thank you both. Someone who spent 17 years in the collections world, it was interesting for me to listen to what you were saying and think back on the many object and artwork descriptions I have done over the years and really thinking about the weight and texture and adding in simple, more descriptors to what we are writing. That was very helpful. We have a few questions from our attendees and if you are listening or watching please continue to drop them into the chat and they will get relayed to me through the magic of technology across the stratosphere. I'm going to start with a simple one. "what software did you use on the iPad?"

Sina: This is built right in and if you want a more detailed demo of this, we have one and the first video of the serious and the first webcast, but it is built right into your iOS device. So any Apple device Iwatch I found it is called voice over and you can ask Siri

to turn on. You can turn on voice over and if you go to settings under accessibility, there is a whole slew of assistive technologies. There is a magnifier, black-and-white mode, switch-based access for those who can't use the screen, there is a screen reader called voice over all of that is built into your iOS devices. That is what I was using as someone who is blind in order to be use a device like an iPhone. That is what your visitors can use to pull up if you take nothing else from this presentation that point that Corey made put as much as you can on your website because is someone who is blind, maybe don't have accessible labels or other things figured out but as long as I can get to that label information, I can pull it up on my phone and read it right in the gallery. Doesn't work for everyone that it's an easy accommodation.

Zinnia: "I often get pained on the length of my alternative text when running an accessibility text checker. Is there an ideal length for alt text?"

Sina: This is a fantastic question. Alt text is used for a couple different purposes on websites and mobile apps. Sometimes when it is a picture of a menu the only thing the alt text should say is "menu" or "lunch menu" because then you click on an essay link and it goes to a page that has the proper lunch menu. Apparently I am hungry given the example. Is one form we want short labels. You don't want "leather bound book with ornate writing" describing lunch because it is a link, the image acting as a link as a control from a tech perspective but if you are talking about and artwork or something that is not a link or button it is actually a thing that we want people to appreciate in the accessibility checker as long. Feel free to put in appropriate alternative text and feel free to send them my way. I will set them right. For shorter descriptions, typically folks that have been settling on a sentence or so that a short like really short. For longer descriptions, it varies institution to institution, 50 words to 350 words is as wide as the range can be. If you go in over 50 words maybe the alt text is not the place to put that description. Think about surfacing that visual description for everybody and putting that description right on the page. You can have the short description and the alt text and then the longer description for everyone to appreciate on the webpage or mobile app. That we get the best of both worlds. When you have pieces of text my screen reader on my laptop and phone lets me navigate by a paragraph and let me have structure

whereas with alt text that you just have to listen to it from beginning to end. You don't get any structure to the text.

Corey: To add something that may be related I believe in the first session, we mentioned that completing these alt text descriptions is helping with search optimization, so how search engines find your content. There is a traffic and viewership audience reach that gets increased not just in terms of accessibility, but in terms of how search engines consume the information and make your content more findable for anyone looking for.

Zinnia: Thank you. This next question is related to what you're talking about, but I'm going to read it slightly different "in regards to content presentation, are there pros or cons to presenting a series of photos of one piece with a short alt text versus hiding multiple pictures of the same piece and thereby bypassing the alt text and simply providing a longer form description of the piece?"

Sina: I would do both. I would do short descriptors on the alt text so someone has the understanding "that's a top back" or "front level view" of an object. This comes up with sculpture. You have the front shot, the different lighting orientation that sort of thing and then to the long form description of the piece and real life so the real visual description of the whole thing. Why do you want to do that? Imagine if I want to capture one of those images and send it to my friend I can't now do that if you have hidden those images. You have removed them from the ability of the blind user from accessing them on the page. Do the short description to differentiate them, but you can be supershort "David front," "David back." And then do the proper visual description on the page.

Corey: There is a parallel here to gallery presentation as well. We were dealing with a scenario this morning where there was one artifact label for a series of works, 48 different prints within a salon and hanging in the gallery and there was one label, but there is a visual description that we want to create for the installation. If we want to call it in installation as well as than the visual description for each of the 48 different prints that composes that. We want to create a hierarchy there so people can go as deep or shallow as they want to when they are exploring that. It is interesting because when we come up with these scenarios for online, it is often very similar to the scenarios we put

into place in the gallery. We just have to adapt and evolve over doing for the different channels or media but often very much the same approach.

Zinnia: Thank you for those answers. These is next question is interesting. I think there are many out there who might be in the situation. "I work in a historic house museum and I am wondering how the suggestions and your presentation can be applied to visitors on guided tours or for collection currently without technology?"

Corey: The concepts are still the same. Let's take visual description as an example. We are talking about surfacing it through digital means. Sina and I have been to a bunch of historic house museums and even just museums in general that do not have a large digital infrastructure and the best is when we can weave description into the tour that is already being given and then expand upon it. That can be delivered through the tour guide through the docent to the person working in the space as easily as it can be delivered through a mobile device. It is not so much the mechanism of delivery as Sina as creating the affordance and that this most appropriate for the context in which we are working. We have been his historic house where the house is the object is the primary artifact. We want to treat that artifact in the same way, develop those affordances, but maybe they are not being present at a mobile device or through a website may be layered being developed and presented through humans.

Sina: Some of the most enjoyable experiences that I've had have been with my phone in my pocket have been with a conversation with someone: "check out this banister of of this wall and the textural difference between that and the stairs". Come upstairs with me and I will describe the lighting to you." Those can be one-on-one tours, visual description tours or they can be part of woven into the tour for everyone to enhance the sensory nature of. Think about the places in the house and I have a cold draft or something else going on that is a different sensory modality. Think about objects that normally you don't want folks to touch, but if you're happy to have someone wear some art gloves and then occasionally have your blind or low-vision users visitors touch them, you can offer those enhanced opportunities, imagining a different experience. Don't think of the tech as the only way to achieve it. That is just one way to surface that stuff.

Corey: One of the most incredible tour experiences that I've been on was one of the tours at the Tenement Museum in New York. There the building is the artifact and it is

all about the interpretation of the guide who is leading you through it. They have different tours that expose different stories but they really other than walking through the old apartments don't want you to touch anything. But they did an incredible job as surfacing the characteristics multimodal characteristics so what people would have smelled, what things feel like et cetera. At the same sort of principles that Sina was talking about when trying to catalogue the sword and surfacing those properties that don't fit into your typical control vocabulary fields they surfaced those deliberately because they did not want people touching touching the house and apartments more than what they were already doing by walking through them. They surfaced those qualities as part of a script that they were delivering and that made it and that was able to translate that experience for us.

Zinnia: Thank you both. We have a little less than five minutes for questions so going to try to get two more. First and this is coming in multiple forms "can each of you share your favorite museums with online exhibitions that exemplify accessibility?"

Sina: No. The reason I don't want to put anyone under that kind of microscope. That is not fair to them. Let me give you some aspects of those that are good. The ones that don't try to be if you're doing nothing more than having some photos on a WordPress website, but they are able to be zoomed in on and able to have visual descriptions and able to be used on an iPhone and web browser, that is so much more rewarding at the end of the then when you compare yourself to individuals that have hundreds of thousands of dollars to spend on an online collection and are essentially achieving the same outcome and often in a less accessible way. The 3D tour in the VR is cute stuff but if it's not accessible it doesn't mean anything to me. I hear the ask for examples of inclusion and accessibility but it is really important to keep in mind that these aspects that we are talking about here, these concepts are really what matters. I would not get too distracted by some of the exemplar or best in class examples that everybody talks about in the museum field. In my opinion for some of the wrong reasons. Corey, your thoughts on that?

Corey: I would say that if all the collections we see, no one does a comprehensively good job. Different organizations do a good job within certain aspects of making their collections and collections accessible. Smithsonian, great job, 19 organizations within

the Smithsonian that we worked with to make access happen, but it was like 2.4 million objects like a handful and then you could say the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York over the pandemic while they were shut down they were able to keep staff from being furloughed by writing visual descriptions so they had 6000 visual description items within their collection. That is amazing. Now are all their collections accessible? No. We can cherry pick little pieces like that which in most cases lead us to say where there are no good examples but there are many great examples they are just not comprehensive, I guess.

Zinnia: Fair enough. This is the final question. And is kind of a long one, but I think you will have a closing thought on it.

"can you talk more about tools like Coyote to help centralize the workflow for visual descriptions and make their reuse across platforms more efficient? I feel like we do a lot of rewriting, replacing between images on MailChimp. How can read and write once, publish to all?"

Sina: Do you want to? I will close us out with Coyote.

Corey: The enterprise content management system at the Human Rights museum that we developed was archival collections, manage digital asset management, web content management system, if thesaurus, and an enterprise search appliance, all work together, all open source, all free. We ended up paying some licensing fees to get more support and then I had people on my team integrate systems but the idea there was that we would store an asset once, map the different fields of the different systems against each other so we could present that item wherever we wanted. So the Human Rights Museum had 97 different digital installations and the 50,000 square-foot exhibitions a bunch of social media channels channels for our et cetera but the same digital asset could be used in the study table in the gallery, could be projected on the side of a building outside, was used in social media posts. It was always has same assets so we stored it once, we mapped the systems and that we could run for or set out as many times as we wanted. That was the greatest piece of technology at that museum. It was completely not sexy, but it allowed us to be effective and efficient when we wanted to use the collections in ways that we had not thought of using them yet. That's what we

are getting into more out the enterprise management content methodology and it can be done that in a lot of ways.

Sina: With respect to Coyote, it is also open source tool and it can be hosted as well. If you are a small museum especially, please reach out. We are happy to work with you on making this affordable for you because what it is is a tool that can integrate especially well with with WordPress websites and other types coming as well that allows for the synthesis, the review, the editing, the publishing, and the storage of a visual description. You can have multiple alt text, longer one, shorter, sign language, what have you for any object in your collection. It is an online platform that facilitates that workflow that was embedded in your question. This way you can have authors writing description but an editor coming along and doing some copyediting, a curator chiming in with institutional knowledge about that piece, and someone to approve that description so it can go live automatically on the website and this way you are not stuck doing all of that work in a single edit field and WordPress, in a single edit field in Drupal. It takes a field and treats it as a first-class citizen. Happy to talk to more about that.

Zinnia: I think that's a great place to end. I think it's a great discussion to continue on the online form so big because I just wrote down "Coyote." I think there will be a lot of people who were to continue this. We are at time, so I want to thank you all for attending and a huge thank you, Sina and Corey, for the great presentations and really practical takeaways and all of these technical trainings. Just a few reminders for everyone who is joining us if you missed any of the session or want to watch it again, you can access the recording on the Museum learning hub website again [museum-hub.org](http://museum-hub.org) under the recent webinar tab at the top of the page and all of the tech trainings and please complete the postevent survey. Visit the forum on the website. You will have to create a login but once you are in their, we are excited about the discussions that we can continue on that platform. As always follow us on social media and finally join us next Thursday, May 6 for the introduction slashes inspiration which we are now talking calling the InSpo section as we are launch module two which is going to focus on live streaming. This will focus on two presenters of the Jane Addams how House Museum and Christine McMillan from the Asheville Art Museum. This introductory session you will hear how Ross and Christie successfully developed live virtual

programs tours and events with small budgets and very basic technology tools. I have truly enjoyed being your host for module one. Next month that goes to my colleague Dan Yeager, the Executive Director of the New England Museums Association who I know is going to do a fabulous job. We'll see if he tells you whether his hair is curly or straight in his visual description. I have appreciated all of you being here. Thank you, everybody, for attending today and have a fabulous day.