

Canadian Society for Women in Philosophy Guidelines for Conference Hosting

The Canadian Society for Women in Philosophy (CSWIP) recognizes that rigorous philosophical practice requires a robustly inclusive philosophical community. Conference accessibility is, therefore, a matter of good philosophical practice and a condition of doing good philosophical work. It is also a matter of justice within the organization and the profession.

This document has been produced by the Working Group on Accessibility (2015-2016), and is intended to stand as a living document that can continue to be revised in light of expanding capacities, considerations, and needs for accessibility in the organization and the discipline.

Accessibility Goals for CSWIP Conferences

- To ensure that accessibility forms an integral part of planning all CSWIP conferences, including but not limited to budgeting and grant applications, and thus is not a discretionary matter with respect to conference planning.
- To ensure that CSWIP conferences and events maximize the principles of Universal Design.¹
- To allow CSWIP and potential hosts/organizers to consider which sites/institutions are suitable for conferences in terms of accessibility, as well as to identify additional conditions for maximizing the accessibility of particular institutional infrastructure and supports.
- To ensure that conference organizers are actively supported by CSWIP Executive, in principle and in practice, in making conferences accessible.
- To have recommended language for CFPs, and a Participant Information Form that conference organizers can use.
- To have a list of accessibility considerations on which potential conference organizers might reflect in advance of hosting/offering to host.
- To have a set of Guidelines for Conference Participants (speakers and moderators; please see example, Appendix 3, attached).

General Considerations for Organizers Regarding Accessible Conference Sites

These guidelines are intended as a starting point for conference organizers. Please consult the following for additional ideas and information:

The Aesthetics of Accessibility

http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2015/02/the-aesthetics-of-accessibility.html

Removing Barriers to Participation for Disabled Scholars

http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2015/07/article-on-

¹ <http://www.universaldesign.com>

[chronicle-vitae-removing-the-barriers-to-participation-for-disabled-scholars.html](http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2015/07/inclusive-chairing.html)

Inclusive Conference Paper Chairing

http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2015/07/inclusive-chairing.html

Accessibility and Psychiatric Disability

http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2016/05/psychiatric-disability-and-accessibility-vs-accommodation.html

Universal Design and Conference Accessibility

http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2016/04/universal-design-and-conference-accessibility.html

Building University-Wide IT Accessibility

http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2015/04/article-on-it-accessibility-building-university-wide-it-accessibility.html

Accessibility and Accommodation

With this document, CSWIP signals that it aims to prevent the occurrence of situations where accessibility becomes discretionary, a matter of supererogation and/or benevolence, rather than a matter of equality and hence integral to conference planning.

CSWIP recognizes an important distinction between accommodation and accessibility.

Accommodation names structures and practices that generally assume, expect, take for granted, and naturalize as normal, regular, and typical the requirements of a certain range of people (Tremain, 2013)² whose needs are met invisibly precisely because they are taken as basic or standard.

Under an accommodationist model, people who have certain other, “non-standard” requirements are entitled to expect that measures will be taken, “as needed” and in a supplementary fashion, to accommodate their “special” and out-of-the-ordinary needs. This model is thus an “individualized and privatized conception of disability” (Tremain, 2013), in which disabled people must make individual requests for the provisions and services they require. Accommodationist approaches conceive of access “as an end state,” rather than as a practice requiring flexibility and oriented toward the meeting of variable and changing needs.

² Shelley Tremain, “Introducing Feminist Philosophy of Disability,” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33(4), 2013. <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3877/3402>

CSWIP aims to have conferences that are guided by considerations that challenge the logic of accommodation. Nevertheless, CSWIP recognizes that many institutions are more accessible than others. Many retain an accommodationist or a “mixed” model (e.g., campuses where all classroom spaces are wheelchair accessible, yet only some are equipped with microphones, which must be requested and require payment). Institutions may entail an accommodationist approach, even when conference organizers themselves aim to take an accessibility approach, or vice versa. Where accommodation is required to meet the needs of conference participants, CSWIP emphasizes as important that they be made in a way that does not create an extra barrier for those participants (see below, Communication About Accessibility).

CSWIP also recognizes that students and faculty for whom travel to conferences is difficult or inaccessible work at campuses that maintain a strongly accommodationist or mixed model approach. These difficulties can also constitute barriers to access. Thus, it is important for CSWIP and conference organizers to have strategies for maximizing the resources available on campuses in a wide variety of cases, allowing CSWIP to go to members, and not only for members to come to CSWIP.

CSWIP recognizes that discussions of access must consider physical as well as non-physical barriers to access. A list of possible considerations can be found below, under On-Site Conference Accessibility. We encourage organizers and potential hosts to familiarize themselves with the levels of accessibility on their campuses, if they have not already done so, and communicate effectively with potential conference-goers about accessibility.

Communication About Accessibility

A hallmark feature of accessible conferences is clear and early communication about available resources, spaces, infrastructure, and support at conference sites, including specific rooms, the campus at large, and the community in which the campus is situated.

- CSWIP recognizes the significant psychological and practical burdens placed on those who are put in the position of having to ask about accessibility, e.g., by sending “a simple email.”
- CSWIP therefore recommends that conference hosts communicate as many details about accessibility as early as possible, preferably in the Call for Papers (see example in Appendix 1, attached). We encourage longer accessibility statements than are often the norm in the discipline.
- This should include information about what is available, as well as what will be asked of *all* participants, and how to ask questions about conference accessibility.
- In addition to making access a priority regardless of specific needs, one way to mitigate this unequal burden is to ensure that *all* conference participants are asked about matters of access as part of registration (see Appendix 2, attached). This can be very useful for all aspects of planning, including questions about, e.g., dietary requirements (for catering) and the inclusion of child-care providers. It can also serve to assist organizers in identifying services conference participants might need that are not always standardly provided on campuses, e.g., CART, ALS, as

- well as in facilitating access beyond host campuses, e.g., assistance with booking accessible transportation and lodgings.
- CSWIP also recommends that conference organizers encourage conference-attendees to communicate with them about accessibility requirements or concerns, and that they approach such communication as a foundational part of conference organization, instead of as work in addition to conference organization.

On-Site Conference Accessibility

It is important to be creative and flexible about accessibility. The following are features of conference accessibility for organizers to consider, and constitute only a starting point for thinking about campus accessibility. It is helpful to find out what is and is not already available, what is and is not standardly provided upon request, and how to access services that conference participants might need. It might also be useful to show this document to your centre for student accessibility, and/or the relevant administrators at your institution.

Physical Accessibility: What is the wheelchair/walker/mobility accessibility like to and within presentation venues, reception spaces, washrooms, parking, and events off-campus? Are food venues, buffet tables, and other hospitality services accessible? Are podia in classrooms accessible (e.g., to those who sit and stand)? Are tables/desks accessible? Is there clearance around tables, chairs, and podia for wheelchairs, walkers, personal assistants, or working animals?

Lodgings and Transportation Information: Are there lodgings in the area that are accessible? What transportation options are available for conference participants? Will there be accessible transportation to and from off-campus events, if applicable? If there will be transportation for conference participants to off-campus events, what are the costs associated with such transportation, including accessible transportation?

Communication/translation services: Does your campus have the capacity for American Sign Language (ASL) translation and/or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)? What are the costs associated with these services, if any, on your campus? At which events will these be provided?

Remote Access: Does your campus have the capacity for the use of Skype and similar services in proposed conference spaces, to enable presenters unable to travel to participate in the conference? What costs, if any, are associated with this service?

Microphones for Conference Presenters/Moderators: Are the conference rooms equipped with microphones? Are they portable enough to be passed around, e.g., between speakers and to members of the audience during discussions? What are the costs associated with these services?

Speaking Time for Presenters: How tightly are you planning to schedule talks and sessions? Is there enough time for someone who requires more than the scheduled allotment? If someone needs more time to present their work, how can they ask about doing so? (the Participant Information Form might be helpful, here)

Signage and Materials: Is there accessible signage on your campus (e.g., using non-alphabetic symbols, large print), including for washrooms and classrooms? Is there enough accessible signage for people who are new to campus? Will there be a paper programme for the conference? Can it be made available in large print format? What is the cost of providing this for the conference?

Childcare and Nursing Space: CSWIP has a tradition of ensuring that parents can participate in conferences, and of welcoming children and childcare providers. Are there places where babies could nurse/breastfeed? Are there change-tables in the washrooms? Are there activities in the area for older children? Are there child-care services that parents can access on or near campus? What costs are associated with childcare?

Quiet space/room: Is there a space/room near conference activities where people needing some time to be quiet can go? What are the parameters for those wanting to use that space? Is there a cost associated with the use of this space? (Additional consideration might be given to using colour communication stickers on name-tags³ which are helpful for a wide range of people).

Sensory Accessibility: Is the lighting in the rooms fluorescent? Is the lighting flexible? Are there spots in conference rooms where participants may sit or stand away from direct light or heating ducts? From elevated noise levels/amplifier sound? Are there predictable, intense sounds on campus that participants might be warned about?

Washrooms: Are there washrooms that are non-gendered close by to the conference rooms? How can people identify them?

Emergency Exits: Are there emergency exit routes that are clearly identified for conference rooms, given that many people will not be familiar with the campus? How will you make this clear to conference participants?

General Campus Accessibility: How well-maintained are your campus facilities? Are there often, e.g., ramps or electric door openers that do not work or go unfixed? Are sidewalks level and marked? How much distance will there be between conference venues? Is there a way to ensure that people who require personal assistance in moving between venues can have it with minimal or no extra fuss?

Guidelines for Presenters and Moderators: Having conference speakers and moderators prepared ahead of time for an accessible conference environment is very useful (see example in Appendix 3, attached).

Personal Assistants: Personal assistants provide essential support to some conference participants. How will personal assistants be part of the conference? Is there room in the

³ See, e.g.,

<https://autisticadvocacy.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/02/ColorCommunicationBadges.pdf>

budget to ensure that they can register without additional cost? If not, are there ways to ensure that personal assistants feel welcome?

Food: How many meals will be provided with conference registration? What dietary needs will the event's catering meet by default, and what needs require specification? How will food be arranged so as to be physically accessible to all participants? What are the costs associated with catering? (meals can often be a difficult additional cost to graduate students and people who do not have travel funds)

Personal Safety: Are there ways to alert conference-goers to services for reporting assault or harassment on your campus? Is there any information that could be provided to conference attendees about personal safety (e.g., WalkSafe programmes, well-lit routes between campus venues and hotels, etc.)?

Practical Suggestions

One way to think of ensuring accessibility is to approach it as a matter of hospitality; taking up a position in which one works to anticipate visitors' needs and expects to be flexible can therefore be a helpful orientation. In addition to ensuring that structures attuned to principles of Universal Design are in place, Bryony Pierce⁴ notes that:

“There are subtle ways in which organizers can aim for greater inclusivity, too. When I'm the person dealing with enquiries, I try to anticipate needs—for example, offering a family room to a speaker who mentioned having been on maternity leave—and make sure people feel able to approach me with any additional requests or questions. I also try to send a high proportion of personalized emails. The organizer is primarily a facilitator, whose role is to make things run smoothly for everyone, disabled or non-disabled, and it's much more rewarding to do that to the best of one's ability than to do the bare minimum.”

Flexibility: Working with a model of accessibility means assuming that participants' needs change and evolve all of the time. One of the most useful things to plan for is an openness to change and to addressing needs in the moment. Some flexibility can, in fact, be planned for – that is, we can set up conferences in which flexibility is part of the plan.

Budgeting: CSWIP hosts and organizers generally request money to fund our conferences from their institutions and from SSHRC. Budgeting for accessibility from the outset ensures that accessibility and flexibility is a central feature of conferences.

Advance Planning, Room Booking: Establishing rooms and venues for conferences as much ahead of time as is possible is an important feature of accessibility. It allows organizers to communicate about the accessibility of the conference venues with potential participants. Providing accurate information about venues and resources that is not changed unnecessarily is helpful for planning transportation to and from campus, parking,

⁴ http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2016/05/dialogues-on-disability-shelley-tremain-interviews-bryony-pierce.html

etc. If there is a potential problem that organizers identify with a particular location, having a back-up plan in place should the need arise is a way to plan to be flexible.

Conference Websites: In consultation with the Communications Officer, conference organizers might consider building accessible websites for conferences (e.g., using Wordpress) with which they can communicate with conference-goers and potential conference participants, and can provide up-to-date information ahead of the conference.⁵

Role of the Executive in Facilitating and Supporting Accessible Conferences

We recommend that the CSWIP Executive take an active role in facilitating and empowering conference organizers and hosts in holding conferences that prioritize and value accessibility. This includes not only ensuring that organizers are attending to matters of accessibility on their campuses, but offering concrete supports to organizers.

Examples of such support might include:

- assisting with CFP wording and accessibility statements that reflect the unique situation at each institution
- assisting with wording and budgeting for SSHRC applications
- intervening with Deans and other members of university administration if concerns about accessibility arise (e.g., the President or Vice-President of CSWIP might send an email explaining the organization's commitment to accessibility, etc.)
- in some cases, strategizing with organizers and hosts about how to address questions and concerns about accessibility, and/or how to work with accommodationist institutions

⁵ There is a helpful resource about accessible website development here:

http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2015/06/accessibility-guidelines-for-websites.html

**Appendix 1 - Example CFP Accessibility Statement
(from CSWIP 2016 at Mount Allison University)**

This conference will prioritize accessibility. Guidelines for accessible presentations will be distributed with successful participant notifications. Conference rooms and the reception space are wheelchair accessible, and information about wheelchair accessible transportation and accommodations will be available by the time of participant notifications. Participants will be asked to use microphones for all talks and for discussion periods. Information about CART availability for the keynote and other sessions will be posted to the website soon. Food will be vegan/vegetarian, and there will be space on the registration form to note food allergies and sensitivities. Participants are asked not to bring or wear strong scents. A quiet room will be available.

Further information, such as information about childcare, breastfeeding and change room areas, and transportation to and from [city/university] will be available soon at [CSWIP](#) and also upon request.

If you have any questions or concerns about accessibility, please contact the conference organizer, [name], at [email address]. All conference participants will be asked to identify any presentation technologies and/or other supports required to participate, and anything else that can help mitigate potential barriers to participation. All information will be kept confidential.

Appendix 2 - Example Participant Information Form/Questions

Conference Registration

Name *

Email *

Institutional Affiliation *

Catering

Our aim is to provide as many meals as we can to conference registrants at no additional cost. Dinner Friday, breakfast/lunch/dinner Saturday, and breakfast Sunday are included with conference registration.

Conference catering will be vegetarian with vegan options.

For our planning, please indicate whether you:

- Require/prefer vegan food: Yes No
- Have dietary needs (halal, kosher, etc.): * Yes No
- Have food allergies:
(Please indicate whether the danger is in consuming the allergen or in having it in your surrounding environment) * Yes No

Accessibility

Our aim is to create as accessible a conference as we can. Conference rooms and reception and eating spaces are wheelchair accessible. Participants will be asked to use microphones for all talks and discussion periods. CART will be provided for the keynote address and the workshop on accessibility. A quiet room will be available. Participants are asked not to bring or wear strong scents. Please review the guidelines on accessible presentations. More detailed information about accessible transportation and accommodation is posted at cswip2016.wordpress.com. With these measures in mind, please help us to arrange for any additional accommodation:

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- A/V: Conference rooms have projectors, and are equipped with wireless Internet. Presenters are asked to use microphones when provided to ensure that everyone in the room can hear them clearly. Please request any other/alternative technologies or services, if applicable (we will do our best to make these available, depending on institutional capacities):

- Mobility and Assistance: We will have student volunteers available to help conference participants navigate our campus. Personal assistants are welcome to enjoy meals with us at no additional charge. Please let us know if you are bringing a service animal (so we can alert anyone with animal allergies). For our planning, please indicate whether there is anything we should be aware of: -

- Would you like help arranging wheelchair-accessible transportation to/from the airport, hotel, and around town? * Yes No
- Childcare: Children and childcare support people are welcome. Will you have childcare needs during the conference? Please let us know, so we can try to help make arrangements:

- General: Is there anything it would be helpful for us to know about your accessibility needs, or anything else you would like help in arranging?

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Appendix 3 – Accessibility Guidelines (General, for Presenters, and for Moderators) (Thanks to Jane Dryden for sharing this document)

Accessibility Guidelines for CSWIP 2016: *Philosophy and its Borders*

Local Organizer: Jane Dryden (jdryden@mta.ca)

CSWIP Accessibility Committee: Jane Dryden, Tracy Isaacs, Anna Mudde, Shelley Tremain

The following accessibility guidelines are intended to improve access to the conference, through thinking of it as a shared space in which all should be able to participate. We are making these guidelines available now so that conference attendees can plan their papers and presentations with them in mind.

Note that there are guidelines for both presenters and for moderators. If there are any concerns that arise during conference events, please let the moderator know. Moderators will be asked to help facilitate accessibility during sessions. You may ask the moderator for assistance before, during, or after your talk. If needed they will be in touch with Jane Dryden (local conference organizer) or a designated student volunteer.

NB: These guidelines represent a starting point for thinking about access during CSWIP 2016. Please note the limits of guidelines, and be attentive to other ways of enhancing access. Access is best achieved if we think of it as a shared community project.

There will be a **quiet room** available throughout the duration of the conference: **Dunn 111**. If you need a quiet place to review your presentation, or just quietly sit for a while, please do not hesitate to make use of this space. Please respect it as a quiet room: do not attempt to strike up conversation. There will be ample conversation time!

Presenter Guidelines for CSWIP 2016

PREPARING FOR THE CONFERENCE

Prepare to be flexible. Access needs are shifting and fluid, and it may be that even your accessible presentation will need to shift depending on who attends your presentation.

Create a script or detailed outline for your talk and bring copies to distribute. Many people find it hard to follow auditory talks, but this is particularly helpful for those who are deaf and also helps the many people who struggle to process you reading your paper, such as those with traumatic brain injuries and second-language learners. If your talk is not scripted, please provide a detailed outline. If you do not want your work cited without

your permission, indicate this on your draft (or collect drafts at the end – the moderator can assist with this).

Make your PowerPoint more accessible. Avoid flashing images, arguments that rely solely on color, and small print. Use a plain background without any watermark, photo, or design behind the text. Plan to have a backup (such as a handout, or using the board) if your PowerPoint fails or is not accessible to your audience.

Bring versions of all handouts and scripts in large print (17 point or larger).

Large-print copies should be single-sided as they may be held close to the face for viewing.

Consider sharing your paper, script, or slides online. This can be in addition to providing printed drafts.

DURING YOUR PRESENTATION

Speak at a reasonable pace. People read much faster than they typically talk, which is hard for everyone to follow. If present, the ASL interpreter or CART transcriptionist also needs to keep up. (CART is Communication Access Real- Time Transcription, which is live captioning for a computer or projected screen.) Before your talk begins, provide a script to the ASL interpreter or CART captioner with jargon you'll use repeatedly (so they can create signs or short-cuts).

[NB for CSWIP 2016: CART will be available for the Workshop on Accessibility and the keynote address. It will be made available for the regular program sessions depending on participant responses to registration form.]

Announce the accessibility practices you are using. Before you begin, note that scripts, large print, copies of the PowerPoint, etc., are available. Ask if you can be heard. Have someone distribute handouts rather than having people come forward.

Describe any images you display. This includes participants with low vision and makes your images more purposeful for everyone. Rich auditory descriptions are best prepared in advance, and avoid a bare description merely of what is in the photo – communicate meaning if that is clear and pertinent to those who can see the images. (Consider Georgina Kleege's piece on visual description: <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/resources/VSAKleegeBlindImagination.pdf>.)

Use captioned videos. Avoid forcing participants to choose between watching videos or interpreters. Recognize that YouTube automatic captioning is flawed. Resources on captioning YouTube videos is here: <http://ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets/youtube.php>.

Use the microphone. This helps all listeners and is often connected to a FM monitoring system for those with hearing impairments.

Re-voice questions. Re-voice (repeat) the questions so all can hear before answering them.

GENERAL

NOTES

Avoid wearing scents. They are triggering for headaches and various kinds of environmental illness.

Communicate access needs to event organizers. It's important that events be accessible to you.

Acknowledgements:

These guidelines have been adapted from the guidelines for *philoSOPHIA* 2016, which were in turn adapted from those prepared by Amy Vidali (amy.vidali@ucdenver.edu) for the Society of Disability Studies 2012 meeting, drawing in part on materials at <http://composingaccess.net>.

Moderator Guidelines for CSWIP 2016

Thanks for agreeing to serve as a moderator! CSWIP is committed to increasing accessibility, and moderators will facilitate panels and assist in making panels accessible to all attendees. Attendees may or may not be comfortable publicly stating their needs, so be prepared to have conversations ranging from public requests to subtle communications.

Please review the general Accessibility Guidelines, available at the registration desk. If you need help while serving in your moderator role at the conference, please contact Jane Dryden or have a student volunteer track her down. Her cell phone number will be made available during the conference.

BEFORE THE PANEL BEGINS

- **Arrive early.** Please be early to allow time to execute needed changes or adaptations.
- **Check in with presenters:** Ask presenters about any access needs, how they are comfortable being reminded of time, and their preferred names and pronouns.
- **Collect materials to be shared with panel attendees.** This includes handouts and website addresses.

- **Consider the room layout.** Adjust for any obvious obstacles, such as chairs that might block wheelchair access. Note the locations of emergency exits so that you can share this with session attendees.

AT THE START OF THE PANEL

- **Identify access as important and encourage access requests.** Accessibility is an ongoing, collaborative effort, and explicit recognition of accessibility encourages conversation and feedback. Ask attendees about access needs (such as better positioning for an interpreter, changes in lighting, etc.).
- **Distribute panelists' materials.** Distribute handouts or designate an audience volunteer. Announce website addresses and write them on the white board, if available.
- **Make question cards available:** A stack of index cards will be available in each room. Make these available for audience members to ask questions on, if they prefer. Alternate spoken and card questions during the Q&A.
- **Remind the audience of the Twitter hashtag for the conference (#cswip2016).** This provides a connection for those who can't attend CSWIP.
- **Identify emergency exits for session attendees.**

DURING THE PANEL AND Q&A

Monitor the pace and audibility of talks: If a presenter is speaking quickly, ask them to slow down. Ensure that everyone speaks into the microphone. Remind presenters to re-voice (repeat) the questions after hearing them.

- **Keep presenters to their allocated time.** This allows necessary breaks between panels.
- **Encourage one speaker at a time.** It is easy for Q&A to become informal and chatty, but this can be challenging for those who communicate in non-traditional ways.
- **Ask for help.** If access needs are being denied or violated, pause/stop the panel and/or immediately head to the registration desk for help.

AFTER THE PANEL: Provide feedback to Jane Dryden at jdryden@mta.ca, or informally around the conference; she will forward it to the organizer of next year's conference. It will be very useful for CSWIP to track any specific accessibility issues – positive or negative – that arise during the conference.

Acknowledgements:

These guidelines have been adapted from the guidelines for *philoSOPHIA* 2016.