

ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

January 2010



Photo Courtesy: Gary Beechey



Message from William Thorsell Director and CEO

Social change comes from persistently unrealized truths that, because they are true, ultimately make themselves known. So it has been with the truths that men and women are equal in their rights and obligations, that race is not a basis for discrimination, and that love is beautiful regardless of who shares it. Society has changed profoundly in accepting these truths after centuries of insistent denial.

More recently, we have come to realize that many people are excluded from generally available pleasures and opportunities by physical and other limitations over which they have no control. It is not long ago that a person requiring a wheelchair could not attend a movie theatre, or a person without hearing could not enjoy a movie on television. We regarded the penalties in those situations as “the way things are” for the individuals affected. The individuals affected persisted in arguing that much of “the way things are” is a matter of social choice, and that social choice is subject to change.

We now understand that providing meaningful access to a museum’s pleasures requires much more than building ramps for wheelchairs, or creating audio tours for the blind. It is essentially an attitude – or curiosity – about any condition that limits the enjoyment of the museum to individuals because of a particular aspect of their situation. It may be language. It may be cultural norms. It may be income, food services or the availability of seating. It may be the assumption that individuals share a common basis of knowledge on which to appreciate what they are seeing in the collections.

In this decade, as the Royal Ontario Museum has physically rebuilt itself, we have also grown in our awareness of how much we can do to enhance the enjoyment of the museum for visitors in a wide variety of individual circumstances. This document explains how far we have come, knowing that there is much more to understand and do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Thorsell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'W'.

William Thorsell
Director and CEO
Royal Ontario Museum

Message from Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, President and Executive Director of ROM Governors



The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) is the embodiment of great architecture, stunning galleries and renowned collections. Together with extraordinary support from our donors and volunteers, we are striving to make the ROM fully accessible to all visitors.

Approximately one in seven people living in Ontario have a disability. That number is expected to rise to one in five over the next 20 years as the population ages. All of the resources and services available to Ontarians, including the many spectacular arts and cultural institutions, need to become more accessible for people of all abilities.

As a former Minister of the Provincial Parliament of Ontario, it was my privilege to introduce the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in 2005. Five years later, the ROM has been recognized for its leading implementation of the AODA and continues to work closely

with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to exceed its current standards.

The ROM's strong commitment to accessibility is also reflected in the ROM Governors' fundraising priorities. Our goal is to engage the world and ensure access to one of the world's greatest Museums. We are committed to building bridges and making critical enhancements in the areas of accessibility, education, digital content, programming and exhibits, research and collections, and gallery development.

It is my passionate belief that the ROM is meant to be for everyone. I know this belief is shared by all our supporters and staff members, who are working hard to break down barriers to accessibility so that the ROM can be an enjoyable and dynamic place for every visitor.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MBountrogianni".

Dr. Marie Bountrogianni
President and Executive Director
ROM Governors

Message from Christine Karcza, Honorary ROM Trustee and Cheryl Blackman, Head, Visitor Experience

Reflecting back on the past years, the Royal Ontario Museum has overcome many challenges, and celebrated a number of milestone achievements in accessibility.

The ROM was recently recognized by the Ministry of Community and Social Services for its leading implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). We were extremely honoured that Minister Madeleine Meilleur toured the museum and identified the ROM as being a model for others in creating a barrier-free Ontario, the 2025 goal for the province.

A break through event was the presentation of the *Out From Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember Exhibit*, in collaboration with the School of Disability Studies, Ryerson University. In recognition of this unique undertaking – the first exhibit in Canada about the history of persons with disabilities in this country - The City of Toronto presented the Royal Ontario Museum and Ryerson University with the *Access Award for Disability Issues at the 2008 Access Equity & Human Rights Awards*. This significant initiative allowed us to raise the awareness about the unknown history of disability to the broader Museum audience; to welcome members of the disabled community into our cultural space; and to create another opportunity to move accessibility forward at the ROM.

Our commitment to serving people with disabilities goes beyond the ROM's legal requirements. Our vision is to create a memorable visit for each of the nearly two million visitors coming every year. We know the Museum is moving in the right direction to reduce barriers to participation for those individuals with disabilities. And we recognize that achieving our vision will take time, resources, effort, partnerships and determination.

We sincerely thank everyone who has enthusiastically supported the accessibility initiative. The extraordinary professionalism and commitment of all volunteers and staff have contributed to making the Royal Ontario Museum a more inclusive organization.

We are proud and excited to present the ROM Accessibility Strategy and count on your continuing support for on-going implementation. The ROM looks forward to the years ahead, as we all strive to exceed the current and future standards of the AODA to create a museum experience for all visitors, including those with disabilities, to enjoy.

Acknowledgements

The Royal Ontario Museum thanks the many staff and volunteers who have contributed to and worked toward access during Renaissance ROM.

The Royal Ontario Museum Accessibility Advisory
Committee (R.A.A.C.)
Exhibit Design
Security Department
Visitor & Member Relations
ROM Conservation Department
Department of Museum Volunteers

Special thanks to:

Cheryl Blackman, Head Visitor Experience
Christine Karcza, Honorary ROM Trustee
Dave Holland, Head, Design
Frank Petersen, Head, Security
Dan Rahimi, Vice President, Gallery Development

Providing Feedback

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1. OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

1.1. Renaissance ROM



A family pauses to view construction of the Temerty Galleries of the Age of Dinosaurs, August 2007. Photo Courtesy: Wanda Dobrowlanski, ROM Images

The ROM is a place of wonder, discovery, and inspiration. With a dual mandate of covering both human civilization and the natural world, the ROM views access to its collections, information resources, programs and services as one of its primary and defining responsibilities.

For many years, much of the ROM's power to engage, to inspire to illuminate the world around us, lay locked in its immense, but hidden, collections. Through Renaissance

ROM, the ROM emerged fully reconceived and brilliantly realized at the centre of artistic, cultural and social life of Toronto, that offers an experience for all. The ROM became a place where visitors can find bridges, rather than barriers, a place of inclusiveness and equity.

From the inception of the Lee-Chin Crystal, Renaissance ROM was carefully designed stressing in Universal Design providing a new level of openness and accessibility. Universal design elements are apparent to visitors at the ROM's new entrance. Instead of stairs, the floor rises gently at two degrees providing continuous access to the museum's heritage building. The entrance area also features automatic doors, and four new elevators. In the spirit of universal design, a lowered admissions counter on one end is available to people using wheelchairs and also to smaller children or seniors who might prefer sitting down while interacting with staff.

At the interior of the Crystal, exhibit design unifies the visual aspects of the galleries' display cases, signage, colour selection, object presentation, lighting, climate control, and furnishings, to create a coherent and enjoyable experience for visitors. Upon entering the new Renaissance ROM galleries, visitors notice the clean, open design, not just the artefacts inside the 77 custom-made transparent glass display cases. The Crystal's Interior design concept combined four principles of gallery development to bring the Museum's collections, and the research that surrounds them, to the public: Access to Collections, Access to the Objects, Intellectual Access, and Aesthetic and Psychological Pleasure.

1.2. Service Promise

The ROM is a world leader in inspiring wonder and building understanding of human cultures and the natural world. Through our nationally and internationally outstanding and innovative research, collections and

programs, we strive to deliver a high and continuously improving level of service to visitors to foster life-long discovery and learning.

QUALITY & INNOVATION

The ROM recognizes the public's right of access to our nationally and internationally outstanding collections. Our galleries are therefore object-rich and object-centred, showcasing the highest quality to increase understanding of the interdependent domains of cultural and natural diversity, their relationships, significance, preservation, and conservation.

RESPECT & COURTESY

Visitors to the ROM can expect service from all our staff and volunteers that upholds the principles of dignity, independence, equal opportunity and integration, as well as a clean, comfortable and safe environment.

EXPLORATION & DISCOVERY

Everyone should have an equal opportunity to explore the ROM's collections for inspiration, life-long discovery and learning. To that end, we are continuously improving physical and intellectual access through our galleries and public spaces to our collections and services to ensure engagement and a meaningful experience.

COMMUNICATIONS

Visitors can expect accessible communication associated with the amenities, facilities, programs and services provided by the Museum. Visitors will be made aware of any costs or restrictions related to their use.

ACTION

All enquiries will be dealt with promptly and courteously by our staff to the best of their ability. Failures in service will also be addressed in an expeditious manner.

CONSISTENCY

To ensure a consistently high level of service, we will monitor and evaluate our progress on a regular, on-going basis. The commitments expressed in this service statement will be reviewed on an annual basis. We welcome comments from members, visitors and users.



Teck Suite of Galleries: Earth's Treasures. Photo Courtesy: David MCKay, ROM Images

2. ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING

2.1. AODA Standards

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), calls on us to make Ontario accessible by breaking down barriers. Accessibility standards are the building blocks Ontario will use to make real, measurable and effective changes to accessibility. Standards Development Committees are responsible for developing proposed standards that could become regulations under the AODA.

Focus On Five Key Areas

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

This standard is the first standard developed to become a regulation. It came into effect on January 1, 2008 and is now the law. Public sector organizations were required to comply by January 1, 2010. Private sector organizations will be required to comply by January 1, 2012. The standard addresses business practices and training needed to provide better customer service to people with disabilities.

Standards in the Process of Becoming Regulation

ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The standard addresses the removal of barriers in access to information. The standard could include information being provided in person, through print, a website or other means. The final proposed Accessible Information and Communications Standard has now been submitted to the Minister of Community and Social Services for consideration as law in summer of 2009.

2.2. AODA Compliance

Under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, the ROM must do certain things to make sure we are providing accessible customer service to people with various kinds of disabilities. The AODA requires that we:

ACCESSIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The standard addresses access to and within buildings and outdoor spaces and are expected to build on Ontario's Building Code. The standards could include things like counter height, aisle and door width, parking, and signs. From July 14 to October 16, 2009, the Ontario government released the initial proposed Accessible Built Environment Standard for public review. The committee will now revise the proposed standard to reflect the public's input. It will then submit a final proposed standard to the government for consideration as law.

EMPLOYMENT ACCESSIBILITY

The standard addresses paid employment practices relating to employee-employer relationships, which could include recruitment, hiring, and retention policies and practices. The final proposed Employment Accessibility Standard was submitted in 2009 to the Minister of Community and Social Services for consideration as law.

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

This standard has been identified as crucial for people with disabilities. Access to transportation is needed for going to work or school, shopping and other aspects of daily life. This standard is to address aspects of accessible public transportation. The final proposed Accessible Transportation Standard has now been submitted to the Minister of Community and Social Services for consideration as law.

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
2. Set a policy allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access the ROM's goods and services and about the measures we offer (assistive

devices, services or methods) to enable people to access the ROM's goods and services

3. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that our policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Train our staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on our behalf on a number of topics outlined in the customer service standard.
6. Train our staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing our policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics outlined in the customer service standard.
7. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the ROM that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, we will use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.
8. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing

goods or services in ROM premises open to the public or third parties.

9. Provide notice ahead of time on what admission is charged for a support person of a person with a disability, where admission fees are charged.
10. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use ROM goods or services are temporarily disrupted.
11. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how we provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how we respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. We will make the information about our feedback process readily available to the public.

The ROM as a designated public sector organization has additional responsibilities. These responsibilities include:

- Documenting in writing our accessible customer service policies, practices and procedures
- Notifying our customers that these documents are available upon request, and
- Providing information in the required document(s), when providing them to a person with a disability, in a format that takes into account their disability.

2.3. ROM Planning & Preparedness Process



William Thorsell, Director and CEO, Royal Ontario Museum addresses audience assisted by American Sign Language Translator. Photo Courtesy: Gary Beechey

The ROM recognizes that people with disabilities represent a significant and growing part of our communities. According to Statistics Canada, about 1.9 million Ontarians have disabilities – about 16% of the population. The number of people with disabilities increases as the population ages. Population projections estimate that by 2021, Canadians aged 65 and older will number close to 6.7 million or about one-fifth the total population.¹

These statistics are reflected in our own visitor demographics. In 2009 there was an increase in the number of the visitors accessing our disability programs and services. These numbers are likely to continue to grow

¹ Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, Statistics Canada, 2001

considering more than 31% of our current visitors will be over the age of 65 in 2021.

In conjunction with the AODA standards, the ROM has been reviewing its policies and practices. A Gap Analysis of our practices was compiled. The Gap Analysis identifies the areas of accessibility at the ROM that require improvement. The Gap Analysis is an important document to establish goals, set priorities and monitor change.

The ROM has used the AODA and subsequent Gap Analysis as the impetus for recording our accessibility practices. In turn, amendments were made to the Public Access Policy and the Management Practice on *Accessibility for ROM Visitors with Disabilities*. A checklist of our goals was also produced from the Gap Analysis.

The ROM recognizes that people with disabilities are a key resource in effective accessibility planning. Since the development of the first Accessibility Management Practice at the ROM in 2005, most policies, practices and procedures at the Museum have been the result of consultation both internally and with people in the community. In 2006, the ROM created the Accessibility Advisory Committee whose main task is to provide feedback on access to the building, exhibits, publications, programs, marketing and communication as well as the visitor experience.

To continue this tradition of consultation, the ROM hosted focus groups on accessible exhibit design throughout the fall of 2009. The focus groups were composed of volunteer community members with disabilities. As a result of these focus groups, a list of suggestions was created to help improve existing and future exhibitions by addressing specific audience needs.

The ROM is improving accessibility to its services and programs by offering the following:

- Large Print access guides/ floor plans are available online and at the Museum.
- An accessibility map indicating access points and features is offered at the Museum and online for special exhibitions only.
- Video podcasts, using sign language are available for free at the Museum. These videos can be downloaded and viewed on a computer, iPod® or mp3 player. The written transcripts of each video are also provided online.
- Additional podcasts, highlighting Museum research, collections, events and much more are available on ROM's website. More than 90 volumes on a wide variety of subjects are accessible with written transcripts.
- The Director's Choice Audio Tour, providing vivid and detailed descriptions of objects on display chosen by our Director & CEO, William Thorsell is available online and for download.
- Audio tours with detailed descriptions of objects are on display. Audio tours for specially ticketed exhibitions are available from the audio guide desk for a rental fee.

Through 2010, the ROM will develop free Tactile Tours for blind visitors and visitors with vision loss. The tours will offer touch opportunities of selected pieces from the ROM's permanent collection, and tactile booklets will be reproduced to complement the tactile experiences at the Museum. The ROM is also working on developing tours lead by American Sign Language (ASL) and Intervenor interpreters. In addition, a tactile map, which uses textures and other three-dimensional features, will depict the ROM's floor plan for people with vision loss. Moreover, *The Warrior Emperor and China's Terracotta Army* exhibition promises to enhance access and participation of visitors with disabilities in the Museum.

3. ROM ACCESS FRAMEWORK

3.1. Commitment to Access



Lieutenant Governor of Canada, David Onley attends the opening of *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember*, April 16, 2008. Photo Courtesy: Gary Beechey

In accordance with its Public Access policy, the ROM endeavours to provide access to its cultural and educational resources to potential visitors to the Museum's public areas. The aim of the policy is to ensure that access equality is considered in all key decisions made by the Board of Trustees, Senior Management and all staff.

Access, as stated in the Public Access Policy, refers to the ROM's responsibility to make its collections, information,

programs and services both physically and intellectually available to ROM employees, volunteers, and members of the public.

An additional resource to approach access accountability is the Management Practice on *Accessibility for ROM Visitors with Disabilities*. This Management Practice provides guidelines to enable visitors with disabilities to access the Museum and its programs, services and exhibits

to the fullest extent possible and that their experience at the ROM embodies the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. It reflects the following core values of the Museum:

- Respect for people, visitors, employees, volunteers and partners
- Effective communication, innovation and action

3.2. Commitment to Collaboration



Opening of *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember*, April 16, 2008. From Left: Christine Karcza, ROM Trustee; Melanie Panitch, Director, Ryerson School of Disability Studies; Catherine Frazee, Professor of Distinction, School of Disability; Dr. Sheldon Levy, President Ryerson University; Kathryn Church, Associate Professor, School of Disability Studies; David Onley, Lieutenant Governor, Canada. Photo Courtesy: Gary Beechey

The ROM recognizes that the application of this practice will enhance the Museum experience for all individuals, not only those with physical disabilities. This will be achieved by integrating accessibility considerations into all departmental planning processes so that anyone can contribute to making the ROM a more inclusive organization.

We embrace a Museum that belongs to everyone, where everyone can fully participate and have a meaningful experience despite their abilities. To reflect our concept of the Museum as a “place of encounter”, we used accessibility planning as an opportunity to connect with the community.

The ROM aims for cooperative problem-solving and partnership with the community. We believe that the involvement of many will result in the removal of barriers for people with disabilities and the general public. We want to continually improve the ROM’s relationships with our many friends, advocates, supporters and partners. We will use their leadership to improve our activities towards access and further the artistic, cultural and social life of Toronto by offering an experience for all.

In this context, we brought our attractions partners in Toronto together for a *Customer Service Standard Round Table* in the fall 2009. We had an open dialogue on the Access issues that touch each of us as customer service organizations. We commonly agreed on the key access objectives we will aim to meet and agreed to create a network of support on issues of accessibility.

Other community partners include:

- The Canadian Hearing Society
- Community for Independent Living
- Deaf Culture Centre
- Christine Karcza, I Can Do This
- The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
- George Brown College
- March of Dimes

3.3. Role of the Accessibility Committee

The Deputy Director, Operations is responsible for ensuring the compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07. Operational and building enhancements in the Museum will be made within the capabilities of the existing funding and financial resources.

Members of the committee will advise the Museum while acknowledging that museum management will make the final decisions regarding next steps. Feedback is only related to access and includes comments on the building, exhibitions, publications, programs, marketing and communication as well as the visitor experience.

The Chair and the Co-Chair along with the Directors Advisory Committee will help to set the focus of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Accessibility Committee is comprised of twelve appointed volunteer positions drawn from members of the community and patrons of the ROM. A majority of the members are persons with disabilities. The valuable experience that members bring to the advisory committee comes through their own personal experience with disabilities, special expertise, professional experience, community leadership dedication and commitment to the mandate of the Advisory Committee in accessibility advocacy at the Museum.

The ROM endeavours to have an Advisory Committee as diverse as possible where every disability is represented. However, each member at the Advisory Committee does not represent the concerns of only one disability, group or organization. The members of this Advisory Committee should work together for the purpose of developing a common approach which is beneficial to every visitor at the ROM.

The 2010-2013 Advisory Committee has representation from the following communities:

Vision loss community
Hearing loss community

Developmental disabilities community
Mental health community
Mobility disabilities community
Museum educators' community

TERM

Members are asked to commit to a term of three years

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE'S ROLE

1. Advise the ROM on matters relating to the implementation of accessibility practices as defined in the *Accessibility for ROM Visitors with Disabilities Management Practice*.
2. Review existing and emerging accessibility initiatives and table ideas for consideration.
3. Maintain an awareness of user needs to support the ROM's desire to ensure alignment with changing community requirements.
4. Review and offer feedback on the design of accessibility for future exhibitions.
5. Promote the ROM's commitment to access and act as ambassadors in the encouragement of people with disabilities to visit the ROM. Also, champion the creation of linkages to visitor groups in the community.
6. Commitment to ROM's mission, vision and principles.

SUB-COMMITTEES

The Accessibility Committee may establish task forces or sub-committees to undertake general duties or specific assigned tasks.

CHAIR'S ROLE

1. Ensure that the Committee operates in a manner consistent with its policies.
2. Represent the Committee to outside parties.
3. Be the only official spokesperson for the Committee, other than in specifically authorized instances.

MEETINGS

The committee will meet six times a year with a pre-circulated agenda of issues to be addressed. Members are requested to direct all questions or concerns directly to the co-chairs for resolution.

4. GAP ANALYSIS

4.1. 2009 Gap Analysis Report

The purpose of this gap analysis was to provide the Royal Ontario Museum with a detailed picture of current accessibility practices at the Museum and its level of compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07. The objective was to identify the access priorities that should be our focus from 2009 until 2025; in addition to make recommendations that should simplify compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

The key areas analyzed include the ROM's Policy, Management Practices and documented and undocumented procedures related to the provision of services to Visitors with disabilities.

The findings of the gap analysis placed the Museum above the industry average. Some examples include:

- The ROM was the recipient of *The Access Award for Disability Issues, 2008, Access Equity & Human Rights Awards* by the City of Toronto.
- The Ministry of Community and Social Services considers the ROM to have some of the best accessibility practices in Canadian museums.
- In the last Visitor Survey as December 2009, the overall visitor satisfaction was at 95 per cent, with 62 per cent exceeding expectations.

However, the results of this analysis pointed out that the deadline for monitoring, both, the Policy on *Public Access* and the Management Practice on *Accessibility for ROM Visitors with Disabilities* was expired. A review process was necessary in order to comply with the Customer Service Standard. In addition, accessibility communications and accessibility training was required to be updated concurrent with the specifications under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07

The following listing describes how the identified areas above were consequently addressed at the Museum:

- The reviewed *Public Access* policy was submitted and approved by the Board of Trustees on 2010
- The reviewed management practice on *Accessibility for ROM Visitors with Disabilities* was submitted and approved by the Management Council on 2010.
- The first formal training in Accessibility was delivered at the Museum in fall 2009 to the front line staff and volunteers, senior management and Board of Trustees.
- An internal assessment in accessible communications has been undertaken at the Museum by the Marketing Department. The focal point of this assessment is the Museum's website and its main goal is to create a website that communicates in an effective way with all ROM stakeholders.

The main recommendation discussed in this report is the enrolment of all operational teams in long-term Accessibility planning. The strategies of the plan should align with the ROM's mandate of serving *all visitors* and its governance duty as a designated public sector organization. In addition, the long-term accessibility plan will prepare the organization to respond to the demand of the growing population. Indeed, in accordance with Statistics Canada (2006), one in seven people in Ontario has a disability and over the next 20 years, as people grow older, the number will rise to one in five. Moreover, the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation (2002) projected that the structure of the ageing population in 2025 will influence the demand of General History and Heritage Museums services in Ontario in a growth rate of 386%¹. Our vision of serving all visitors will be achieved by integrating access considerations into all departmental planning process.

¹ Impacts of Aging in the Canadian Market on Tourism in Ontario, Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, July 2002, p. 9 (P D F)
https://ospace.scholarsportal.info/bitstream/1873/4110/1/1_0305380.pdf

A Growth Market Behaviours of Tourists with Restricted Physical Disabilities in Canada, Quebec Government, 2001
<http://www.keroul.qc.ca/library/pdf/a-growth-market.pdf>

4.1. ROM Goals 2008-2012

2008 GOAL

PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENTS

The *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember* exhibition, in cooperation with Ryerson University and ROM Governors, explored the social history of disabilities in Canada. The exhibition brought the contributions of Canadians with Disabilities to the broader Museum audience.

As a result of this initiative, the ROM was awarded the *Access Award for Disability Issues* in the *2008 Access Equity & Human Rights Awards* by the City of Toronto. The ROM was recognized for its ongoing efforts to build a city where everyone can participate fully in the social, cultural, economic, recreational and political life of Toronto



Visitor attends *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember*. Photo Courtesy: Gary Beechey

2009 GOAL

AWARENESS

Accessibility awareness was a key focus in our operational activities in 2009. An accessibility assessment against the AODA was conducted in the Museum. Next, we proceeded with our planning process which was based on consultation and research of accessibility benchmarks. Since the AODA is still evolving and currently provides no

guidelines for museums or cultural organizations, we brought together every team in the Museum and customized a set of checklists and templates. Checklists and templates help us to ensure access equality is considered in every process at the Museum while delivering the right service to people with disabilities.

Building on the focus of increasing awareness, in 2009, the ROM was fully trained in accessibility and customer service. Board of Trustees, Senior Management and front of house received training. Three different training models were designed depending on the level of interaction with our Visitors.

Finally, this year, ROM Governors proudly announced access as their number one priority area for fundraising.

2010 GOAL

IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVICES THAT SUPPORT OUR PROGRAMS AND BOOST OUR COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Our key focus for 2010 is building on implementation of services for people with disabilities. In 2010, the ROM will be developing free Tactile Tours and tours lead by American Sign Language (ASL) and Intervenor interpreters. A new tactile map which depicts the ROM's floor-plan will help people with visual disabilities to have a more independent experience while at the Museum.

We are producing one of the most accessible exhibitions in ROM's history. The exhibition will offer an accessibility map of the exhibition, tactile experiences, on-demand accessible tours and audio tours that address a broad range of disabilities. In addition, captioned videos became a standard in all new ROM's exhibitions.

Throughout the year, the ROM intends to continue to build connections between internal departments in the areas of product development, marketing strategies and customer communications to improve accessibility at the Museum.

The ROM also plans to develop effective advertisements that include people with disabilities. All publicity materials at the ROM should include access information, provide

information in alternative formats and television ads should include close captioning. We will aim to work in collaborative manner with disability organizations when new services affect a specific disability group.

Finally, the ROM intends to develop strong and lasting relationships with the public and private sectors which will aim to build access awareness. Sharing best practices and promoting positive messages, in relation to accessibility expansion initiatives in our community.

2011 GOAL RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS

For 2011 it is our goal to build and expand partnerships with Deaf and Blind Studies programs in Canada to build a bridge between Museum Studies and Disability Studies. Through these partnerships, research will be conducted to educate and create experiences that are worthy and meaningful for those with disabilities. We will develop case studies that illustrate the relationship between disability studies and museum studies.

The ROM will enlarge the ASL-video podcast database and will continue making them accessible for free in ROM website as part of ROM access program which reaches audiences beyond ROM's boundaries.

In 2011, we will use quantitative and qualitative data gathered from past years to conduct marketing research for

ROM visitors with disabilities that will help us to understand our audience and test the services we have in place at the Museum.

2012 GOAL SELF-DETERMINATION & ENHANCEMENT OF VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Our goal for 2012 is to ensure that the right tools which support programs and services for visitors with disabilities are in place at the Museum. Thus we will provide an enhanced experience for all Visitors at the ROM.

The ROM wants to be barrier free for every visitor at the Museum. We will strive to improve our way-finding system for blind visitors and visitors with vision loss by evaluating the acquisition of new technology that facilitates a more independent experience for visitors with vision loss.

In 2012, we will introduce Tactile Tours for deaf/blind Visitors and expand ROM Tactile program as a hands-on learning experience available for visitors with developmental and learning disabilities.

We plan to create an archive collection of tactile booklets that will include large print, Braille and raised line-drawing reproduction of selected artefacts from the ROM's permanent collection and from our special exhibitions.